



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 1A

Chapter 1:1-5

P.O. Box 702107
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210.319.5055

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- Overview of the Book
 - Two parts
 - Beginning of all things (Chap 1-11)
 - Beginning of the Jewish race and nation (12-50)
 - Genesis may be the most important book of the Bible
 - Some consider it a book of stories (Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah, etc.)
 - Most important written work in history
 - Foundation of all things
 - Matter, energy, life, marriage, family, society, morality, Law, even the 7-day week
 - Book of firsts
 - First human beings, marriage, birth, death, lie, trial, murder, first self-defense, ownership of property, natural death, rainfall, boat, nations formed, cities built, calendar established, first example of God's grace, first covenant, on and on
 - Most quoted by other Bible authors, except Psalms and Isaiah
 - Quoted as literal text by Jesus Himself
 - By itself, Genesis reveals virtually everything we need to know about the person of God and man's relationship to God
 - Reveals His character, nature and person
 - His purpose for the creation
 - Genesis also explains much about man
 - Reveals the source of our character
 - Reveals our purpose for existence and the reason for our condition
 - And it reveals God's intentions for our relationship with Him
 - Genesis makes sense of everything in life
- Author & Time
 - Moses wrote the Torah (around 1445-1405 while wandering in the desert)
 - Originally 1 work – not split into 5 books (Mark 12:26)

Mark 12:26 “But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’?”

- Covers human history from about 4,000 BC – 1800 BC
 - Must go from Exodus to Revelation to cover an equal amount of time
- Name Genesis
 - Taken from the Hebrew word *toldot*, which means the generations

- The Greek translation of the OT (Septuagint) translated this word into *geneseos*, from which we get Genesis

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

Gen. 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

- The heavens and earth refers to the physical earth and the atmosphere
 - Not the heaven where God dwells
 - We will examine why a little later
 - From the first verse, “In the beginning, God...” we learn four important things
 - First, our world and everything in it had a beginning
 - There was a point before this existed
 - Every man has contemplated the question of where did everything begin
 - Even atheists pursue the question of the beginning of all things
 - The theory of the Big Bang is the secular answer
 - But it still begs a question of where did the material for the Big Bang come from?
 - The reason the unbelieving world has no answer for what came before everything, is that they limit their sources of information
 - They will only accept answers taken from what can be observed
 - But since we can only observe what already exists, we can never hope to learn what came before things existed
 - We must seek our answers from a source that existed before the creation of all things
 - We must be willing to acknowledge that there was a source of all things, which implies an authority, a judge
 - It also implies that if everything had a beginning, then it likely has an end as well
 - There will also be a point when it has ceased to exist

2Pet. 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,

2Pet. 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

2Pet. 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

2Pet. 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded

with water.

2Pet. 3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

- The unwillingness to acknowledge the Biblical account of creation begins with an unwillingness to acknowledge a higher authority Who holds us accountable
 - Revelation tells us that this world does indeed have an end

Rev. 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

- The irony: we are eternal but this world has an end
 - This is the opposite of the world's viewpoint
 - The world teaches we are temporary but the world is billions of years old and will never cease
- Secondly, Gen 1:1 teaches that God existed before all else
 - "In the beginning, God"...He was already there
 - God was around before the physical creation
 - Therefore nothing in the creation is equal to, or as powerful as, God
 - Nothing in the creation can outlast God
 - Nothing in the creation can contend with God
- Third, time itself is measured according to the origin of the Creation, not by the origin of God's existence
 - Time is a part of creation itself, so the passage of time did not exist until the creation itself existed
 - More importantly, the very existence of time is a feature of Creation to help us understand the beginning from the end
 - Once the end comes, then time will take on a new meaning
 - Or perhaps it will disappear as well
- Finally, the opening line of Gen 1:1 single-handedly contradicts six popular philosophies in our world today
 - Atheism—God does exist.
 - Pantheism—God is distinct from His creation.
 - Polytheism—"Created" is singular in the text.
 - Radical materialism (matter is eternal)—Matter had a supernatural origin (emphasis on origin).
 - Naturalism (evolutionism)—Creation took place when someone outside nature intervened (emphasis on process).
 - Fatalism—A personal God freely chose to create.
- Among Christians, the opening two verses of Genesis give rise to a fair amount of

controversy

- First, the Traditional view
 - Verse 1 & 2 are a summary of the entire chapter
 - Verse two describes an early starting point for God's work
 - Verse 3 and later describe the successive steps of creation as the world increases in order and complexity
- Second, the Gap Theory (Recreation Theory)
 - Stems out of the language in verses 1 & 2
 - Gap theory says that verse 1 is the initial formation of the earth
 - Verse 2 is God's judgment on the earth (due to Satan's Fall)
 - Verse 3 begins God's reforming of the earth
 - Support for Gap Theory
 - Language
 - *Erets hayah tohu bohu (Earth was formless and void)*
 - Disjunctive Conjunction Subject Verb
 - In other places where a similar construct is used, the verb is translated "became"
 - The formless and void phrase can be read as a phrase used in Isaiah 34:11 and Jer 4:23 to describe a state of judgment
 - Satan's description in Ezek 28 suggests a Creation with Satan prior to His fall
 - Against Gap Theory
 - Similar structure to the beginning of Chapter 2
 - Hebrew grammar would expect a different verb construct if it were describing items in a sequential order
 - Earth and heavens are described as beginning in verses 6-10
 - All Biblical cross references say the earth was created in 6 days, leaving no time for the earlier creation
 - Strange interpretation of the text – not the natural reading
- Some try to use the Gap Theory to find room to place the dinosaurs in between
 - We will address this later (end of Chapter 1)
- Looking at the start of the creation process
 - God begins creation with an initial stage where everything is formless and void with the Spirit hovering (*rachaph* - fluttering)
 - God is already shown as present in two Persons here
 - John 1 adds the third Person

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

- The earth was formless and void, meaning it was chaos
 - The Hebrew words are *tohu* and *bohu*
 - *Tohu* means confusion or without meaning
 - *Bohu* means empty, a vacuum
 - And there was darkness over the deep
 - The deep here is literally *tehom*, which is abyss
 - It can also refer to deep water
 - But deep water came to be called *tehom* because it resembled a dark abyss
 - So shouldn't imagine water at this point
 - We should understand that Moses is describing the creation as completely without physical form, utterly dark and completely without order
- The only thing that matches that description is matter, absent any form or order
- Then, the Spirit is seen to be moving or hovering over the deep
 - The Spirit seems to be introducing energy into the matter
 - This understanding would seem to match our understanding of how matter and energy are intimately connected
 - $E=mc^2$
 - The only thing missing is light

Gen. 1:3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Gen. 1:4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

Gen. 1:5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

- The basic equation explaining all matter and energy in all the universe, is consistent with the Bible's description of creation
 - Before anything existed God created all matter, formless and dark
 - God created everything *ex nihilo* or from nothing
 - God then introduced all energy
- Then, God spoke light into existence
 - Here we see confirmation of the Third Person of the Trinity
 - The Word was Jesus acting to bring Light into existence
 - He saw light was “good”

- Saw – *raah* – reflected upon, concluded
- Good – *tob* – good as in best, beneficial
 - Good (vs. bad) implies a purpose
 - God can only do good
 - So why make the statement?
 - It implies this light is good or beneficial for something
 - What?
- And God separated light from darkness
 - God named the light and dark
 - Naming means one has authority (sovereignty) over something
 - What two things are most curious about this description of creation?
 - Light without an apparent source
 - Where does it come from? God
 - Darkness is “created”
 - Not merely the absence of light

Is. 45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun

That there is no one besides Me.

I am the LORD, and there is no other,

Is. 45:7 The One forming light and creating darkness,

Causing well-being and creating calamity;

I am the LORD who does all these.

- So God sets about to create the world with light and dark from the beginning
 - And these features are present in the universe before there are any celestial bodies
 - In fact, the Sun and Moon don't arrive until Day 4 in Creation
 - This fact leads us to discover an important pattern or code in the first 6 days of Creation
 - In the first three days we will see God creating spaces
 - In the second three days, He will create the objects to fill those spaces
 - And by this pattern, we'll come to understand His purpose in the creation itself
 - That answer awaits our arrival to study Day 6
 - For now, let's go back to examining the purpose of God creating light and darkness
 - This dichotomy is even more interesting when you discover that in the new Heavens and Earth, there won't be darkness
 - Rev 21:25 tells us that the NH&E have no darkness

- So if God has determined that He doesn't need darkness in the eternal order, why did He include it in the first Earth?
- Well, consider how God has consistently linked light & dark with good & evil

Job 30:26 “When I expected good, then evil came;
When I waited for light, then darkness came.

Psa. 104:19 He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the place of its setting.
Psa. 104:20 You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.

Is. 9:2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
Is. 9:3 You shall multiply the nation,
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

- It would seem God has created the world with two sides, light and dark, so they could serve as powerful metaphors for good and evil
 - Which also suggests that God was already anticipating and planning for the entry of sin into His creation
 - Which would also explain why the future New Heavens and Earth will lack a night

Rev. 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

- So as we continue studying through Genesis 1, we have two puzzles to solve
 - Why does God describe his work as “good?”
 - And why is God embedding creation in ways different than the way He eventually creates the eternal order?
 - In particular, with metaphors or symbols of evil



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 1B

Chapter 1:3-13

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Gen. 1:3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Gen. 1:4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

Gen. 1:5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

- Then, God spoke light into existence
 - He saw light was “good”
 - And God separated light from darkness
 - God named the light and dark
 - Light without an apparent source
 - These features are present in the universe before there are any celestial bodies
 - In fact, the Sun and Moon don’t arrive until Day 4 in Creation
 - Where does it come from? God
 - Also darkness is “created”
 - Not merely the absence of light
- So God sets about to create the world with light and dark from the beginning
 - We discover an important pattern or code in the 6 days of Creation
 - In the first three days we will see God creating spaces
 - In the second three days, He will create the objects to fill those spaces
 - And by this pattern, we’ll come to understand His purpose in the creation itself
 - We will come to that answer when we arrive on Day 6
- Let’s remember why God creates both light and darkness
 - We discovered that in the New Heavens and Earth, there won’t be darkness

Rev. 21:25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed;

- So if God has determined that He doesn’t need darkness in the eternal order, why did He include it in the first Earth?
- Well, consider how God has consistently linked light & dark with good & evil

Job 30:26 “When I expected good, then evil came;
When I waited for light, then darkness came.

Is. 9:2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them.

Is. 9:3 You shall multiply the nation,
 You shall increase their gladness;
 They will be glad in Your presence
 As with the gladness of harvest,
 As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

- God created the world with a built-in message about good and evil
 - We learn by experience how light and dark are opposites
 - How there is no mixing of the two
 - How one does away with the other
 - How one exposes sin and reveals glory, while the other provides opportunity for sin and produces despair
 - They serve as powerful metaphors for good and evil
 - Because God was already anticipating and planning for the entry of sin into His creation
- Further proof is found in the way God “remakes” the earth in a future time
 - The New Heavens and Earth will lack a night...it only has day

Rev. 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

- To conclude Day 1, in what way was light and darkness separated?
 - From the first day, God has established the passage of time
 - Were it not for the alternative light/dark cycles of our world, there would be no passage of time
 - We would have no way to measure change
 - The separation was not in a physical way, but a temporal
 - Evening, morning, first day
 - Jewish culture count the beginning of each day at evening for this reason
 - So far, God has created matter, energy, light and time
 - And God says one day has passed
- This opens an opportunity to examine another theory of creation
 - Day Age Theory
 - The theory suggests each day represents a long period of time, *i.e.*, millions of years
 - Why did anyone ever think to suggest such an interpretation?
 - Does the text itself leads us to that conclusion?
 - No. The answer why is our love affair with the teaching of secular science

- In the 19 century, scientific establishment proposed that the Earth wasn't young
 - Rather it was very, very old...billions of years old
- Christians were taught that this idea was certain because scientists proposed it...and we can trust scientists
 - Christians were taught they must understand their Bible in the light of science
 - What about God's word?
 - In other words, if the world is billions of years old, then how do we understand Genesis 1?
- What is the Biblical response?
 - In Hebrew, "day" = *yom* (appears 2,267 times)
 - Nearly 2,000 times it means a 24 period
 - Only 9 times is it used to mean age
 - Evening (*ereb*) and morning (*boqer*) are also literal terms that always mean a normal 12 hour period
 - Later in this same chapter we will use the terms "years" and "seasons"
 - The author could have used those words here if he intended to describe long periods of time
 - Golden Rule of interpretation demands we use the literal, ordinary and primary meaning of any word when there is no contextual basis to do otherwise
 - What cross references do we have in the Bible?

Ex. 20:8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Ex. 20:9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

Ex. 20:10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

Ex. 20:11 "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

- The rationale for a Sabbath would make no sense whatsoever if the days of Creation weren't literal 24-hour periods
 - God says, "For in six days the Lord..."
 - Therefore, rest one day
 - If "day" really means millions of years, how long are we supposed to rest on the seventh "day?"
 - Christians who adhere to this view occasionally quote 2 Peter

2Pet. 3:8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the

Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

- If 2 Peter 3:8 were intended to teach that a day = 1,000 years, there still isn't enough time to fit the millions of years into the story of Creation
- Let's move onto the next phase of Creation

Gen. 1:6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

Gen. 1:7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.

Gen. 1:8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

- Take this apart...
 - 2 bodies of water: one above, one below.
 - An expanse between them, which God calls heaven (*shamayim*)
 - What heavens are we talking about? Clue: look at what fills these spaces...
 - Waters below the *shamayim*
 - Oceans
 - Waters above the *shamayim*
 - Space/Atmosphere
 - But what about God's heaven?
 - 3 heavens – same word, different places
 - 1st heaven – the one in view here (birds fly)
 - 2nd heaven found in 1:15
 - 3rd heaven is God's home (2 Cor 12:2)
 - Need to note context to decipher which "heaven" is being referred to
- When we compare the events on this day to the way God creates the New Heaven and Earth, we see another interesting distinction

Rev. 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

- Why did God choose to create the first world with a sea but He removes it in the second Earth?
 - Did He change His mind?
- Consider the word often translated as sea in the Old Testament - *tehom* (deep/abyss)
 - It is often a synonym for going into death or going into the holding place of the dead, Sheol

Jonah 2:5 “Water encompassed me to the point of death.
The great deep engulfed me,
Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Gen. 49:25 From the God of your father who helps you,
And by the Almighty who blesses you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

- So the sea becomes a metaphor or picture of the depths of death and the abyss, the holding place of the dead
 - In fact, the word for abyss and deep in Hebrew is the same word
- But in the New Heavens and Earth, we’re told there is no more death
 - Which confirms that the presence of the sea is itself a feature God intended to picture the death and sorrow of sin
- Evening, morning second day (fill in chart)
- Onto the Third Day

Gen. 1:9 Then God said, “ Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.

Gen. 1:10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:11 Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.

Gen. 1:12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

- One of the “waters” is gathered
 - This one is called seas
 - How is it gathered?
 - What does that say about the land? All the land started in one place.
 - What does he do on the land?
 - God brings up vegetation. Still part of the “space” that something else is supposed to fill
 - Not supposed to exist for itself
 - But what are they created for?
 - Vegetation appears instantly

- Notably, the plants appear with seed, trees with fruit
 - What is the significance of producing the plants fully formed with all the seed and fruit present?
 - Appearance of age
 - In preparation for Adam's arrival with food he can pull off the tree as soon as he needs
 - Negates ability for creation to date itself



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 1C

Chapter 1:14-25

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- We return to Day 3 briefly to notice one interesting detail
 - The trees are told by God to bear fruit after their kind
 - The trees were commanded to reproduce, but in a very specific way
 - They were going to reproduce after their own kind
 - They couldn't reproduce something other than their kind
 - Kind (*min* in Hebrew) is a difficult word to translate
 - There isn't a good English equivalent
 - Not species exactly – broader term
 - Yet it does imply a limit
 - Kind is a collection of species
 - But still there is a limit, and the trees and plants were not going to move beyond the limit God provided
 - The limit is determined by the information present in the organism's DNA
 - Only the information already present can be used to produce offspring
 - And some division or branching will be possible within those limits
 - We'll talk more about this in our Evolution seminar
 - End of Third day – fill in chart

Gen. 1:14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;

Gen. 1:15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.

Gen. 1:16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.

Gen. 1:17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,

Gen. 1:18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

- Expanse of heavens again
 - Which *raqia* (expanse) and which *shamayim* (heaven) are we talking about here?
 - Context tells us – outer space
 - Then He creates lights in the expanse to separate day from night
 - This is different from separating light from darkness
 - The light/dark alternating pattern that defines the passage of time has already been established
 - Now God associates the day with a certain light and the night with different lights

- So when the Bible says “separated” here, it means distinguished
- The day was distinguished from the night by the appearance of different lights in each period
- Curiously, God doesn’t name the sun and moon here
 - Why?

Deut. 4:19 “And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

- Since we know He placed the stars so far away, how could light be visible on Earth right away?
 - Doesn’t light take millions of years to travel from the farthest stars?
 - Scientists point to this physical problem to discredit the Creation story
 - It’s impossible, they say, for light to be visible from stars so far away on only the 4th day of Creation
 - This is proof that the Universe took billions of years to form, they would say
 - The Biblical response is simple yet profound
 - God would have created a path of light from each star to the Earth just as He created the stars themselves
 - So on Day 4, the light was already in place and visible from Earth
 - And we know He did this because of the purposes He states for their creation in the first place
- God gives three reasons for these objects to fill the day and night
 - For signs
 - *Oth* in Hebrew (wonder, omen, witness)
 - There are at least three ways in which the lights in the sky are useful to God as signs to the world
 - First, to bear witness to God’s existence

Psa. 19:1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Psa. 19:2 Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.

Psa. 19:3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.

Psa. 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

Psa. 19:5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.

Psa. 19:6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

- Second, to reveal God's attributes or His character

Rom. 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

- Third, to His plan for creation

Joel 2:30 "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

Joel 2:31 "The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

- Then God says He created the lights in the sky for seasons
 - The way the earth is positioned relative to the sun and moon creates seasons, tides – i.e., circular patterns of life

Psa. 104:19 He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the place of its setting.

Psa. 104:20 You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.

- Why are seasons important?
 - Message to the world about the surety of God's promises
 - What goes 'round comes 'round

Eccl. 3:1 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven —

Jer. 5:22 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD.
'Do you not tremble in My presence?
For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,
An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it.
Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail;
Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it. \

Jer. 5:23 ‘But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
They have turned aside and departed.

Jer. 5:24 ‘They do not say in their heart,
“Let us now fear the LORD our God,
Who gives rain in its season,
Both the autumn rain and the spring rain,
Who keeps for us
The appointed weeks of the harvest.”

Jer. 5:25 ‘Your iniquities have turned these away,
And your sins have withheld good from you.

- Finally, God created the lights for days and years
 - Counting and marking and recording of time
 - Why is counting time important?
 - God intends to communicate about the future (prophecy)
 - He wants us to be aware of coming of His promises
 - The counting of time is not a count up – it’s a count down
 - The earth is going away one day in the future
 - And we are to know that there is an end, and a judgment at that time
- Fourth Day – chart

Gen. 1:20 Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.”

Gen. 1:21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that
moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged
bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the
waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

Gen. 1:23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

- God fills the seas and the air
 - By the context, we know that this time *shamayim* means the air
 - There is an important new detail on this day
 - We have for the first time living creatures
 - The word for “living” in Hebrew is *chay nephesh*
 - Living soul, or living being
 - By the way it’s described in the text, we know this is a new kind of life
 - Different than plants because it represents conscious life
 - By the way God made these creatures, they will come to serve a very useful
purpose for God in His plan for redemption

- Because they contain *chay nephesh* (the breath of life), they can experience a death similar to man
 - Plants lack *chay nephesh*, so when plants die, it's not a death in the same sense as a man's or animal's death
 - We instinctively understand the difference
 - We don't mourn the loss of a plant in the same way we mourn the loss of an animal or person
- Later, God is going to use this difference in the sacrificial system of the Law to demonstrate the nature of sin and its consequences
- As we notice that animal life first appears in the seas, we need to revisit the Day Age theory again for a moment
 - The Day Age theorists believe that the unique order of events in Creation support their theory and mirrors the fossil record
 - They argue that the evolutionary record is consistent with the creation story in Genesis by virtue of each Day representing millions of years
 - And in the geologic record, evolutionists claim that animal life began in the seas
 - And especially the first complex forms of animal life appeared in the oceans
 - Scientists refer to something called the “Cambrian Explosion” to explain the emergence of animal life in the sea
 - As they study the fossil record in deposits, they notice that at a certain point, most of the species in the fossil record suddenly came into existence
 - According to their dating theories, this occurred 4 billion years after the earth was formed
 - Day Age believers try to line up the Genesis record with this scientific belief by claiming that the Cambrian Explosion in the seas occurred during the millions of years represented by Day 4
 - Apart from the previous critiques I mentioned, there is another serious hole in this view at this point
 - According to Genesis, God also created birds during this day
 - But according to Evolutionists, birds came long after the explosion of new species in the seas
 - In fact, birds came even after most other land animals had appeared
 - This would be Day 6 (or Age 6)
 - So the Christian who believes the Day Age theory is a way to reconcile the Biblical account with the theory of Evolution, must admit that not only are the lengths of time in Genesis to seen as non-literal (i.e., a “day” is not really a day)...
 - But they must also maintain that the sequence of events in Genesis is non-literal
 - Essentially, it begins to beg a huge question: what, if anything, in the Genesis account is meaningful accurate?

- If day doesn't mean day, and the sequence of events is wrong, then of what value is the entire account?
- Here again, as Christians we are faced with the fundamental question
 - Is God's word literal or not?
 - Do we trust it to mean what it says, or must we invent a creative, alternative meaning to please ourselves?
 - In my experience, if we place our faith and trust in it even before we can fully understand it, God is good to bring us that complete understanding at a later time
 - If we doubt it from the beginning, He refrains from revealing the truth to us, not desiring to reward our pride and arrogance and lack of faith
- Fifth day – chart

Gen. 1:24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so.

Gen. 1:25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

- On Day 6, we see more living creatures filling the final space
 - This time, the creatures fill the land or the earth
 - The names used in English may sound arbitrary (i.e., cattle), but they reflect very specific Hebrew words
 - Cattle – domesticated animals
 - Beast – wild animals
 - We know that at this time there is no death
 - So that would mean that no animals were to be feared
 - Animals didn't threaten one another, nor would they threaten humans
 - Even large, potentially fierce animals like dinosaurs could roam without threatening Adam and Eve
 - This state is the natural, planned state for the animal kingdom
 - This is not the exception...this is the norm
 - Death, even in the animal kingdom, is not the normal, intended state for God's creation
 - We know this to be true because of how this world began AND because of how God will remake the world in the future kingdom

Is. 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

Is. 65:18 “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;

**For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing
And her people for gladness.**

Is. 65:24 “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Is. 65:25 “The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says the LORD.

- In the future Kingdom, God returns the world to a time when animals and the resurrected saints no longer suffer death
 - And therefore, at that time the animal kingdom no longer sees one another as predator and prey
 - And man will not fear even the most deadly snake
- As God looked upon Day 6, He remarked as He has on every day
 - It is good
 - By what measure is this day - and every day - good?
 - The answer to this question has always been the same
 - These days have produced a world which is good...perfectly good...for a single, intended purpose
 - As a home for man
 - Remember when I told you that the best question to ask when studying Genesis is “Why did God take so long?”
 - He could have created the world in a blink of an eye
 - Instead, he took six 24-hour periods and followed a very deliberate – some might say elaborate – process
 - To create in this unique way tells us He wanted to communicate a purpose or reason for the creation even as He went about making it
 - The reason is for man
 - The entire plan of creation...
 - From the light & dark – to communicate Good vs. Evil
 - The lights in the sky – to tell time, send signs and make seasons
 - The atmosphere that’s perfect for man to breathe
 - The seas to produce weather and provide food
 - The land and trees ready with fruit for food
 - The animals for company and labor
 - Everything is building toward a single purpose:
 - To make a suitable home for God’s most important creation
 - If it happened in an instant, the purpose and focus would have been lost



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 1D

Chapters 1:26-31; 2:1-3

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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Gen. 1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Gen. 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Gen. 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Gen. 1:29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

Gen. 1:30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

Gen. 1:31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

- The sixth day began with animals and ended with man
 - Notice a difference in how man is created?
 - By God’s hands, not by His voice
 - Could He have spoken men into existence? Yes
 - The use of His hands suggest much greater concern and personal involvement, even love
 - And what of the materials God used?
 - In all other cases, the things being made are formed from nothing, or out of the mass described in verse 2
 - In this case, man is made out of an existing material: the earth itself
 - This difference is critically, supremely important
 - In fact, this is so important, it determines the course of human history until the Kingdom arrives
 - We will see why in Chapter 3
- When God begins to make man, He begins with a new statement
 - God says let “us” create
 - The word for God in Hebrew is *Elohim*, which is a plural word
 - The verb for create is also plural
 - God is shown as more than one Person even in the first chapter of Genesis
 - God then creates Man
 - The word for man is *adam*, which literally means earth or dirt in Hebrew
 - In Chapter 1, the story is telling us that God created mankind on Day 6 – male and female

- We see this confirmed in Chapter 2
 - For now, the author is content to simply use “man” in the general sense so that mankind is accounted for in the story
 - He gives more detail on this event in Chapter 2
- The text says Man is created in God’s image (or likeness), or according to His likeness (or His pattern)
 - This detail alone confirms that God intends to set man apart from the rest of creation
 - God chose to express His nature and character into a creature that has the capacity to appreciate it and worship it
 - Such a goal requires a creature with the capacity to know God in a manner similar to the way God knows Himself
 - This is what “in His image” ultimately means
- So in what ways are we in God’s image or “like” God?
 - First, in our ability to exist as God exists
 - We have the capacity to share in many of the character attributes that God Himself embodies
 - God is the author of love, grace, mercy, charity
 - In a very real sense, God establishes these concepts by His very existence
 - God IS love, grace, etc.
 - Furthermore, we can exhibit them to one another as God demonstrates them to us
 - So we share in an existence that mirrors God’s own nature and character
 - Unlike the rest of Creation
 - Secondly, our ability to make moral choices or decisions
 - To obey or disobey authority
 - Finally, our capacity to know and relate to God
 - Our intellect, reasoning and our capacity to worship and glorify God
 - The rest of creation gives God glory by its mere existence
 - We can go beyond that and glorify God by our will
- All of this adds up to a simple statement
 - God created us in His image so that we could have a meaningful relationship with Him
 - All these attributes result in the capacity for true relationship
 - A greater degree of relationship than even the angels enjoy
 - Christ was the perfect example of what a man, created in God’s image, could achieve in terms of relationship
 - Perfectly obedient, perfectly pleasing to the Father, perfectly giving Him glory, One with Him in relationship

- By faith in Christ, when we become born again into the family of God, we are called God's sons
 - And we come to share an even greater portion of His nature
 - We share in Christ's perfect nature to the degree we set aside our old self and pursue the knowledge of Christ in His word

Col. 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

Col. 3:10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him —

Eph. 4:20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

Eph. 4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

Eph. 4:22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

Eph. 4:23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

Eph. 4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- As we come to faith and walk in that faith through a growing knowledge of God in His word, we actually move closer to the state God intended when we were created
 - We become more like the image of God and less like our sinful selves
- God tells man to fill earth, subdue it and rule over animals
 - Rule = *nadah* = dominion
 - Man initially had dominion over the earth – unearned
 - The world was created for man – a dominion prepared for man
 - God gives man plants to eat
 - No meat...why not?
 - Meat would require death...no death
 - With the introduction of *chay nephesh*, we have another huge problem with the Day Age theory and evolution
 - Day Age (evolution) requires death to advance creation
 - Bible says death came only after man sinned (Chap 3)
 - No death until then

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —

Rom. 5:13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Rom. 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those

who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

- So absent sin and death, there can be no opportunity to eat anything except plants
- Sixth day – chart completion (create vs. fill)
 - Man is a part of Day 6 because we share much in common with the animal kingdom in a physical sense
 - But the text makes clear that we have an entirely different kind of spirit
 - And the world and everything in it was given to man as our dominion

Gen. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

Gen. 2:2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

- The heavens and earth are complete (and everything in them)
 - Why do we have Chapter 2?
 - It compares & contrasts the events of Day 6
 - Some say Chapter 2 is a “second” story of Genesis
 - They see Chapter 2 as starting the story over
 - This is an ill-informed view
 - Chapter 2 is Day 6 expanded
- Genesis is known for its “zoom in and zoom out” pattern
 - Chapters move from looking at short periods of time in detail, to looking at long periods of time at a glance
 - Chapter 1 is a longer period of time than Chapter 2
 - Chapter 2 is Day 6 in detail
- Before we start the zoom in for Chapter 2, consider the interesting statement in verse 2
 - God rested
 - Was He tired?
 - The word for rest is *shabath* – brought to an end, ceased
 - God didn’t rest from tiredness...He ceased
 - Why?
 - We know He doesn’t need rest
 - We also know He doesn’t need 24 hours to cease
 - It seems a peculiar and pointed effort by God to make a statement
 - He is setting an example He will use later
 - Consider how God explains the Sabbath later in Scripture

Ex. 20:8 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Ex. 20:9 “Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

Ex. 20:10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

Ex. 20:11 “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Deut. 5:15 ‘You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

- According to Scripture, God’s rest was intended to set an example for the Jewish nation under the Law
 - We know that God doesn’t tell Adam to observe a rest
 - Adam does work, but he doesn’t get a command to rest
 - Also, God’s rest was NOT a physical rest
 - God is Spirit only and therefore He didn’t need physical rejuvenation
 - His rest was not physical in nature
 - By ceasing from His work, God was setting an example
 - Therefore, the Sabbath’s ultimate purpose was not to provide us with physical rest
 - In the same way that water baptism was not commanded to ensure we clean our bodies
 - Water baptism was a picture of a more important spiritual event
 - Similarly, physical rest on the Sabbath was always intended to be a picture of a greater spiritual rest
 - The weekly physical rest God commanded for the Jews was a picture of something even greater
 - What spiritual truth does the Sabbath picture then?
- First, consider we have been saved and transformed by Christ

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2Cor. 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

- Second, Scripture says that our reconciliation with God is the result of a work that God Himself did on our behalf

Heb. 10:11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;

Heb. 10:12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

Heb. 10:13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.

Heb. 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

- God did the work of our salvation
 - We did nothing to accomplish our salvation
 - We were simply the beneficiary
 - After the work of redemption was complete, Christ sat down
 - He rested or ceased from His work once redemption was completed
- Likewise, God did the same in the time of His creation
 - God did all the work of creation
 - We did nothing to assist in the creation of the world
 - Man was simply the beneficiary
 - Once God was done creating, He ceased and “rested”
- So God did the work on the cross and we were the beneficiary (without doing any work of our own)
- A man’s rest on the Sabbath is only temporary
 - After the Saturday Sabbath, each man’s work resumes on Sunday
 - The rest was not lasting
 - No man could rest securely and perpetually on the Sabbath
 - He always knew work would begin again the next day
- The Sabbath was given to picture the rest we have in Christ.

- Continuing in Chapter 2 with a “zoom in”, focused on Day 6 of Creation

Gen. 2:4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

Gen. 2:5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.

Gen. 2:6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

- Moses is telling the story of Adam
 - In Chapter 1, the earth has been formed in perfection with a man and woman
 - But how did we get to our imperfect state with a decaying world?
 - To tell that story, Moses will begin to tell the point at which things begin to change
 - Which was immediately after man arrived
 - So Moses begins the next part of the story by going back to right before man arrived
 - The world is nearing completion
 - But the business of planting and harvesting had yet to begin
 - And man had yet to arrive to care for the garden
- In setting up the story of Chapter 2, Moses gives us an interesting detail worth noting
 - There has been no rain on the earth...only a mist to rise up and water the surface of the earth
 - Indicates that rain was not part of God’s original design
 - When did rain begin?
 - We’ll see in Chapter 9 that rain began with the flood event
 - We’ll look more at that when we get there, but there are two interesting details from the flood story to corroborate the theory of no rain
 - Gen 7:11 says the flood gates of the sky are opened
 - During the flood these gates were freed, loosed for the first time
 - Gen 9:12-14, God “set” (*nathan* = added) His bow to the sky
 - Which means a rainbow had never been there before
 - God held back rain until the flood so that He could reserve the rainbow as a sign of His mercy to the earth in the generations following the flood

Gen. 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

- This description is more detail of the way God formed man in Chapter 1
 - Compare to 1:27
 - This corresponds to the first part of that verse
- Man was created from the material of the earth
 - Everything else was created *ex nihilo* or out of nothing
 - But Man was created out of dust
 - Formed – *yatsar*, means pottery
 - Why does God create man from the dirt?
 - If Man is God's greatest creation and the reason God made the rest of the world...
 - Then why make Man from the dirt? That seems lowly
 - We get the answer for why in Chapter 3
 - For now just know that God was making decisions here, including how to create Man, with full knowledge of what the future holds
- God breathed life into man
- This is a completely different experience than was applied earlier
 - God gives a physical life and then a spiritual life

**Is. 42:5 Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it,**

**Job 34:14 “If He should determine to do so,
If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,
Job 34:15 All flesh would perish together,
And man would return to dust.**

- The removal of the spirit God gave us results in the body dying
- Remember the parable Jesus told that ended this way:

Luke 12:19 ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’

Luke 12:20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

- It was God's Spirit that gave man his own soul or spirit

Job 33:4 “The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Job 33:5 “Refute me if you can;
Array yourselves before me, take your stand.

Job 33:6 “Behold, I belong to God like you;
I too have been formed out of the clay.

- God created Man as a perfect sinless body and an innocent spirit
 - And in this state, men lived eternally
 - The body never experienced decay
 - But now we inherit a disobedient spirit in a corrupted, sinful body
- As God is at work to correct this problem, He begins by giving every believer a new spirit (we're born again by faith)
 - Later a new body (1 Cor 15:51)
- In summary, we have a different kind of life from any other creature
 - Plants are biologically alive, but don't have *chay nephesh* (life blood)
 - Animals have *chay nephesh*, but don't have the spirit that comes from God's breath
 - Animals can die – made them a suitable sacrifice
 - But they can't be murdered
 - Man has *chay nephesh* and a living spirit, and since they are created in God's image, they can be murdered
- God draws this very distinction when He institutes the eating of meat in Genesis 9

Gen. 9:5 “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it.
And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

Gen. 9:6 “Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.

- The penalty of taking a man's life is that a man lose his life
 - The stiffest penalty possible
 - Reflects an important principle of scripture virtually lost in modern culture
 - We have a spiritual obligation to treat other men with love and respect regardless of how they treat us because they are made in the image of God
- Given these injunctions, can we ever take the life of another man?
 - God Himself says yes, and He even says we must under certain situations

- The difference is lawful vs. unlawful taking of life
- Death penalty is a legal remedy

Gen. 2:8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Gen. 2:9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gen. 2:10 Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

Gen. 2:11 The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

Gen. 2:12 The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.

Gen. 2:13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush.

Gen. 2:14 The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Gen. 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

- Begin with a summary statement for verses 9-14
 - What are the rest of the verses covering?
 - This is a detailed description of the first half of v8 – the start of the garden
 - Perhaps God sets up this garden in a separate act apart from the earlier day
 - But it's meant in the sense of cultivating a new garden to grow from existing material rather than creating something all new
 - The garden was "East" – from man's perspective
 - If the garden is East of man, then Man already exists at this point
 - And the garden is created a distance away from the Man
 - All this implies that God intended Man to be an audience for this separate act
 - Furthermore, Man is "placed" in the garden (*sum* = assigned, set)
 - He must have been moved to the Garden...how we wonder?
 - Why does God want man to witness this process in this way?
 - The process communicates God's loving intention to provide for Man
 - He witnesses God's care and preparation
 - Remember Man is less than a day old
 - Adam is the only human being who couldn't say "I wasn't born yesterday."
 - This is part of how God trains Adam to understand who and what he is

- Then the garden was filled with trees (every tree that was pleasing to look at and good for food))
 - Remember, this is not the moment trees were created (that happened on Day 3)
 - This is a separate moment on Day 6 when God causes a garden to appear for Adam
 - There were already trees and plants on the Earth, just as today we might create a garden in our backyard
 - In the garden were two unique trees (also with fruit)
 - What do we know of the first tree, the Tree of Life?
 - It's mentioned in Gen 3:22
 - It appears again in Rev 22

Rev. 22:2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

- Is this tree the source of man's life?
 - Can't be the source of life because Man's life came before the tree
 - Furthermore, God is the source of all life
 - He doesn't need a tree to keep us alive
 - Yet God may have chosen to make it the means by which He sustains life

Gen. 3:22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"

- It might be the means to ensure immortality in physical terms
- A better question would be why create a tree to provide eternal life? Why not just do it without a tree?
 - The question is even more profound when you remember that it exists again in the eternal state in the New Heavens and Earth
 - The answer is likely the same for both the garden and the future state
 - A tree we must visit regularly to sustain life becomes a powerful reminder that our life has a sustainer
 - When you have an immortal body, it's important to have a physical reminder that life has been made possible by God
- That brings us to the other tree...the Tree of Knowledge
 - It's a real tree – Eve eats from it

- It also had pleasing food
 - Therefore, it probably didn't look much different from any other tree
- What does it mean that this is a tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
 - What does good and evil mean? (Address in a minute)
- Let's look at the remaining description of the garden
 - The rest of the description deals with rivers
 - Interesting details, especially because the verb tense changes mid-description
 - In verse 10, the description from within the Garden is in past tense
 - In the following verses, the rivers are described in present tense
 - The other rivers are modern (to Moses' Day)
 - The place name references are post-flood
 - Maybe the initial description was handed down to Moses from Adam (or God)
 - But only God, Adam and Woman knew what it looked like
 - Adam lived the rest of his life with that memory
 - The garden was destroyed in the flood, so no other man could have ever seen it
 - Interestingly, the garden stood for 700 years after Adam's death (aged 930)

Gen. 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

- The word for cultivate (*abad*) actually means to "serve"
 - Adam is told to serve God by keeping the garden, or securing it, preserving it
 - Basically, Adam gets his first job
 - Like most young men, his first job was taking care of the yard for Dad
 - Turns out the oldest profession is actually gardening
 - We were created to serve God – even from the beginning
 - Adam's work differed from ours
 - In a perfect setting, without difficulty
 - In fact, it's hard to imagine what tending a perfect garden really looked like
 - Maybe the bushes were trimmed to look like Gabriel and Michael
 - Scripture teaches that we will work in farming and building in the Millennial kingdom
 - And again we will serve God before His throne in the new heaven and earth
 - In fact, you could make the argument that a retirement (in the way we see it) is not Biblical

- No man of God is ever portrayed in the Bible as retiring, ceasing from working to serve God
- We aren't supposed to cease work and serve only ourselves
- We may cease a full time occupation, but then we just transition to serving God in a new way
- Paul warns about this kind of lifestyle:

2Th. 3:10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

2Th. 3:11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

2Th. 3:12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

- Paul says the testimony of a Christian life is not what God has done for us, but ultimately is the testimony that we are His.
 - The nature of our existence from here into eternity should be to serve God
 - And Adam wasn't exempt from that



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 2B

Chapter 2:16-17

814 Arion Parkway, #410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
210.319.5055

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- Continuing in Chapter 2 examining God’s work to create man and woman
 - We left off watching Adam in the Garden, assigned the work of serving God by tending the garden
 - We learned that man’s original purpose in life was to serve God
 - And once we come to faith and return to relationship with God, we are supposed to resume this mission
 - No matter what our station in life, we seek to serve God, as Paul said:

**Eph. 6:7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,
Eph. 6:8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.**

- Having been assigned his responsibilities, Adam now receives God’s instructions – God’s word

**Gen. 2:16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;
Gen. 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”**

- God says the garden is filled with trees that will provide Adam with food
 - But there is also one tree in the garden that has edible fruit, but this tree is off limits
 - This tree is not available for Adam to eat
 - It is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - What does its name mean?
 - First, notice that it is the tree of knowledge
 - The tree is not a tree of good and evil
 - It is likely just another ordinary tree
 - The tree does not possess either good nor evil
 - But the tree holds the knowledge of those things
 - Therefore, what does it mean to know good and evil?
 - First, only by contrast can you know them
 - If you lived in a world where there was only good, then you can’t know what evil is
 - Conversely, if all you know is evil, then you have no understanding of good
 - One is defined by the other in the same way that light defines dark and sound defines silence
 - If you only have one, you can’t understand the other
 - Adam and Woman were good, because God created them that way

- And now they have been given a commandment which explains that they have an option to know evil if they choose
 - By His word, God forbids a behavior (eating from the tree)
 - And now by their disobedience, they can come to know evil should they choose to disobey God's word
- It wasn't the tree that provided them with the knowledge of evil
 - It would be their own disobedience to God's word that would lead them to experience (and thus know) evil
- This possibility was a part of a covenant God has made with Adam
 - Hosea mentions this covenant in passing when discussing the plight of Israel

Hos. 6:6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,

And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Hos. 6:7 But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;

There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

- We call Adam's first covenant the Edenic covenant, after the name of the Garden
 - Like all Bible covenants, it was a binding agreement based on a word from God
 - The first part of the covenant was actually provided in Chapter 1
 - In 1:28 God blesses Adam, which is the beginning of the covenant making process
 - Then God told Adam to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth
 - Then Adam is told to exercise dominion over the Earth and all living things
 - Now in Chapter 2 God continues the instructions of the covenant
 - Man is to keep the garden
 - The Hebrew word for "keep" implies obey God in service
 - Next, God instructs Adam to eat from the trees of the Garden
 - God gives Adam tremendous freedom in the Garden
 - Though we focus on the one restriction, the truth is Adam had tremendous freedom and only one restriction as far as we know
- Why put such a tree in the garden as part of this covenant?
 - First, consider that God has created man with both the ability to choose sin and the opportunity to choose sin
 - This is more than God Himself can do
 - God's character and nature are such that He cannot choose sin, even when it is available to Him
 - The Father is without sin and without the capacity to lie or sin, the Bible tells us in multiple places
 - So God's creation of man included an ability to choose sin
 - In fact, it required the Son to take the form of man so that He would be able to

experience temptation to sin, though He never gave in to temptation

- This is why the Bible says that Christ was the second Adam
 - He was God in the flesh, which means for the first time God was able to choose sin yet didn't follow after Adam's lead
- Men born today are not like the original Adam nor like Christ
 - As we come into this world, we are born in a state of sin, already fallen and unable to obey God
 - We are slaves to the state of disobedience that Adam established by his sinful choice
- So the first point to understand in answering the question of why was this tree in the garden, is that men were given an ability to choose sin
- Secondly, consider that our eternal state is one in which we can no longer choose to sin
 - The body we are given after resurrection is "incorruptible" according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15
 - Meaning it cannot rebel against God
 - This is similar to the process God followed with the angels
 - Initially after the angels were created, Satan and a third of the angels sinned by rebelling against God
 - Now the remaining two thirds of the angels, the chosen or elect angels as Paul calls them in 1 Timothy 5:21, are no longer able to rebel
 - And while God made no provision to redeem the fallen angels, He has made provision to rescue some of the fallen men

Heb. 2:16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

- So God created men with the power to choose to rebel against His authority
 - But later He will remove that ability to assure perfect obedience
 - Therefore, we must conclude that the purpose for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to ensure that man would have the opportunity to fall by his own choice
 - Obviously, God could have left the tree out of the garden, no?
 - He could have made it so tall, Adam could never reach it's branches
 - So the very fact that there was a tree and it was available to Adam is evidence that God was placing a test before Adam that would result in Adam's failure
 - This reminds us of the parable of the Prodigal Son
 - The father in that story had a choice when the young son demanded his inheritance early
 - The father could have denied the son's request and demanded he remain in the household or suffer a penalty of death

- And had the son remained under those circumstances though, it wouldn't have been a relationship of love
 - Furthermore, without the opportunity to run away and then eventually return, the son would never have known the father's mercy and grace and forgiveness and love
 - If the son was to fully know the father, the father had to be willing to let the son sin, and leave and return
 - And then upon the return, the father and his son had a true, abiding relationship
- Thus it was for God and man in the garden
 - God intended that man experience sin
 - Remember the creation pattern we saw in Chapter 1?
 - There was dark and light (because God knew there would be sin)
 - But only light in the new Heaven and Earth
 - Dark is a picture of sin
 - There is sea (because God knew there would be judgment for sin)
 - But no sea in the new Heaven and Earth
 - Sea is a picture of the abyss, hell
 - There is a sun and moon now to provide light (because God knew He would not be able to fellowship in the presence of sin on the earth)
 - But not in the new Heaven and Earth because God will be present and we will be without the ability to sin
 - Clearly, God created the world knowing that sin would come
 - And then in Chapter 3, He was the One Who made it possible for Adam to choose sin
- Why does God permit, even invite, Adam's sin?
 - God's purpose in the creation was to express His nature and character to a creation that can know Him and worship Him fully
 - But before the creation can fully know and worship Him, we must have opportunity to see God's full personality
 - We must know God's love, compassion, provision and wisdom
 - These attributes are knowable in a world without sin
 - But to know God fully, we must also know His wrath, judgment, mercy, and grace
 - And these attributes are only knowable in a world of sin
 - Without the possibility of Adam knowing evil, mankind couldn't hope to understand God's full nature
 - And the very purpose of the creation could not be fulfilled
 - And without Adam's choice to fall, mankind would never have known the depths of God's love when He sent His son to death, to save us from that sin

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love
Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
Eph. 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

- God the father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world
 - Before this creation story started, He had a plan to redeem men through the death of His Son
 - Why did He do this? Verse 4 says because of God's love
 - God predetermined that He would adopt sons to Himself...
 - Notice that God's plan required that from before the world began, our adoption would be made through His Son
 - Implying that we were chosen to believe in the sacrificial death of His Son
 - Again, why? Verse 6 says to elicit praise to the glory of His grace
 - What Paul is saying is that God created the world and man and the garden and the tree knowing that it would lead to His Son's death on the cross
 - And when you remember that the Son was the One creating everything, it stuns us to consider that the Son made all things come into being knowing it would require Him to go to the cross
- Am I suggesting that this tree is somehow a big trap for Adam?
 - Far from it. Look at vs.16-17...God warns Adam in no uncertain terms – don't eat
 - There is no subterfuge here, no attempt to bait Adam
 - Adam fell because he chose to sin
 - And even if Adam had not fallen, then perhaps Cain or Abel would have fallen
 - Or perhaps Abraham, or perhaps you or I
 - Sooner or later a man with the choice to sin will fall
 - Better that it happened to the first man
- Lastly, in examining vs.16-17 we need to consider that this tree came with a promise
 - Adam received God's word
 - In God's word, Adam received a promise
 - The promise was that should Adam choose to eat from this tree, Adam would surely die
 - When God says to Adam that Adam will surely die, what does God mean?
 - We know that the Bible talks of two kinds of death
 - First, there is a physical death
 - Our physical body will cease to exist at some point, and when it stops

functioning, we call that death

- But the Bible also talks about a spiritual death, which is a state of existence in which our physical body is alive but our spirit is corrupted by sin

Eph. 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Eph. 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Eph. 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

Eph. 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Eph. 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

- Paul reminds believers of who they were prior to having faith in Christ
 - We were dead in our sin
 - This state of deadness is characterized by a separation from God, an inability to know God or to fellowship with God
 - And a complete inability to seek God truly
 - This is why the Bible says that no man will seek for God unless it is granted by the Father
 - Spiritual deadness has no cure except that God Himself cures us
 - This is what Paul means when he says that even while we were dead, God made us alive in Christ
 - God did the work to bring us back into a state of spiritual life where we were capable of knowing and following God
 - And He did this on the basis of our faith in Christ
- Notice that our two states of being – being dead in sin and then alive in Christ – both happened while our physical body remained unchanged
 - So a dead spirit living in a state of sin can coexist with an otherwise normal physical body
- God promised Adam that in the day he ate of the tree, he would surely die
 - But Adam lived 930 years after he fell into sin
 - So then we know that the death God is promising in v.17 is not physical death
 - It must refer to spiritual death
 - The very same day of Adam's disobedience was the day of his spiritual death

- Finally, let's consider the relationship between Adam's spiritual death and our spiritual renewal by faith in Jesus Christ
 - In vs.16-17 God's word gave Adam a promise
 - Adam had to believe in God's word, in God's promise concerning the tree, or else it would result in spiritual death
 - The promise was that spiritual death was the consequence for eating the fruit
 - There was nothing to prove that God's word was trustworthy
 - Adam had no understanding of evil prior to eating from the tree
 - And therefore he had no way to appreciate what God meant when He said that Adam would "die"
 - What did die mean, Adam must have thought
 - Still, Adam didn't have to understand all that God meant
 - He only had to believe in God's word and Adam would have stayed away from the tree and lived
 - Instead, Adam failed to believe in God's promise, and so Adam died
 - And by his sinful choice, Adam brought the rest of mankind with him

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —

- So how does God choose to offer redemption to mankind in light of Adam's sin
 - The Bible says that salvation is made possible for the descendants of Adam by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
 - Have you ever wondered why God chose this method to save men?
 - Well, consider how it mirrors Adam's own choice?
 - Adam was given God's word in which God made a promise
 - The promise offered blessing and a path to life
 - But it also required faith in that promise
 - Adam couldn't have known what was at stake
 - He could only believe in what he was told
 - Adam had to show faith in God's promise to have a relationship with God and avoid spiritual death
 - Now today, men are fallen in the likeness of Adam
 - And today God makes a new promise
 - The promise is that Christ's death on the cross is payment for our sin, and if we accept that payment, we will receive eternal life
 - And we can avoid the penalty of eternal death for our sin
 - But this promise also requires faith
 - And without faith to believe in God's promise, we cannot have a

relationship with God

- But unlike Adam, we are not expected to hold to this promise by our own power
 - God does all the work of our salvation
 - He provides a sacrifice for our sin
 - He gives us the gift of faith to believe in the promise
 - And He gives us His Spirit so that we can never retreat from that faith nor suffer loss again
 - And in our new relationship, we can fully know this God of love, and mercy and grace

- Last week we spent an entire teaching on two verses (a new low for me)
 - But those two verses (vs.16-17) were important enough to warrant the extra attention
 - Together they explained God's purpose for the creation and the reason why faith in God's word is now the means to our salvation
 - I hope you agreed it was worth a week to examine them in detail
 - But today we are moving forward to finish the chapter
- Notice we are still learning the details of Day 6 and the creation of man and woman
 - Over the past two lessons, we've watched God create Adam from the ground and breathe life into him
 - Then God prepared a unique home for Adam, a garden
 - And God placed Adam in the garden and commanded him to serve God by keeping the garden
 - God didn't need a gardener, but He desired a servant who obeyed God
 - And then last week, God extended His covenant with Adam by giving a commandment and a promise
 - The commandment was not to eat the fruit of a certain tree; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - With that commandment came a promise that should Adam decide to eat, he will experience spiritual death
- Now this week, we move forward into the events of that day

Gen. 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Gen. 2:19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

Gen. 2:20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

- God says man should not be alone
 - It's not "good" for him
 - We notice back in Genesis 1 that the conclusion of Day 6 was occasion for God to declare that His work was "very good"
 - But now we learn that midway through that day, God decided that His creation on that day was "not good"
 - God decides it's not good for Adam to be alone
 - This is a strange statement, since Adam isn't alone

- He is walking with God in the Garden
 - God Himself is the perfect companion
 - It suggests that God is thinking ahead to a future need, when Adam will need a helper other than God
- The words for “suitable helper” form a unique Hebrew phrase in the Bible
 - It occurs only here
 - It literally means “servant in front”
 - The sense of the phrase is to describe a perfect compliment to Adam
 - Think of a sphere that has been sliced in half using a jagged cut
 - Each piece of the sphere is perfectly matched to its missing half
 - The two pieces can only fit to each other...no other part can match perfectly
 - And only after the two sections are reunited will the sphere become whole again
- This is the sense of God’s decree
 - He’s looking for the other half of Adam
 - Something perfectly matched, a helper who makes Adam complete
 - And the match is perfect physically, spiritually and intellectually
- God begins the search with the animals, but we know He ultimately arrives at Woman
 - And so we have to understand the phrase “suitable helper” in the context of a wife
 - And we’re not talking about a girlfriend, a domestic partner, a live-in lover
 - Nor are we talking about a slave or second-class member of a marriage
 - We’re talking about a life-long, committed marriage partner
- So, what does the phrase “suitable helper” mean when talking about a wife?
 - First, it’s not a demeaning phrase or term at all
 - In fact, God often calls Himself a servant using the same Hebrew word
 - It is used to describe someone committed as a willing partner in an honorable and important life work
 - It means a servant who values the opportunity to serve
 - The word is important because it implies several expectations that God has for a marriage relationship
 - First God is implying that Adam’s helper is to be engaged in a work of service with Adam
 - She is a committed helper with Adam in the work God gave Adam
 - This is why she is called a “helper”

- Adam received the command to serve God before the Woman appeared
- And so when God determined that Adam needed help in accomplishing that work, He offered Adam a “helper” in that work
- Secondly, it implies that the ultimate purpose of marriage is to make Adam more effective in serving God
 - It is not an arrangement designed to enhance our social life or financial standing
 - It is an arrangement that should result in a more successful life of service to the Lord, both for Adam and Woman
 - If a marriage isn’t making both partners more effective servants for the Lord, then something needs to change
- Finally, this description teaches that the work begins with the husband
 - The wife is the helper for a life of service that was first given to the man
 - While the woman’s work stands on its own and has equal value and importance to God, it can’t be a replacement for the spiritual service every man must pursue to the glory of God
 - A wife will find it difficult to help a husband who isn’t himself already engaged in a work
- You can sum up the relationship by a comparison
 - Woman helps Adam in the way the Holy Spirit is the Helper sent by Christ to every believer
 - A life-long companion
 - A counselor for the sake of righteousness
 - A source of love and comfort and encouragement
 - And at times a source of conviction
- But before we get to the moment when God creates this perfect helper, we see He begins by creating the animals for Adam
 - And interestingly He creates them from the dirt of the ground, just as He created Adam
 - Here we learn that the animal kingdom comes from the same substance as Adam himself
 - This becomes important in Chapter 3
 - And then Adam is given the right to name the animals
 - Up to this point God has named every part of His creation (other than the sun and moon)
 - But here He grants Adam the right to name the animals
 - And in that way God is implicitly assigning Adam dominion over these creatures
 - In fact, this is the true purpose of this exercise

- God knows that the animals are not suitable companions for Adam even before He begins the creation process
 - There is no discovery for God during this process
 - He is not surprised that Adam finds the animals insufficient companions
 - God has already stated that Adam needs a perfectly matched helpmate
 - Nevertheless God asks Adam to watch while He makes all the animals in the creation, and then asks Adam to name them
 - Clearly, God's intent is not for Adam to arrive at a successful helper
 - He is engaged in teaching Adam something more important
- First, God is demonstrating that Adam is to rule over the animal kingdom
 - And the animals are under Adam's dominion, made clear by the fact that God grants Adam the right to name the animals
- Secondly, Adam was to understand that the animal kingdom will serve man but in an incomplete way
 - They will be useful to man
 - They give useful work
 - They are companions
 - But they are not substitutes as THE helper for the purpose of serving God
 - Through this exercise, Adam is exposed firsthand to both these truths
- Unfortunately, we'll see in Chapter 3 that Adam missed the significance of this lesson
- Looking at the naming process for a moment, Adam watches a parade of animals and names each one in turn
 - This suggests that Adam was able to speak a language from the beginning
 - And we can even make a reasonable assumption concerning what language Adam spoke
 - If we look at the Biblical record prior to the Tower of Babel and the confusing of human language, we will notice that all the names have meanings
 - For example, Adam means earth
 - Abel means vanity
 - Lamech means warrior
 - Methuselah means when he dies, it shall be sent
 - But these meanings are only true in a specific language
 - Only in Hebrew does *adam* mean earth
 - Only in Hebrew does *abel* mean vanity, etc.
 - After the confusing of language at the Tower of Babel, names in the Bible no

longer have meaning except the Hebrew names

- With the arrival of new languages, the meaning of names is lost except for Hebrew names
- Therefore, we can safely assume that the first language given to man was Hebrew, and all men from Adam onward spoke Hebrew until the scattering of language at the tower
- At this point, you might ask how it was possible for Adam to name the entire animal kingdom in one day?
 - The answer is two-fold
 - First, remember that Adam is naming “kinds” as they were created
 - The full spectrum of animal diversity had yet to emerge from the various kinds God created
 - So the total number of animal types would have been far fewer than we know today
 - For example, Adam was likely asked to name one kind of animal a “bird” without necessarily naming each distinct subtype of bird individually
 - Distinctions like canary, nuthatch, sparrow, etc. were made later
 - Secondly, Adam was probably not asked to name every animal God had created
 - For example, God never asked Adam to name fish, yet fish have names today and men have dominion over fish
 - Therefore, we can conclude that God gave Adam a representative cross section of animals to name without necessarily presenting Adam with every animal
 - This all makes sense when we remember the ultimate purpose in the naming process
 - The point of the process was to show Adam he had dominion over animals
 - And to demonstrate that Adam needed a helper that was fundamentally different from any other creature in the world
 - These points were made clear enough without necessitating that God present Adam with every single animal
 - A suitably large sample would be enough
 - Even then, Dr. Henry Morris estimates that Adam could have easily inspected and named 3,000 kinds in only five hours...more than enough to get the point So God sets about to make a suitable helper for Adam
 - What follows is a fascinating process that reflects God’s ultimate purpose
 - Before we read how God creates woman, let’s compare what we see happening on Day 6 from earlier in Chapter 1

Gen. 1:24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it

was so.

Gen. 1:25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Gen. 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Gen. 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- Notice the order of events in Chapter 1 compared to Chapter 2
 - In Genesis 1 the events on Day 6 are:
 - God fills the land by creating the animals
 - Then He makes man, both male and female
 - Then He instructs man and woman to have dominion over the animals
 - But in Genesis 2 the order is:
 - God creates Man
 - God creates the animals
 - Adam is shown he has dominion over the animals
 - God creates Woman
 - There would appear to be a different order for Day 6 events
 - Which is another reason critics claim that Chapters 1 & 2 represent two different creation accounts
- To answer this question, remember first that Chapter 2 was written to clarify and explain Day 6 in detail
 - If God had believed that the explanation of Chapter 1 had been sufficient, He would never have given us Chapter 2
 - Chapter 1 was a summary of the day, while Chapter 2 gives us the detailed, specific events in detail (zoom out vs. zoom in)
 - Therefore, we should view Chapter 2 as the definitive timeline since it was written for that purpose
 - Secondly, the purpose of Chapter 1 was to highlight the importance of mankind in God’s plan of creation
 - So naturally, the creation of Man is left for the end of Day 6, thus communicating that Man was the crowning achievement of creation

- But the purpose of Chapter 2 is to explain God's care and attention in creating Man, and in particular, to explain the existence of Woman
 - So, the order of events become more important to the story
 - And Moses sets them in precise order to explain God's purposes and intent in the creation process
- Now we turn to God's creation of Woman

Gen. 2:21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

Gen. 2:22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

Gen. 2:23 The man said,
 "This is now bone of my bones,
 And flesh of my flesh;
 She shall be called Woman,
 Because she was taken out of Man."

Gen. 2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

- God's last act of Creation is to make Woman
 - Only after God makes Woman will He finally rest from the work of Creation
- First, we notice that Woman is created in a very unique way
 - She is not made *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), nor is she made the way Adam was made (out of dirt)
 - Instead, she is made out of Adam
 - Ultimately, she is made of the same substance as Adam (dirt)
 - But there is tremendous significance in the fact that she is made from part of Adam and not from a new part of the Earth
 - The meaning of that significance is covered in Chapter 3
- To begin the surgery, God puts Adam into a deep sleep
 - We logically assume that the sleep was necessary to protect Adam from the pain of the surgery, but we shouldn't run to that conclusion too quickly
 - In a perfect world, it may not have been true that Adam would have felt pain under these circumstances
 - And even if pain would have been natural, God could certainly have eliminated the pain without putting Adam to sleep
 - Remember that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were protected from the heat and pain of a furnace by God in the book of Daniel
 - This suggests that the deep sleep means something much more than simply some

type of anaesthetic

- Instead, the deep sleep has important symbolic meaning
- You may remember that when God enters into a covenant with Abraham, it begins with God putting Abraham into a deep sleep
 - We will study that scene more in Genesis 15, but I can tell you now that the sleep of Abraham was intended to convey a similar message
 - Abraham's deep sleep pictures Abraham dead (in his sin) while God alone performs the work of establishing a covenant to save Abraham and his descendants
- Similarly, Adam is placed in a deep sleep so that God makes clear that He alone is performing a work to save Adam
 - What is the work in this case?
 - Well consider that Adam appears to be dead while in this deep sleep
 - And from his flesh, a bride is made
- Does that sound familiar?
 - In the future, a new Adam will go to the grave for a time
 - But later this new Adam, Christ, will resurrect back to life, like coming back from a deep sleep
 - And as a result of this deep sleep, God will make for Himself a Bride for this new Adam, a Bride taken from the body of Christ
 - The Bride being the Church, of course
- Even in this early point of the Bible we see God foreshadowing the church
- How was Woman actually made?
 - The Bible says she came from the rib of Adam
 - In fact, the word in Hebrew is *tse/a*, and is used 53 times in the Bible – but only here is it translated rib
 - It simply means “side,” and when we see Adam's response, we notice he says Woman is made from both flesh and bone
 - This would suggest that the material God chose was more than simply a rib bone but probably a larger section of Adam's side
 - This didn't leave Adam deformed, because it says God closed up the flesh at that place, suggesting He repaired the damage
 - The importance of the word *tse/a* is that it suggests purpose
 - Woman wasn't made from Adam's head or foot
 - These extreme locations might indicate that she ruled over Adam or Adam over her
 - Instead, she was created from Adam's side, indicating parity and partnership

- This was God's original design for Woman – equality with Man
- As Adam sees Woman for the first time, it's love at first sight
 - Good thing for Adam, since his options were very limited at this point
 - Interestingly, Adam names the new person
 - He names her Woman, which means “wife” in Hebrew
 - And Adam says this is her name because she was taken from Man
 - But Adam uses a new word for man
 - He doesn't say *adam*, but husband
 - The word *adam* means earth and describes mankind
 - But now that Adam has a wife, he sees himself in a new way
 - She is a wife, so he is a husband
 - Adam defines himself as this woman's husband
 - And he defines her as his wife
- This relationship is one God establishes for the benefit of both men and women
 - But God has established it because of something that is yet to come for Adam and Woman
 - Remember that in our resurrected bodies, men and women return to a state without need for marriage

Luke 20:34 Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,

Luke 20:35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;

Luke 20:36 for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

- So why is marriage needed now but not in our resurrected state?
 - As I have said on numerous occasions, we will see this answer in Chapter 3
- Based on Gen. 2:24, we can learn several things concerning the Biblical view of marriage
 - The marriage relationship is considered inviolate in God's view because of how the first marriage was ordained
 - Adam and Woman were literally made out of the same flesh
 - How could they ever consider themselves to be two distinct people again? How could they ever separate?
 - No more than you could consider your own arm to be foreign to the rest of your body
 - This verse is so important in the Bible because it also illustrates how we are joined

to Christ

- We are joined to Christ permanently, joining a single Body never to be separated
- This is the second relationship established in the Bible after man's relationship with God Himself
 - It shows how important the marriage union is to God
 - It carries a picture of God's union to men in the New Covenant

- God created the world in 6 literal days
 - He “rested” on the seventh day to establish a picture for men
 - The picture that only through God’s work can we enjoy true lasting rest
 - The Sabbath picture is eventually fulfilled in Jesus’ work on the cross
 - God carefully created two people who were clearly distinguished from the rest of creation
 - They enjoyed the benefit of an entire world created specifically for their use and enjoyment
 - They were granted the unique ability to relate to the creator and respond to Him
 - Their nature was free and innocent
 - They lacked the capacity to understand either good or evil, in relation to the other
 - God desired to express Himself to fully to a creation capable of understanding and responding fully to that expression
 - So God gave a single prohibition to them, which became the test of their willingness to follow Him fully
 - It wasn’t a trap, yet without such a test, there could be no true relationship based on love
 - This is the world God designed and desired
- Man would live forever in this situation, multiplying and filling the world, he and his descendants giving God glory and enjoying God’s caring provision
 - Yet God’s word and His design of the world reflects an expectation that things would not remain as He established them in the beginning
 - Ephesians 1:4: reminds us that He chose us even before the foundation of the world
 - Reflects reality that God expected there to be a fall, which necessitates a Messiah, who would come to die, and that in that relationship some would receive the grace that God offers
 - Design of creation itself also reflects this:
 - Tree in the garden, water suspended above world, the sea, night – all show us that God was preparing for a change in the world He created
- That brings us to Chapter 3
 - In this chapter, we will see the fall of man from this place of privilege
 - But this chapter is also the place where redemption begins
 - In fact, the rest of the Bible is the story of God at work to return the creation to a place that’s even better than the one Adam knew
 - We will also see the way sin works and the techniques of the enemy
 - But first, we must examine a transition verse at the end of Chapter 2

Gen. 2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

- Moses offers us a bridging verse to end Chapter 2 and introduce Chapter 3
 - The Hebrew word for naked is *arom*
 - If we glance ahead to 3:1 we see the word crafty which is *arum*
 - They are very similar to the Hebrew ear
 - Moses uses the similarity of the two words to draw a connection and bridge the two chapters
 - Moses contrasts the innocence of man and the sinister nature of the enemy
 - Why mention this detail?
 - Moses connects evil with our tendency to be ashamed of nakedness, to teach that this relationship is more than learned behavior
 - It's a spiritual issue that we will understand better later in Chapter 3
 - Meanwhile, the fact that man and woman could be naked in each other's presence without shame is important to Chapter 3
 - It also pictures spiritual transparency and vulnerability
 - Transparency in a relationship means true and complete honesty
 - Whether before God or one another, we live in a transparent way when we act and speak with no intent to keep part of ourselves hidden
 - Literally, we have nothing to hide
 - True transparency is a by-product of holiness
 - Only someone who is truly right before God can live in a truly transparent manner
 - This was the state of Adam and Woman at the start of Chapter 3
 - Conversely, after the Fall we lost the ability to live with transparency with one another and God, because we lack complete holiness
 - The more we have to be ashamed of, the less we can be transparent
 - Our sin removes our ability to live fully transparent lives
 - We'll address the clothing connection later in the chapter, but at this point it's enough to note that man and woman are living without shame as they were made, because they are innocent

Gen. 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

Gen. 3:2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

Gen. 3:3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God

has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’”

- At some point, man and woman are confronted by a serpent
 - This event happens after the first week, but we don’t know how long afterward
 - Who is the serpent?
 - First, we know it is Satan

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Rev. 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

- Scripture also calls him the Father of Lies

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- Is this intended to be a literal snake?
 - The word in Hebrew is *nachash*: a serpent or snake
 - Moses says it is a beast of the field
 - So the natural reading of the text is that Woman saw a snake that was also Satan
- What does Moses mean when he says the snake was more crafty than other beasts?
 - Is Moses saying that the snake as God created it is naturally sneakier and nastier than other animals?
 - We know this cannot be true because today we have poodles 🐶
- Moses is telling us something about this particular snake
 - This particular serpent was the craftiest of all creatures
 - In other words, this is Moses’ way of subtly explaining that a snake was indwelt by Satan and therefore it was made crafty
 - In the same way that the antichrist can be described as the most evil of all men because Satan will indwell him as well
- Crafty in Hebrew means sensible, prudent
 - It indicates a combination of a special, abnormal intelligence

- Why did Satan take the form of a snake?
 - First, there is no indication that the snake was chosen for any particular reason
 - Had Satan chosen to indwell a poodle, today we would be saying that the poodle was more crafty than any beast of the field...and how appropriate that would be
 - Secondly, Satan must take some form when he appears to Adam and Woman
 - So he chooses to come as an animal, talking and offering advice
 - Remember, in 2 Corinthians 11:14 Paul says the enemy comes as an angel of light
 - Why doesn't woman run screaming when she sees a talking snake?
 - This suggests that the encounter with Satan happens very early in their existence
 - Before they have explored the world and come to understand that animals lack the ability to speak and interact with people
 - Based on Adam's experience naming the animals, he would have known that a talking animal was an anomaly, but he's not engaged at this moment
- Before we go further in the storyline, let's ask a more fundamental question: where did Satan come from?
 - He isn't mentioned in the creation story
 - But we know he existed in the Garden before Satan fell in sin

Ezek. 28:12 “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,
 “You had the seal of perfection,
 Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezek. 28:13 “You were in Eden, the garden of God;
 Every precious stone was your covering:
 The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
 The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
 The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
 And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
 Was in you.
 On the day that you were created
 They were prepared.

Ezek. 28:14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers,
 And I placed you there.
 You were on the holy mountain of God;
 You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezek. 28:15 “You were blameless in your ways
 From the day you were created

Until unrighteousness was found in you.

Ezek. 28:16 “By the abundance of your trade

You were internally filled with violence,

And you sinned;

Therefore I have cast you as profane

From the mountain of God.

And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,

From the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezek. 28:17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;

You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground;

I put you before kings,

That they may see you.

- Satan was in the Garden, but the Garden wasn't created until Day 6
 - So at a point in time, Satan was in the garden without sin
 - Another theory is that the Garden existed in an earlier form and was destroyed at the time of Satan's fall
 - Then remade in the six days of Creation
 - This is part of the Gap Theory
- Notice that evil existed before man's sin
 - Satan's fall produced the arrival of evil and the Father of lies
 - He then becomes the instrument for initiating man's fall
- Why did God allow Satan to remain in the Garden and tempt man?
 - Would there have been a fall without Satan tempting man?
 - We will examine that question a little later, but for now remember that God has anticipated and even prepared for the Fall from the beginning
 - Satan begins with a question
 - As we look at his question and the dialogue that follows, we also want to take time to examine the art of deception and the seductiveness of sin
 - Satan asks has indeed God said...
 - Notice right away that had God never given Adam a prohibition, Satan would have had nothing to challenge
 - The mere existence of the tree makes this conversation possible
 - Without a tree, there is no starting point for disobedience
 - Paul makes the same point in Romans when he says:

Rom. 4:15 **for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is**

no violation.

- Satan's question is more than a question
 - It's actually a statement
- He implies that God has treated Woman unfairly
 - It makes woman feel disadvantaged, taken for a ride
 - Made a fool, made to seem naive
 - Satan impugns God's motives
- Satan's method is often to bring us to a place where we doubt God's character or purposes, by first questioning His word
 - But cleverly, Satan allows us fill in the blank with our own accusations against God
 - This is the way the Father of Lies works
 - He uses suggestion to weaken our resolve and obedience
- Woman answers Satan
 - It's interesting that she seems ready to have a natural conversation with a snake
 - Again, this would be expected if she had little experience to go on in dealing with the animals
 - Her answer is a defense on behalf of God
 - She tries to repeat God's instructions to correct the snake
 - Does she get it right? No
 - How is it wrong?
 - Firstly, she makes God's word more restrictive (adds to His word) while neglecting to emphasize the freedom God gave, and de-emphasizing the penalty (not surely die)
 - She says they cannot touch (God never said that)
 - And she forget to mention that they could eat freely from the other trees (2:16)
- Obviously Woman is not familiar with or completely aware of God's word
 - Here we see one of the dangers in failing to know God's word well enough
 - When we don't know the Word, we change it
 - And when we change it, we don't tend to make it less restrictive
 - We actually tend to make it more restrictive (legalism)
 - When religiously-minded men depart from God's word, they tend to insert their own rules and ideas and call them God's ideas
 - Legalism is man-made restrictions masquerading as God's law
 - Legalism leads to resentment and frustration and ultimately it drives people away from obedience to God

- And it makes God to be an unkind taskmaster intent on robbing us of joy
- Every word of Scripture matters, and when we change even small parts, we begin to depart from God's path

Prov. 30:5 Every word of God is tested;

He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

Prov. 30:6 Do not add to His words

Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

- And as our memory fades, the enemy is quick to insert other meanings and confuse our understanding
 - And as this process takes hold, the result is a meaning that doesn't edify and strengthen our walk
 - But rather we will be confused and weakened in our resolve and we may begin to question God's motives
- The antidote is a life-long pursuit of God's word as a way of knowing and following Him better

- We last saw Woman at a pivotal moment in human history
 - She encountered evil in the form of a snake
 - The snake was indwelt by Satan
 - And he brought Woman a challenge
 - Did God really say that they couldn't eat from any tree in the Garden?
 - Last time we said we were going to study this interaction carefully to note the way sin works in our life
 - First, we noted that the enemy is the Father of Lies
 - Notice here that his opening statement is a lie
 - How appropriate that Satan's first recorded words was a lie
 - Secondly, we noted that Satan's attack is directed at God's word
 - The enemy knows where the power of God resides in His creation
 - It's with His word
 - So Satan attacks at that point
 - He causes us to question and doubt God's word or become confused or distracted
 - In today's world, Satan seems determined to undermine God's word in all these ways
 - The Bible is attacked from all sides in the world
 - And in the church, it's also under attack
 - And that attack is neglect
 - Third, we noticed that Satan's charge was that God is holding Woman back from joy and freedom
 - In v.1 he suggests that God has restricted every tree from Woman
 - Even if that had been true, it wouldn't be cause to doubt or impugn God
 - But Satan is appealing to pride here
 - He wants Woman to imagine how much better things could be if she went her own way rather than remain within God's law
 - As we remember, Woman didn't fall for the bait, at least not yet
 - She responds by correcting the snake and agreeing with God's word, but she doesn't get the story quite right
 - She added some things and forgot other things
 - The sum effect of her answer was to leave an opening for Satan to pry open
 - Furthermore, her own uncertainty concerning God's word left her vulnerable to Satan's guile
 - So now Satan goes in for the kill

Gen. 3:4 The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die!

Gen. 3:5 “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

- Satan directly challenges the truth of God’s word
 - In Step 1, Satan set forth a proposition that was a lie and used it to attack God’s word
 - In Step 2 the woman lacked the knowledge and confidence in God’s word to refute the enemy’s scheme
 - Now in Step 3, the enemy proposes an alternative path that he suggests will arrive at a greater benefit than God’s way
 - He says you surely will not die
 - This is a direct contradiction of God’s word and offers no compromise
 - Woman is presented with a clear alternative to accepting God’s word in faith
 - Satan goes on to explain that the effect of eating will be having eyes opened
 - And this new awareness will make Woman like God Himself
 - She will know good and evil
 - Satan is implying that there is more to her existence than God has provided
 - In other words, God and His word are not sufficient
 - If she goes outside God’s instructions, she can have an even greater existence
 - One that rivals God’s
 - Like most lies, it involves a partial truth
 - If she eats of the tree, her eyes will be opened
 - She will be more like God, in that she will now better understand what it means to be good
 - The lie is that she will also be less like God in that she will now know evil
 - Though God knows about evil, as He knows everything, He has no first-hand experience in evil
 - Satan is proposing that sin has no consequences
 - And even more, that disobeying God’s word will bring a great, better experience
 - That when we choose our own desires over God’s commands, we will not suffer loss, but rather experience gain
 - This is the first and greatest lie
- Let’s step back for a moment and consider sin’s pattern
 - Sin is a disregard of God’s will and His word and a reliance on our own ways and desires

- Sin is facilitated by a weak knowledge of God's word and can be easily twisted by the Enemy to ensure we arrive at a distorted understanding (i.e., a lie)
- Examples are easy to find:
 - Money is the root of all evil
 - God helps those who help themselves
 - Prosperity Gospel
 - All roads lead to Heaven
- As unbelievers, we were completely captive to the enemy's lies and knew nothing else
 - But even as Christians we can naively follow the enemy's half truths when we allow this pattern to repeat
 - When we live in a state of ignorance concerning God's word
 - And when we come to believe that making our own rules will arrive at a better result than the ones God has given us
- We come to believe that sin has no consequences and can be better than obedience
 - In time, the lie will be seen for what it is, but at what personal cost?
 - If we wait to cease sinning until we finally see the negative consequences of our sin it will be too late
 - We will have incurred even greater penalty
 - Like the person who ignores the warnings of smoking only to discover one day that they have lung cancer
- Woman's cost is about to be paid...

Gen. 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

- With the Enemy pulling her strings, Woman's prideful spirit begins to pull her toward sin
 - And the process begins with one simple word
 - Saw
 - Woman saw the tree was "good" for food
 - But God already had declared it to be bad...not food
 - And this fact doesn't change anything
 - We know the tree was a fruit tree, so taking notice that the tree had good food didn't add any new information for Woman
 - Looking at the language a little more closely
 - Woman saw that the food was a "delight"

- This is the Hebrew word *taavah* – intense longing
 - And desirable to make one wise (gain insight)
 - *Chamad* – covet
- Woman is giving us a powerful example of how sin works in all of us
 - Almost invariably, it begins with the eye, what we see
 - We see something that leads to a longing and coveting and desire

Luke 11:34 “The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

Matt. 5:27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’;
Matt. 5:28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- Not every sin is connected to the eye or what we see – but I challenge you to think of one
 - If we include the things we can see in our mind’s eye, then it gets very hard to think of a sin that doesn’t involve seeing and the desire it brings
- Woman is falling prey to this trap
 - She is letting her sight and her lusts direct her rather than God’s word
 - Seeing leads to temptation, and temptation leads to desire and lust which precedes and leads to sin

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

James 1:15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

- Temptation is not sin (Jesus was tempted in all things)
- But giving into temptation is sin
- In Woman’s case, her lust is for the suggestion Satan planted into her mind
 - She notices that the tree was desirable to make one wise
 - How would she come to the conclusion that this fruit would make her wise?
 - Only that she accepted the enemy’s story
 - This tree would make her know what God knew, or so Satan said
 - The next step in the chain began
 - Once lust was conceived, it grew like a child in this womb
 - And that growing will almost inevitably lead to a birth

- And the birthing process begins with touching
- Woman grabs the fruit
 - I wonder if she paused before she ate?
 - Remember, she had remembered that God told her not to touch the fruit or she would die
 - That wasn't an accurate quote, but now that she has touched and not died, I wonder if she began to doubt God's word even more?
 - Woman's poor memory of God's word is actually an accomplice now in drawing her closer to sin
 - After all, if touching didn't result in death, why would eating, she might have wondered?
- I see this pattern very frequently today
 - I often encounter Christians who are troubled by contradictions in God's word
 - They have misunderstood a verse or passage of Scripture, and as a result they have come to believe it contradicts another passage in Scripture
 - In reality, the two passages are not contradictory, but because their understanding is incomplete, they see the problem with God's word rather than with themselves
 - As a result, they begin to lose confidence in the literal truth of all that God's word says
 - The enemy is only too willing to oblige in this process, feeding the doubt and offering alternative "truths"
- Finally, Woman sins by eating from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil
 - God said she would die, but obviously Woman was still breathing
 - She didn't die at this moment, at least not physically
 - Adam will physically live for 930 years after eating!
 - And yet we know she died at that very moment in the sense of dying spiritually
 - She ceased to be holy and innocent and pure
 - She lost the ability to fellowship with God
 - But from her limited perspective, nothing much has changed
 - Now she must truly feel that God's word is untrustworthy
 - God said that eating of the tree would result in death, but she sensed no change
 - God was not present in the Garden at this moment, so Woman has not experienced the conviction that comes with God's holiness
 - That will happen shortly
 - But for now, she senses no change in herself as a result of eating the fruit
 - Except for one...

- She notices that after she ate from the fruit, she felt less connection with Adam
 - Suddenly, she feels oddly distanced from him
 - And instinctively, she feels the urge to share the fruit with him
 - In fact, it's the very next thing she wants to do
- When we live in sin, we will seek out others to share that sin with us
 - Misery loves company, and so does sin
 - When we live in sin, we are a bad influence, and not just because we set a bad example
 - The very nature of sin is that it spreads

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —

- It's a disease that moves from host to host, and when we indulge in sin, we will often feel like sharing it with others
 - If someone close to us hasn't made the same mistake, we will want them to join us to minimize our own conviction
 - And to validate our choices, to affirm we are right to do what we do
- In Woman's case, she would have felt an immediate distancing from Adam who was not yet a sinner
 - And she would have needed to share her sin with Adam to draw him to her side
 - We need to recognize the danger in our sin isn't limited to ourselves
- Finally, in one of the strangest and most disturbing lines in the entire Bible, we're told that she gave it to her husband with her and he ate
 - Adam was with her, and when he was offered the fruit, he ate
 - No discussion, no debate
 - He just complied
 - There is some debate over whether Adam was present or not
 - I think the text makes that clear
 - He was "with her"
 - There seems little reason to include that detail unless it was intended to explain where Adam was at the time
 - In truth, it doesn't matter
 - Whether he was there throughout the conversation or showed up only after Satan left, the Bible makes clear what role he played
 - Adam chose to eat without any deception

1Tim. 2:14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

- Adam can't use the serpent's deception as an excuse, no matter where he was at the time
 - Scripture says his reason for eating had nothing to do with the serpent's arguments
- What's more, Adam didn't protest like Woman did
 - He doesn't try to quote God's word
 - He seems completely willing to disobey
- But who's credited with the fall?
 - We might assume it would be Woman, since she ate first
 - But Scripture doesn't seem to place any importance on the order
 - Instead, it lays the sin of mankind at the feet of Adam

1Cor. 15:21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

1Cor. 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

- Or Romans 5:12 which we quoted above
- Adam (one man) brought about the fall
 - Look at the next verse

Gen. 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

- Only after Adam ate were "both" their eyes opened
 - His eating produced the sin that brought down mankind
- Why wasn't Woman credited with the fall?
 - According to the verse we read, deception was a legitimate defense
 - She was deceived by Satan into eating the fruit
 - Her own lust and sinful desire was the ultimate mechanism to bring her to sin, but the entire process was instigated by Satan
 - Had Satan not played his crucial role, we can fairly assume Woman wouldn't have sinned
 - Why was deception a legitimate defense? Woman was innocent
 - She didn't know evil, she was an innocent

- Woman COULD be deceived in the full sense of that word
 - She could be led to think she was acting in an appropriate way
- Can we use Satan's deception as a legitimate defense as well?
 - No
 - After the fall, we have no defense because we are born into sin
 - We are not innocent
 - We don't live a single day without sin, so we stand condemned regardless of what we do
 - Only by faith can we be rescued
- So if the fall of mankind must happen through Adam, why did Satan begin with Woman rather than going to Man from the beginning?
 - We might assume that Satan attacked the easy target?
 - But in reality, he attacked the harder target
 - Woman believed God's word and tried to defend it
 - Satan had to use deception to get her to act against God's word
 - But Adam was ready and willing to eat that fruit
 - It's as if Satan knew that Adam was going to be the easy one, but he had to work on Woman
- If this is Adam's fault, why was Woman put outside the Garden too?
 - It sounds like her action was not a sin, but rather the result of deception
 - Doesn't that mean she gets a free pass?
 - Perhaps, but since Adam ate too, it didn't matter
 - Woman was guilty of sin because Adam ate
 - His sin brought sin to Woman as well (her eyes were opened after he ate)
 - How does Adam's sin open Woman's eyes?
 - Well, here we see God's wisdom in creating Woman in such an unique way
 - Woman was created from Adam's flesh rather than from the ground
 - So now as Adam sinned, he brought sin to his flesh
 - And Woman being of one flesh with Adam experienced that sin with him
 - His eating brought both of them down
 - We can now look back at God's decision to create Woman in this unique way as a form of grace, knowing where events were leading
 - He knows that one day Adam will sin, and He doesn't want one person inside the garden and another outside
 - So He creates in a way that will ensure that both go together
- There is one final outcome from the eating of the fruit

- After, they knew they were naked and made effort to cloth themselves
 - First, what does it mean that they knew they were naked?
 - We talked about nakedness meaning vulnerability and shame
 - Now we see more clearly that with sin comes a sense of exposure, or vulnerability
 - Of the need to cover up and conceal ourselves
 - The feeling is so strong, they feel the need to create clothing
 - Not for weather protection or because of civil standards
 - It's inherently a reaction to our sinful nature – before God
- It's a visible evidence that God has implanted in us a conscious
 - We instinctively recognize our unholiness before God
 - And their sin also meant they lost their transparency between one another
 - All the communication problems and difficulties talking in a marriage trace back to sin
- Won't it be wonderful to have relationships in our new bodies that don't suffer from sin and the lack of transparency?



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 3C

Chapter 3:7-19

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- In the next part of the chapter, we examine what is easily the most important moment in Scripture, apart from the death of Christ –
 - The fall of man and woman, and the curses of God

Gen. 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

- They knew they were naked and made effort to clothe themselves
 - What is the connection between sinfulness and clothing?
 - It would be understandable if we assumed that our universal desire to hide nakedness was merely a culturally-learned trait
 - But the Bible tells us that the practice of covering ourselves came instantly as a result of sin
 - The simple definition of sin is law breaking
 - So when we sin, we have broken a law and offended a lawgiver
 - That lawgiver promised that when they ate of the fruit, they would be due a penalty of spiritual death
 - And so as they eat, they experience a spiritual change, which leaves them feeling different about themselves and about their relationship with God
 - They now have shame: feeling that they have a reason to hide or conceal themselves
 - This is a feeling that accompanies the law breaking
 - We call it our conscience
- They instinctively recognize their unholiness before God
 - And they try to cover themselves physically to remove this shameful feeling
 - Here we see the dilemma of mankind's spiritual defect
 - Their physical actions (i.e., disobeying God by eating the fruit) produced a spiritual change (i.e., death) that led to a physical change (shame)
 - But the reverse is not true
 - Now that we have a fallen nature, we cannot fix our spiritual defect through physical actions
 - Our spiritual nature cannot be "improved" through corrective actions
 - We can't work our way out of a fallen nature

Gen. 3:8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Gen. 3:9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

- They hear God approaching them in the garden
 - What do they hear? Is God truly walking?
 - The word for walk is *halak* and generally means to access, go in, enter
 - So God entered the garden
 - As God is all Spirit, He doesn't have a physical body to walk in the Garden
 - A better way to understand this moment is that God is making known His presence to the man and woman in the Garden
 - Moses adds that He enters in the cool of the day
 - The word for cool is *ruach* which means Spirit or breath or wind
 - It seems that God entered like the wind (not walking)
 - And importantly, He made His presence known (to be heard) like a wind rustling leaves
 - Clearly, God has made an overt effort to ensure Adam and Woman hear Him coming
 - He wanted Adam and Woman to know He was coming
 - Why does God want to make His presence known?
 - When they hear God, they hide themselves from Him
 - Why are they hiding?
 - As we've already said, their sin gave them reason to fear God
 - Instinctively, they knew they had offended the lawgiver and were afraid of confronting the holiness of God
 - So it seems God is showing grace to them by making sure they have opportunity to shield themselves from His presence
 - To come face to face with God while in a state of sin means death (eternal judgment)
 - Because God is compelled by His own perfect nature to judge sin and not ignore it

Ex. 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

Ex. 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

- And God doesn't want to destroy mankind,
 - So to be sure they hide, God makes noise as He enters
- Next, God calls out for them
 - Why does God ask "Where are you?"
 - Doesn't He know? Yes

- It's grace again
 - An opportunity for repentance, so they could admit their guilt
 - They had an opportunity to answer back with a confession
- Does Adam take the opportunity? Gen. 3:10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

Gen. 3:10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

Gen. 3:11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

- God asks where are you, but Adam answers a different question
 - Adam essentially answered the question why are you hiding?
 - He says he was afraid
 - Here we see how fear of the Lord comes upon man as a result of his shame produced by sin
 - Our sin has produced a debt before God, an instinctive reason to fear God
 - Adam explains he was fearful because he was naked
 - This is also a strange answer, because Adam has been naked from the beginning
 - Yet only now was he bothered by appearing before God naked
 - Ironically, he isn't even naked now, because he's wearing fig leaf shorts
 - Yet he still feels naked before God
 - Here we have a very visible proof that Adam's spiritual change has created a physical change
 - He feels shame over nakedness, but clothing his physical body hasn't corrected his spiritual problem
 - He says he still feels afraid and still feels naked before God
 - Adam needs a spiritual solution for this spiritual problem, and only God can bring that solution
- God asks who told you that you were naked?
 - Naked is *nagad* – made known, declared, made conspicuous
 - The real question is how did you come to know you were naked? What was the source of this knowledge?
 - No answer was necessary
 - Adam was showing proof that he had obtained the knowledge of good and of evil
 - God's second question clarifies what He means
 - Have you done as I commanded you not to do?
 - Have you disobeyed? Have you sinned?

- They broke the only rule they were given
 - They ate from the tree
- In these questions, we see Adam’s second opportunity to repent and confess His sin
 - Adam’s response is classic – and needs virtually no commentary

Gen. 3:12 The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”

- Adam names the source of his knowledge
 - He says it was the the woman
 - And just to clarify, Adam adds “...the one You gave me”
 - Throughout the history of mankind, husbands have said some pretty stupid things concerning their wives
 - But Adam still holds the record
 - In one sentence, Adam manages to insult not only his wife but God as well
- Adam points to Woman but in the process he tries to blame God
 - Since Woman was God’s gift to Adam, he tries to hold that gift against Him
 - This is classic shifting of blame
 - Adam is at fault, but he looks for someone else to blame
- After first blaming the woman for handing him the fruit, and then God for creating the woman, finally Adam gives himself a little credit
 - He says “and I ate”
 - He has tried to minimize his own role
 - Stuck at the end, almost as a footnote
 - Adam doesn’t repent or seek forgiveness
 - He seems unconcerned about the penalty found in God’s promise (they will surely die)
 - After all, everything else God said has come true, so why isn’t Adam thinking about what comes next?
 - Because he’s still stuck in denial rather than repentance
- Next, God follows the chain of evidence and asks of Woman...

Gen. 3:13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

- He asks simply what have you done?
 - Unlike Adam, Woman’s response is largely accurate
 - First she responds that she was deceived
 - Secondly, she admits her actions

- Unlike Adam, Woman had legitimate reason to put her own actions at the end of the sentence
 - It was true that she ate as a result of deception
- If not exactly a confession, at least it was truthful without excuse
 - Remember, deception was a legitimate reason for her actions prior to the fall
- Now the fall has happened, as God knew and expected even before creation, He is now faced with a dilemma
 - God had said Adam and Woman should fill the earth
 - And these people would serve Him in His creation
 - But now that they have sinned, they have a fallen nature which will produce after its own kind
 - When they have children, their children will also come into the world bearing the marks of their sinful choice
 - They are on a course to fill the world with sin and disobedience
 - God must judge sin
 - And when He pronounces judgement on sin, He must demand the just and right penalty
 - He must demand the death and eternal separation of these two from His presence forever
 - It's not as though He can choose a different penalty
 - Eternal separation is the inevitable result of their sinful nature
 - But if God wants to preserve a relationship with Man, He will have to come up with a solution that doesn't require judgment in this moment
 - So then God responds

Gen. 3:14 The LORD God said to the serpent,

**“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;**

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

- God works backward, beginning with snake and ending with Adam
 - Along the way, He pronounces curses
 - The word for curse in Hebrew is *arar*, and it's used 70 times in the Old Testament

- It always means a divine judgment of condemnation from God
- For example:

**Jer. 17:5 Thus says the LORD,
“Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.**

- The sense of the word is always damnation
 - The one who is cursed will go to Hell
 - There is no recovery from God’s curse
 - A curse is a permanent judgment that always results in eternal separation from God
 - Take special note of where God pronounces curses and where He doesn’t
- First, God speaks to the snake
 - Actually, He speaks to both the snake (the animal) and to Satan
 - In v.14 we’re looking at the snake and in v.15 we’re looking at Satan
 - God begins by saying because you have done this...
 - Meaning participating in the deception in v.13
 - Cursed are you more than all cattle and beast, and on your belly you will go eating dust
 - Clearly God is addressing the snake (the host)
 - It appears to lose an ability to move upright, perhaps on legs
 - It suggests that snakes had legs originally, and some still show evidence of legs
 - Are we saying that snakes really eat dust?
 - It’s a Hebrew figure of speech that means having one’s face in the dirt as a sign of shame, as snakes do
 - If we jump forward to the Millennial Kingdom when God begins to restore creation back to His original design, we notice something interesting

Is. 65:25 “The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says the LORD.

- Even after the Kingdom arrives, the snake is still said to eat dust
- You may be wondering why God curses the snake? After all, it was just a unwitting host for Satan
 - It wasn’t guilty by association
 - God is changing the snake’s appearance and behavior as a memorial of this

seminal event

- Remember, God has complete authority over His reaction, to make it any way He wishes
 - And it makes no difference to the snake itself; it doesn't know the difference
- Verse 15 moves to Satan
 - We know it's talking about Satan and not the snake, because enmity between snake and the woman makes no sense
 - Yes many women hate snakes, but so do men
 - And some women like snakes
 - Besides, what does God accomplish by creating dislike between women and snakes? Nothing
 - The enmity is between women and Satan, the one who indwelt the snake
 - Why does God limit it to women rather than all mankind?
 - The answer is found in the next line
 - Between your seed and her seed
 - The enmity isn't between just Adam's wife and the serpent in the garden, but what each represents
 - The serpent represents Satan and his offspring
 - The corrupted, sinful children that his deception has produced and who belong to the Enemy

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

1John 3:8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

1John 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1John 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

- There are two kinds of people in the world
 - Children of the Devil and children of God
 - And here we have their origins
 - One group follows the enemy and one God
 - And all of us start life born into the camp of the enemy

- And by grace we receive the gift of faith and are born again as a child of God
- Here God places enmity between the enemy's children and God's children
 - They will be enemies forever
 - Satan's attacks will no longer come against unsuspecting targets
 - Satan will battle against an army of God's choosing, equipping them to be wise to the enemy's schemes
 - And who can never lose their inheritance again
- Why does God say woman's seed...why not Adam's seed since seed is uniquely a male attribute?
 - First, it's simply a reference to Woman's unique role in birthing children
 - She has the honor to bring new life into the world, so seed refers to her children
 - Secondly, seed is implying something much greater to come
 - We call it the *proto evangelium* or the first gospel
 - The seed of woman is a reference to a virgin birth of Christ

Gal. 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

- According to v.15, each seed will bruise (*shuph*) one another
 - The two instances of *shuph* are sometimes translated differently because of the context
 - "He" bruises "you" (Satan) on the head
 - Conversely, "you" (Satan) bruise "Him" on the heel
 - He and Him refer to the coming Messiah, the Seed who must come by a woman to destroy the enemy
- Note, a wound on the heel is not a fatal
 - The enemy gains a small victory over Christ on the cross
 - He bruises Christ – a short-lived, temporary blow
- But Christ's blow is to Satan's head, a lethal blow

Gen. 3:16 To the woman He said,
 "I will greatly multiply
 Your pain in childbirth,
 In pain you will bring forth children;
 Yet your desire will be for your husband,
 And he will rule over you."

- Then God turns to the woman (still working backward)

- Many misunderstand this verse to be in judgment of Woman, disciplining her for her mistake
 - Instead, each case shows God's grace
- She will give birth to children in pain
 - First, this is an obvious act of discipline
 - It provides a memorial in the woman's body as a reminder of the pain God must now endure on our behalf when he brings us new life in Christ

John 16:21 “Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.

John 16:22 “Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

- Women carry in their body a reminder, though painful, of the work God did on the cross
 - Though this is chastisement in one sense, like all good chastisement, it is grace
 - Ultimately, the woman is being told that she will be given the privilege of giving birth to the Messiah
- Next, Woman will have a desire for her husband and he will rule over her
 - Word here for desire is *teshuqah* – only appears in two places, here and in Song of Solomon
 - In Song of Solomon it means sexual longing
 - So should it not be interpreted here in the same way?
 - Instead, society twists this into the woman longing to rule over her husband - using the second half of the verse as a way to justify a fight
 - But family unity is critically important to God's plan
 - And should center around the love a wife has for her husband
- You may have heard that God curses woman, but notice there is no curse
 - Each of these decrees is actually a grace given to Woman
 - She goes largely unpunished, except that she will share in the punishments handed to Adam – to be covered next week



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 3D

Chapter 3:17-24

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- God has responded to the sin of the Garden by punishing Satan and then dealing to the Woman
 - We saw last week that God never curses woman
 - And the three decrees given to Woman is actually grace
 - She goes largely unpunished, except that she will share in the punishments handed out to Adam
 - And those punishments are severe
 - But yet there is a measure of grace for him as well

Gen. 3:17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;
Cursed is the ground because of you;
In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.

Gen. 3:18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;

Gen. 3:19 By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”

- God reserves the longest statement for Adam
 - He listened to his wife’s voice...was this wrong?
 - No, except by comparison
 - Who’s voice should he have listen to? God’s
 - And notice, Adam didn’t listen to the serpent’s voice – only the Woman’s voice
 - This suggests to us that man wasn’t eaves dropping on the conversation between the woman and Satan
 - Man was culpable for his decisions and is therefore the one who brought sin into the world
- So God issues His second curse
 - Notice, He curses not Adam but the ground
 - God has deemed the earth to be irreparable
 - A curse means that the object of the curse will cease to be
 - By this curse, God declared that the earth must be replaced
 - Earth no longer considered suitable for eternity
 - Adam’s sin has become a contaminant
 - Remember that Adam was made from the earth, so when Adam fell, the

“earth” itself became contaminated by sin as well

- God has now declared that the earth will deteriorate and eventually be replaced
- We can see in play the second law of thermodynamics – all matter and energy go from a higher state to a lower state, never the reverse

Is. 34:4 And all the host of heaven will wear away,
 And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
 All their hosts will also wither away
 As a leaf withers from the vine,
 Or as one withers from the fig tree.

2Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2Pet. 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2Pet. 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

2Pet. 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

- Before this curse, Adam was instructed to work the ground in the garden to serve God
 - And that work would have been enjoyable and rewarding
 - In fact, it wasn't work at all, in the way we think of work today
 - Now, his efforts to work the ground will be a chore and a fight against the decree God has instituted
 - Work will be a “two steps forward, one step backward” kind of experience
 - God's curse guarantees that our work will result in the world seeming to work against our best efforts
 - Yard work isn't fun, gardens have weeds, things will wear out and need repair
- Before the fall, Adam's work didn't include these kind of set backs
 - After the restoration of the earth, we will find a wonderful kind of work serving God, in the way Adam first experienced in the Garden
- Why does God curse the ground?
 - First, like Woman's pain, it is a chastisement that also forms a memorial of the mistake
 - Today we can remember how sin led to this situation
 - Second, this change becomes an object lesson to teach us the futility of man's work in the face of sin
 - Our flesh wants to solve its own problem

- We are tempted to work our own solution
- But now man's fruitless efforts at work will serve as a contrast to God's perfect work in Christ
- We simply can't rely on our own work, because that work is never finished
 - When we pull a weed, a new one emerges
 - When we paint the house, it needs new paint in a few years
 - If our own work can't ensure permanent solutions in the garden or the shingles, how can our work save us from our sin?
- Finally, the curse will ensure that God eventually puts an end to everything contaminated by sin
 - This is the origin of physical death for everything that comes from the ground
 - Adam's body, animal's bodies, trees, plants
 - It is the wisdom of God to create a plan where He can curse the contaminated world without cursing Adam's spirit
 - Only the physical body is cursed by this pronouncement
 - Which is why we must receive a new body upon our resurrection
- This curse is ultimately a blessing for God's children
 - Man's corrupt body must be replaced
 - And because Woman was made from Adam, she shares in these same pronouncements
- If not, man would live forever eternally sinful

Psa. 102:24 I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days,
Your years are throughout all generations.

Psa. 102:25 "Of old You founded the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

Psa. 102:26 "Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

Psa. 102:27 "But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end.

Psa. 102:28 "The children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before You."

- Also, the ground will be replaced too
 - And when the earth is made new, the curse will be gone

Is. 65:21 "They will build houses and inhabit them;
They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

Is. 65:22 "They will not build and another inhabit,
They will not plant and another eat;

**For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people,
And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.**

- So then the chapter wraps up with a number of significant details

Gen. 3:20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

Gen. 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

- It seems the story has abruptly changed course
 - Adam decides to give his wife a new name
 - Remember, Adam had already given her a name

Gen. 2:23 The man said,
“This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

- But now Adam decides to rename Woman to Eve
 - Why is this renaming happening, and why did Adam decide to do it here in the midst of such a haunting moment?
- First, the name Eve means mother of all the living
 - The word Eve is *chavvay* in Hebrew – which means life or living
 - Her name tells us why Adam has renamed her and why he did so here
- Adam has just heard God declare that He would bring a solution to this problem through the Woman
 - The solution would result in the destruction of the serpent
 - And it would come through a seed that Woman would provide
 - This solution, later to be called the Messiah, would be the source of all the living
- So Adam hears God make this promise, and he takes action in response
 - The word God spoke said Woman would bring new life, and Adam renamed her Eve, meaning life or living
 - Adam is showing proof that he received this word from God and believed it
 - We know God had spoken to Adam before concerning the tree
 - Adam didn't believe that word
 - So sin came into the world
 - But the Fall of Adam brings us a troubling question
 - If Adam didn't believe God's word, was Adam saved?

- Did he receive grace and was he saved from the sin he produced?
- Here we have our answer
 - Having heard God's promise concerning Adam's wife, Adam believe God's word this time
 - In fact, he renames his wife to make clear that he believed
 - This is also a direct reversal of the last time
 - Last time Adam heard a word of God and didn't believe and acted contrary
 - But now he acts in keeping with belief
 - And he takes an action consistent with his belief
 - In this moment we can say that Adam becomes a believer by faith in God's word
- In response to that faith, God then demonstrates that forgiveness is available
 - God makes Adam and Eve animal skins for clothes
 - Remember that Adam and Woman had tried to cover themselves with plants
 - But that covering hadn't been enough
 - They still felt vulnerable
 - Now by faith, God grants them a covering made of animal skins
 - This means that animals had to die to provide their skins
 - An animal was sacrificed to provide a covering for man – both spiritual and physical
 - The atonement was a picture of the atoning work of Christ on the cross
 - Where before man tried to cover himself by his own work in making leaves, that work was insufficient to provide true covering for sin
 - But now in faith, Adam has found a true covering
 - And God provides animals skins by His own hands
 - God's work can do what man's work cannot
 - This is the first death recorded in the history of creation
 - An animal sacrificed to cover the first sin (limited atonement)

Gen. 3:22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” —

Gen. 3:23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

Gen. 3:24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

- First, we immediately notice that God uses a plural when referring to Himself

- What a simple way to see that even in the first pages of the Bible God is referring to Himself as the Godhead
 - He says that man became like one of Us (plural reference to God – *Elohim*)
 - Trinity clearly on display
 - The term “one of us” combines a singular and a plural reference
- This statement is a comment by God for the benefit of mankind
 - It explains why we (man) were excluded from the Garden God made available
 - The Garden included a tree that provided eternal physical life
- This is grace in two ways:
 - It is grace to provide for the replacement of the corrupted body
 - It is grace to ensure that men aren’t left alive to be used by Satan indefinitely
 - To live forever in a sinful body is a curse
 - By forcing them out of the Garden, the man and woman will know physical death, but this is a good thing for believers
 - Secondly, God must prevent Adam and Eve from entering God’s presence in the Garden again
 - Though they are saved by faith, nevertheless they still carry around sin in their bodies
 - This sin cannot be in the presence of God and live
 - So God “drives them out” and they are expelled from the Garden
 - The sense in Hebrew is that they weren’t necessarily willing to leave the Garden
 - But God used His angels to force the ejection
- To be sure they don’t try to re-enter, God stations angels at the entrance
 - This must have been a dramatic scene for many years
 - In fact, this guard was in place for 1,630 years (until the flood)
 - Adam and the next generation would have discussed how they were excluded from the Garden
 - This was grace in that it preserved the human race to ensure that God’s plan of redemption would have time to play out as God intended
 - Instead of coming to an untimely end by meeting God in judgment in the Garden
 - The reference to the flaming sword is actually a reference to the Shechinah glory of God Himself
 - So God used angels and His glory to keep men out of the Garden
 - Before, Adam enjoyed the direct fellowship with God
 - But now sin had produced a barrier that prevented him from having that intimate, personal relationship with God in the Garden
 - The barrier was obvious and foreboding in the form of this angels and God’s glory

- As long as sin existed in Adam and the world, access to God was impossible
- Only if something removes that barrier can true fellowship return
 - We know that Jesus by His blood cleansed us and the world of that sin
 - And in a future day, we will enter in His presence without fear because the atoning work of Christ will have removed that barrier
- Today we have access in Spirit because of Jesus' work
 - In a future day, we will also receive new bodies, and we will walk into Christ's presence

- As we begin Chapter 4, Adam and Eve begin their life outside the garden as a married couple
 - At first, life isn't too bad
 - Adam and Eve had the beginnings of a great marriage
 - He didn't have to hear about all the men she could have married and she didn't have to hear about how well his mother cooked
 - No in-laws, no siblings, no noisy neighbors
 - Though they are under a curse, the full effect of that curse won't be apparent for many centuries
 - But in case we were tempted to think that the sin of the garden didn't have an immediate effect on mankind, God gives us the events of Chapter 4

Gen. 4:1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD."

- The chapter opens with Adam and Eve having their first child
 - Adam and Eve have relations
 - This is unlikely the first time Adam and Eve had been together in this way
 - The reference to one flesh in Chapter 2 suggests that the marriage was consummated from the start
 - But here they conceive and a child is born
 - With no prior experience with child birth, it must have been both a scary and awesome moment
 - The first time one human being gave life to another
 - Eve, the mother of the living, is witness for the first time to what God's promise will mean for her and all women
 - The first baby is born, and we wonder a little at how they would have understood to care for him
 - They name him Cain (*Kaia*n) which comes from the Hebrew root kin, which means to give form to, or give shape
 - Then Eve adds that interesting phrase at the end
 - The Hebrew in the last part of this verse is very important to understanding it's meaning
 - In Hebrew, that verse only says "I have received boy: Jehovah"
 - Translators have struggled to make sense of this statement, usually placing other words in the verse to create a different meaning
 - But the meaning is exactly as Moses stated

- Eve has announced that she has given birth to God in the form of a boy child
- Remember God had promised Eve that she would bring a child who would crush Satan
 - And so as this child is born, Eve is overjoyed in the birth moment and imagines she will have the privilege to birth the promised Messiah
- This is a natural assumption
 - How was Eve to understand that it would be millennia before the Messiah arrived
- Before long, a second boy arrives

Gen. 4:2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

- To put this verse in perspective with the prior verse, we need to look at it in Hebrew as well
 - The name Abel in Hebrew is *habel*
 - Which means vapor
 - It can also be spelled *habal* which means vanity
 - We can see two meanings in his name
 - First, we can see a prophetic meaning in that Abel was fleeting like a vapor
 - Secondly, we see Eve's realization that she was wrong about Cain
 - By now Cain is probably a toddler and Eve noticed that her "Messiah" was going through the terrible twos
 - This can't be God, she realized at some point
 - Then she realized that the birth of Cain wasn't a one time event
 - She will birth many children who will carry on that pattern
 - She might have thought that the birth process was merely intended to produce the Messiah
 - So when Eve has a second boy, she has learned her lesson
 - She declared that it was vanity on her part to assume she was giving birth to the Messiah
 - And she names her second son Abel (vanity) to remind herself that she had been vain when she made her declaration concerning Cain
 - God often frustrates men by not choosing the one we assume should be chosen
 - Moses begins a pattern here that will continue throughout the book of Genesis
 - The line of Messiah is in God's choosing, not man's
 - And he will continually make distinctions between the two children to emphasize that fact

- Abel becomes a keeper of flocks while Cain farms (*Incorrectly switched in the audio*)
 - We can understand the need for farming, but what were the flocks for?
 - Since the eating of meat was not yet permitted, we assume the flocks produced milk
 - And as we'll see now, they also served a purpose in worship

Gen. 4:3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.

Gen. 4:4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

Gen. 4:5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

- In the course of time...
 - Moses emphasizes that what happens next is according to the natural course of events
 - It suggests an inevitability arising from the Fall in the Garden
 - Here is a story on the consequences of sin in the world
- Cain and Abel brought an offering to God
 - Sacrifices were already an understood necessity
 - God had at some point revealed to Cain and Abel the necessity for atonement
 - This is before the Law of Moses, but God's Law has always been in place
 - Moses was merely the one privileged to reveal it in the way God delivered it
 - So Cain and Abel are directed to approach God with these sacrifices
 - Notice that God and man are still in a relationship though now it's a different relationship
 - Where before God and man worked and lived together in the Garden
 - Now man is seen approaching God with payments and an atoning sacrifice in an effort to appease God's wrath for sin
 - Obviously, the relationship between God and man has been injured through sin
 - And these two boys are caught up in this problem, though they had nothing to do with the original sin in the Garden
- Each man brings a different offering and gains a different result with God (we need to look closely at this)
 - Our first clue to understanding what happens is in noticing that Cain brings a grain offering
 - Just as in the Law that was provided through Moses, God commanded grain offering, and Cain is giving his offering here

- But under God's Law, the grain sacrifice was a tithe offering
 - We know the Law had not been given in its full form at this point
 - But God would have instructed these men in a way similar to what He gave Moses
- Our second clue is that Abel brings an animal sacrifice, specifically a first-born animal that has already been killed and its fat was being burned
 - This is the second major type of sacrifice
 - Animal sacrifices were atonement for sin offerings
- Our third clue is found in the Hebrew at the beginning of v.4
 - The Hebrew is limited to a few words, leaving room for interpretation
 - The Hebrew is *Habel gam bo*, which is "Abel also brought"
 - It likely means Abel brought grain like Cain and also brought an animal sacrifice
 - Abel seems to understand the need to honor God with tithes and to bring atonement for his own sin
 - But Cain is limiting his actions to tithing only
 - We see confirmation of this interpretation in the book of Hebrews

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

- Abel is said to have presented gifts (plural)
- The next clue is found in how God responds to Cain & Abel
 - God has regard for Abel, not for Cain
 - In Hebrew, give regard is *shaah* = paid attention
 - Another way to say it is He made His face to shine upon Abel's sacrifice
 - But God doesn't have regard for Cain's sacrifice
 - In Hebrew, it's the same word (*shaah*) but with a negative in front
 - Why did God see the two sacrifices differently, since both types were commanded under the Law?
 - Was Abel's contribution better in some way?
 - Some have speculated that the cause for God responding so differently was in the nature of the sacrifices themselves
 - Maybe blood vs no blood
 - Maybe fruit (off) the ground vs firstlings
 - That Abel also tithed like Cain, but Cain didn't bring an animal sacrifice like

Abel

- First consider some scripture

1Sam. 15:22 Samuel said,

**“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.**

Hos. 6:6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Hos. 6:7 But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

1John 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that
we should love one another;

1John 3:12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what
reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were
righteous.

- Scripture teaches that sacrifice is made necessary by our sin
 - But God is more interested in our obedience so that it doesn't require sacrifice in the first place
 - More importantly, in speaking about Cain and Abel, John says that the key difference between the two was that the actions of one were evil and the other righteous
 - John's commentary teaches us that there was something unrighteous in Cain's actions and something righteous in Abel's
- God is condemning Cain's sacrifice because it was made with an unbelieving heart
 - Cain is not interested in knowing God or in loyalty, and Hosea said
 - Abel's actions, on the other hand, reflect faith
 - What kind of faith are we talking about in their cases?
 - Specifically, Cain is not believing in the promises of God concerning the need for atonement
 - Cain doesn't accept the reality of sin and the fact that an atonement is necessary
 - He is acting purely out of pride and self-righteousness
 - And God will not accept much less be pleased by Cain's tithe offering unless it comes with faith in God's promises

- Without faith, it's impossible to please God
- How can we know that Cain's lack of faith is the cause for God's displeasure?
 - Look at what follows...

Gen. 4:6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

Gen. 4:7 "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

- These two verses offer one of the more inscrutable statements in all scripture
 - Many have tried and failed to make sense of these words, especially in light of the context
 - In fact, many interpretations (and many translations) of this verse are nonsensical
 - We are going to learn them properly this morning
 - We should note in passing that this is the first mention in the Bible of anger
 - Cain expressed anger against God because God does not accept Cain's sacrifice
 - We're left feeling that Cain arrived before God so that he could receive praise for his tithe
 - When the praise didn't come, it angered him
- First, God asks why are you angry? Why are you disappointed?
 - Why does God ask this question?
 - It's clearly rhetorical, but it begs a question...why wouldn't Cain be angry about God's rejection?
 - Then looking at v.7 God says if you (Cain) do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?
 - But in Hebrew, most of those words aren't there
 - In Hebrew, the verse reads: do well, be raised up
 - Now God's question starts to make more sense
 - God says to Cain why are you angry that I gave regard for Abel's animal sacrifice?
 - Animal sacrifices are for sin
 - Since you didn't bring an animal sacrifice, you must not have felt you needed atonement (i.e., you don't think you have sin)
 - So why would you be angry with Me for giving regard to your brother's sacrifice if you don't even need to sacrifice?
 - If you do well (have no sin), you will be raised up (resurrected)

- Then we reach the toughest part of the statement
 - “If you do well, sin is crouching at the door...”
 - Not doing well here is the opposite from the earlier statement
 - Doing well = not sinning, so not doing well must mean sinning
 - If you sin, then sin is crouching at the door?
 - This statement makes no sense
 - At the very least, it’s redundant
 - The word for sin is *chattah*, which is usually translated “sin offering”
 - You can see a similar application in Greek in 2 Cor 5:21

2Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Jesus, Who knew no sin, became a sin offering on our behalf
 - He didn’t become sin, but rather a sin offering is implied in that verse
- In Cain’s case, God is saying if you sin, then a sin offering is...
 - The English translation says “crouching”
 - How does that word make sense here?
 - Sin is waiting to get me? It’s already got me
 - Sin is ready to tempt me? God said when Cain sins, it will be crouching (temptation has already happened)
 - There is no way to fit the word crouching into this context
 - The word in Hebrew means lying down, but it’s almost always used to described a four-legged animal lying on the ground
 - Like a goat or sheep laying down
 - Next, the word door is properly translated doorway
- Finally, we look at the end of verse 7
- The end of the sentence is only two words in Hebrew: *teshuqah*, *mashal*
 - *Teshuqah* means desire and it occurs only here and in Gen 3 (a woman’s desire for her husband) and Song of Solomon
 - This is the only time of the three, where the interpreters have assumed a negative connotation
 - It should have remained positive
 - *Mashal* means a master or ruler
- What does this image evoke?
 - It reminds us of Passover, when God places the blood of a the lamb over the door of

the homes of Israel

- This is God's proclamation of the Gospel to Cain in the form of a promise to provide a sacrifice in the doorway for sin
- If Cain is without sin, he'll be raised up without an animal sacrifice needed
- But if he sins, an animal sin offering will be lying in the doorway
- God tells Cain to have a desire for that master or King (i.e., Christ)
- The solution to Cain's anger and dejection is to accept Christ

- We drop back into the story of Cain and Abel after God has instructed Cain to seek the sacrifice offered him to atone for his sin
 - But as we will see today, Cain doesn't take that offer
 - And in fact, Cain goes further in the opposite direction, indulging his sinful flesh

Gen. 4:8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

- In understanding what transpired, we face another lost in translation challenge
 - The opening phrase of verse 8 reads "Cain said to Abel his brother..."
 - There is something missing
 - Most modern English translations have tried to make it read as if this phrase stands alone (i.e., unconnected to the rest of the verse)
 - But the earliest surviving Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts all state this verse as:
 - "Cain said to Abel his brother, let's go out into the field."
 - The NET Bible has also chosen to render it this way
 - This better translation conveys Cain's premeditation, as Cain convinced his brother to go to a remote place before committing murder
 - Cain must have had a large enough extended family at this point that he had reason to need privacy, and fear retribution
- So Cain commits the first murder in the Bible, the full depravity of the human heart on display from the very beginning
 - All the sin required for us to do the very worst things in life existed from the time of the second man
 - The condition of the world is not the result of a worsening of the human condition that leads to things like murder
 - It has always been a part of the human heart
 - We should also notice the conscience at work as well
 - Why did Cain feel the need to lure his brother into a remote place?
 - There can be no other explanation than that Cain felt guilt over his crime even before he committed it
 - And he was protecting himself from discovery – evidence of a conscience
- What was the basis of Cain's anger at Abel?
 - Simply, a hatred of those who gain God's approval
 - As Jesus warned:

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

- When Cain murdered Abel, scripture tells us it was the most ungodly man living destroying the most godly
 - The first believing son persecuted by the first unbelieving son
 - The spiritual son of the first murderer, Satan, rising up against the first prophet, Abel – first among many to be persecuted
 - The pattern continues unabated today
- Now we have the second time God has confronted man after a sinful act

Gen. 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Gen. 4:10 He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.

Gen. 4:11 “Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.

Gen. 4:12 “When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”

- Verse 9 is one of the most sarcastic and disrespectful statements spoken to God recorded in the Bible
 - God gives Cain the same opportunity for repentance that He offered Adam and Eve in the Garden
 - And instead of responding with confession, Cain offers this remarkably blunt response
 - In fact, this is the first human lie in history
 - Clearly, there is no repentance nor remorse in his heart
 - But don’t miss the grace of God on display in these early chapters of Genesis
 - Despite watching mankind turn away from Him, disobey Him, disrespect Him, nevertheless God maintains a patient forbearance with all of it
 - And as a result of the first murder, we also see in v.10 the first burial referenced
 - That’s the meaning of the phrase “from the ground”

- And the earth “opening” its mouth to receive Abel
- In this case, the burial was done out of the need to cover up a mistake, not out of respect for the body
- God then responds to Cain’s insolence with a statement of judgment
 - God says, look what you have done (in the form of a question)
 - And that Abel’s blood cries to God from the ground
 - God is aware of injustice and of the affliction of His children by faith
 - Abel’s blood cries out to God for vengeance and God acts in the due course of time
 - The punishment God delivers to Cain sounds similar to Adam’s but is actually quite different (and it’s unique to Cain alone)
 - God says “you” are cursed from the ground
 - While Adam’s sin resulted in a curse against the ground
 - Now the ground itself becomes evidence against Cain and brings a curse upon him
 - In Hebrew, the sense is that the ground has been Cain’s prosecutor and jury, convicting Cain of his sin
 - And the verdict that the ground demands is death
 - So God pronounces a curse on Cain
 - Remember, a curse is a permanent judgment of damnation
 - There is no recovery possible for Cain
 - Furthermore, God declares that the earth will no longer give its produce to Cain
 - He is no longer a farmer who stays in one place
 - Instead, Cain will wander the earth and scrounge for his living
 - The word for vagrant is *nua*, which means to shake in fear or to stagger, to walk to and fro
 - To wander is *nud*, which is similar in meaning but with an emphasis on grieving and mourning
 - He will forever wander the earth in fear and grieving
 - More importantly, Cain must live out his days away from the rest of his family and from God Himself
 - At this point in the history of humanity, Cain can expect to be alone for the most part
 - More importantly, Cain is being banished from God’s presence on the earth
 - It’s obvious that God has maintained some kind of presence among men on earth even after the Fall in the Garden
 - Cain and Abel sacrificed to God

- Later we'll see that other men in Adam's family knew God and even walked with Him
- So Cain's banishment means he is leaving the community where God is frequently visiting in some form
- Cain's removal from God's presence is a remarkable picture of what we know happens to all unbelievers in eternity
 - They are eternally separated from God's presence as they feel the weight of their sins
 - This is the cursed outcome of every unbeliever
 - Notice that according to this analogy, the unbeliever isn't annihilated
 - Cain's existence didn't come to an end
 - He continued on but apart from God, in an existence of suffering
 - Similarly, the unbeliever under judgment is also subjected to a continuing existence apart from God
 - Cain's story is a Biblical picture of how unbelievers are going to be judged one day
 - They will appear before God
 - And He will test their work, but they won't have an answer for His questioning
 - And in the end, their deeds will be found lacking, and they will receive punishment in eternal separation from God
 - And as an unbeliever, Cain pictures the eternal through the experiences of his earthly life
- The Bible declares that Cain was an evil person who had no faith in God
 - And this is why he finds no forgiveness
 - But if we are ever tempted to think that someone may be converted to faith through some convincing display of God, remember Cain
 - Cain knew God
 - He spoke with God, He talked to God
 - Yet he didn't accept the gospel
 - He didn't submit his will to God's
 - An encounter with God or a powerful religious experience cannot create faith
 - Hebrews tells us that God is the author and perfecter of our faith
 - He is also the perfect judge of all who oppose Him

Gen. 4:13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"

- Cain reacts with regret and sorrow, and a complaint
 - Cain seems to understand the significance of God's judgment

- In literal Hebrew, Cain declared or said that his iniquity (or crime) was too great to be lifted or forgiven
- He may not be talking about his punishment, but rather his offense
 - He recognizes he won't find mercy from God
- Don't be misled by what you see in Cain here
 - This is worldly sorrow, not godly repentance

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- Only God can produce true spiritual repentance, and it leads to a faithful response to God's word
 - In 2 Cor. Paul explains the difference to his readers as encouragement
 - They had been chastised by Paul and felt sorrow, but Paul says this was good sorrow, because it led them to lead a more godly life
- No such godly response is taking place here
 - Instead, Cain is simply showing regret over his circumstances

Gen. 4:14 “Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

- Cain now argues his case before God
 - He says he is being...
 - Driven from the face of the ground
 - Banished from the farming of the land – his way of life
 - Made a wanderer
 - These are simple restatements of God's words
 - But then Cain adds that this existence will leave him vulnerable to attack
 - Moving around puts at him risk from those who would harm him
 - The irony here is that what Cain himself started, he is now concerned about receiving
 - The first murderer fears being murdered
 - What he sows, he now fears reaping
 - And who might threaten Cain?
 - Reasonable projections of population growth arrive at a likelihood that there

were 20-30 thousand people on earth by the time Abel died

- All of these people are relatives, and since Cain is the first to murder, the prospect of retaliation is on Cain's mind
- So God responds to Cain's concern with a measure of grace

Gen. 4:15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

- God is bringing some protection to Cain
 - God declares that anyone who takes vengeance on Cain for Abel will receive a seven-fold (meaning divinely complete) vengeance on his own family
 - Then to be sure that this promise was trustworthy, God gave Cain a sign that he could remember
- The typical reading is that a mark was put on Cain, but the word for sign is *oth* – a sign like that given to Noah
 - More likely, God simply gave Cain something that he knew meant that he could trust God's promise
- Why does God protect Cain?
 - Ultimately, Cain stands as a witness against lawlessness for many generations
 - Secondly, God has not instituted earthly punishment for sin
 - There is no government or laws to constrain men's behavior
 - So God is merely controlling sin more than protecting Cain

Gen. 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Gen. 4:17 Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

Gen. 4:18 Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.

- Cain is no longer in the presence of the Lord
 - And so he goes east of Eden
 - East is always a picture of where the unrighteous go (Babylon)
 - West is always a picture of righteousness and the Kingdom
 - This is a common motif in the Bible

- Mesopotamia is in the East
 - Israel is in the West
 - Abraham was called out from the East and sent to the West
 - Isaac's bride Rebekah, who pictures the Church, is called out from the East and meets her husband in the West
 - Ishmael and Esau leave the West and go East
 - Etc.
- Cain lands in Nod, which could mean wanderer in Hebrew (similar to *nud*)
 - This shows fulfillment of prophecy
- In v. 17 we hear that Cain has a wife, and at this point, a question everyone asks is – where did Cain get his wife?
 - In fact, this question is one of the first places critics of Scripture will go to suggest the Bible is untrustworthy
 - How can Cain have a wife?
 - But the answer is so easy, even children can answer it correctly
 - His sister! (Or likely some other female relative, a niece perhaps)
 - Can this be appropriate?
 - First, consider that our hesitation to accept this answer is conditioned on modern standards and mores
 - We understand today that incestual relationships are unhealthy
 - They produce defective (disabled) babies – DNA is a problem when you bring together parents with closely matched genes and those defects pass down to the child
 - Secondly, God Himself outlawed incest in the Mosaic Law
 - Prior to this time, brother-sister marriages were not unlawful, although they were uncommon
 - Take Abraham, who married his half-sister
 - In the beginning, the need for brother-sister marriages was obvious, and God permitted it
 - But initially such marriages were not unhealthy because the DNA of Adam was perfect, as he was created perfectly
 - The curse on the Earth introduced the wearing down of the human genome and the introduction of genetic defects - albeit over many generations
 - Later, after DNA errors began to build up, God outlawed such marriages to protect families from the problems bad DNA would cause
- This is a classic example of wrongly interpreting scripture with a modern viewpoint
 - Today we have been conditioned to see incest as bad and harmful, and therefore it is outlawed - rightly so

- But in Cain's day, there was no prohibition and no medical concerns with the practice
- And it was essential to growing the population of men on Earth

- Sin changed the world
 - And it changed the nature of men
 - We saw last time how sin turned one brother against another
 - From the earliest stage of humanity, sin was so evident and powerful that it led to murder
 - Humanity didn't work itself toward doing evil, first with small sins and then later with greater sins
 - Instead, it began with murder, in demonstration of how sin has changed the nature of men
 - But those smaller sins were also present
 - Sins of pride, boasting, lying, jealousy, anger, impatience, rudeness
 - All of these characteristics of sin and others were evident in the story of Cain and Abel
 - And of course, we see all these sins present today in every person who descends from Adam

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, two young church members were going door to door to invite people to visit their services. When they knocked on one door, it was immediately clear the woman who answered was not happy to see them.

She told them in no uncertain terms that she did not want to hear their message, and before they could say anything more, she slammed the door in their faces.

To her surprise, however, the door did not close; in fact, it bounced back open. She tried again, really putting her back into it, and slammed it again with the same result - the door bounced back open.

Convinced these rude young people were sticking their foot in her door, she reared back to give it a slam that would teach them a lesson. Just then, one of them said quietly: "Ma'am, before you do that again, you really need to move your cat."

- Cain has now received his banishment, to wander, as an example of a man under the curse of sin
 - And he leaves God's presence and the family connections Gen. 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Gen. 4:17 Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to

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

Gen. 4:18 Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.

- As we mentioned last time, Cain goes east of Eden
 - East is always a picture of where the unrighteous go (Babylon)
 - West is always a picture of righteousness and the Kingdom
 - Cain lands in Nod, which could mean wanderer in Hebrew (similar to *nud*)
 - Though Cain was destined to wander, it doesn't prevent him from beginning communities, and then moving on again
 - His extended family likely grew large over the decades and some might remain in these towns as he moved on
- In v. 17 we hear that Cain has a wife, and we discussed how that happened
 - Cain's wife was also a sister or some other female relative (a niece perhaps)
 - And we looked at how this can be acceptable in Cain's day while no longer being acceptable today
 - It was a necessity in Cain's day and an acceptable means of populating the earth since DNA was near perfect
 - Today, the circumstances have changed and God no longer permits such marriages according to the Mosaic Law
- So Cain's first son is Enoch, who's name means dedicated toward something sacred, as to God perhaps
 - Isn't that ironic
 - Here's a man who is himself an unbeliever calling his son a name that means sacred
 - Here is a classic display of a superficial attempt to connect to God (through works)
 - It's ironic because why would someone who rejected God's authority care to identify with God at all?
 - But this is exactly what the unbelieving world does
 - Religion is the result of exactly this kind of thinking
 - Religion is man's attempt to reach God
 - Grace is God's way of reaching men
 - Unless God reveals Himself to a person, the only option left for unbelievers is to create something to fill the God-sized hole in their heart
 - Superficially, falsely, and through works

- But it doesn't reach God at all
 - It is merely for show
- Jude describes unbelievers who think themselves wise in spiritual matters, as men who have gone the way of Cain
 - Going the way of Cain means opposing God's Law, seeking one's own righteousness, opposing God's people and substituting man-made religion for true relationship
 - We need to guard against allowing even the hint of self-made religion to replace truly following the Spirit, and obeying God's word
- After Cain, seven generations are named
 - Mehujael – smitten of God
 - Methusael – man of God
 - Notice the names are all claims to a relationship with God
 - Yet we know Cain's line is not the line God reveals Himself to
 - Ending with Lamech, the seventh from Adam in Cain's line
 - Seven suggests a culmination of something, a bringing to completion of something in Cain's line
 - In this case the seventh means the completion of the corrupting effects of sin

Gen. 4:19 Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

Gen. 4:20 Adah gave birth to Jabel; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

Gen. 4:21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.

Gen. 4:22 As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

- Lamech is the seventh in the line
 - His name means warrior
 - And he takes two wives
 - First record of bigamy
 - Notice that it falls to the seventh one in Cain's line to introduce this practice
 - The one who is perfecting corruption
 - God records this event, but He doesn't endorse it
 - We only have to take note that it originated in the ungodly line of men to know that it was an evil practice from the beginning
 - His wives also carry interesting names

- Adah – adorned (outward) (for child bearing)
 - She gave birth to Jabal, who began the tradition of the nomadic lifestyle of shepherding in an ever-moving style
 - His brother was Jubal, the first man to explore the concept of music and musical instruments
 - Zillah – to grow or be dark (for sexual pleasure)
 - Her first son is Tubal-cain
- From Lamech came men who developed fundamental technologies
 - Herdsman
 - Musicians (string and wind instruments)
 - Tools
- Worldly accomplishments and worldly praise
 - Everything you could want
 - Power, influence, intelligence, culture
 - Solely dependent on self and separated from God
 - These inventions are not wrong in themselves, of course
 - They are proof that God dispenses a measure of His grace and mercy on even the unbelieving world, as seen in these men’s intellect and creativity
 - But it is significant that these pursuits are associated with the line of Cain
 - Today the science, art and entertainment of our culture are also used as wedges to drive men from God
 - They are amoral by themselves, but they are distractions the enemy can use to satisfy men’s need to express their independence from God
 - Our life is the way it is because unbelievers seek to make their own world conform to their will, not to God’s
 - For the believer, the advancements of our world can be opportunity to serve and glorify God
 - Or they can be distractions as well

**Gen. 4:23 Lamech said to his wives,
 “Adah and Zillah,
 Listen to my voice,
 You wives of Lamech,
 Give heed to my speech,
 For I have killed a man for wounding me;
 And a boy for striking me;
 Gen. 4:24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
 Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”**

- This is the oldest recorded poetry in the Bible
 - Hebrew poetry doesn't use rhyme, but rather parallelism and repetition
 - Notice in v.23, Lamech tells his wives to listen to his voice
 - And then again he says give heed to my speech
 - That repetition and parallelism is poetry to the Hebrew ear
 - Then Lamech gives his news to his wives
 - He boasts he has killed two men
 - We don't have the details on this event, and in the big picture it isn't important to the account
 - The point of the poem is to boast in defiance against God
 - Or more accurately, he claims equality with God
 - Everyone knew Cain's history
 - Lamech's poem confirms Cain's notoriety
 - And until now, we might assume no one else had murdered except Cain
 - And Lamech seems determined to improve on Cain's reputation
 - The sin of pride is on display here
 - Lamech boasts that he has committed murder
 - Remembering that Hebrew poetry speaks in parallel lines, we should understand that the man and the boy are one and the same
 - The poem simply lists the person twice
 - The point of the dual reference is to emphasize that this is a younger man, someone of greater agility than Lamech
 - But in retaliation for the attack, Lamech took vengeance
 - We don't know who this young man was, but he was probably from Cain's family
 - Finally, Lamech boasts that if attacking Cain brought revenge from God, then attacking Lamech brought his own revenge
 - And Lamech's revenge was greater than God's revenge
- The corruption of Cain's line shines through now
 - Lamech is a man whose fleshly, sinful nature is on full display
 - His flesh cannot be satisfied and it seeks anything it wants
 - The world had been given marriage by God
 - It was one man, one woman
 - This wasn't enough for Lamech's flesh
 - He decided that if everyone else could take one wife, he could take two
 - When the world crossed him, he fought back

- He wasn't going to give an inch nor show a vulnerability
 - And when one young man went too far, Lamech killed him
- Cain had killed in a fit of jealousy over God's approval
 - Lamech killed to prove he didn't need God's approval
 - And he boasts about it now to his wives to convince them and himself
- Remember that when Cain's sin was discovered, he mourned the outcome for what it meant for his safety
 - As a result God promises to protect Cain and avenge him should anyone harm him
 - Lamech on the other hand demonstrates his completed, perfected sin nature when he says he will avenge himself
 - He doesn't need God for protection
 - Lamech is the quintessential sinful man in rebellion against God
 - And his life is the poster child for the power of sin to corrupt
- Now in contrast to the seventh man in the line of Cain, let's look at the other side of the family tree

Gen. 4:25 Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."

Gen. 4:26 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.

- When Adam was 130, a new son is born
 - It seems from the text that this may have been the first son given to Eve in some time
 - Similar to the story of Sarah and Abraham, God seems to have made them wait for a replacement to Abel
 - If this is true, then it would have meant that the family of Cain was reproducing and filling the earth, but the believing line was nowhere
 - Until Seth came along
 - The name Seth means the appointed one
 - And Eve recognizes he was a replacement for Abel, the man of God intended to bring a seed into the world
 - He is the son God appointed to continue the line to the Messiah
 - In fact, the entire book of Genesis is directed toward showing how God works to keep His promise concerning the seed
 - Seth gives birth himself to a son, Enosh
 - Enosh means frail or fragile man

- You can see this repeated in Psalm 103:15

**Psa. 103:15 As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.**

- The word for man is *enosh*
- And with Enosh, men again began to call upon the name of the Lord
 - This phrase in Hebrew doesn't mean that Adam and Seth were not believers themselves
 - It's a reference to public worship
 - Enosh is the man to initiate public worship and faithful witness of God
 - Notice the difference in the lines
 - While the line of Cain glories in self, the line of Seth is glorying in God
 - And they don't depend upon themselves or their own strength
 - They trust and depend on God, as do we
- As a final note concerning Chapters 1-4 of Genesis
 - Bible critics intent on tearing down the truth of Scripture will commonly claim that the first four chapters of Genesis weren't written by Moses, much less were they inspired by God
 - They say they were written by different authors
 - At different times
 - And then later men pieced together these parts to create a myth
 - In response, take note of these facts:
 - The name Abel appears seven times
 - The name Cain appears fourteen times
 - All names listed in Cain's family, counting parents and sisters, total fourteen
 - The word "name" appears seven times
 - From Genesis 2-4, the word land is found seven times; the word field is found seven times; the word ground is found seven times; and the combined usage of Jehovah and God, appears thirty-five times
 - In Chapters 1-5, the combined usage of Jehovah and God is seventy times
 - Clearly, the book is divinely inspired and authored



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 5

Chapter 5:1-27

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- Today is Mother's Day...

An Amish boy and his father were visiting a mall. They were amazed by almost everything they saw, but especially by two shiny, silver walls that could move apart and back together again. The boy asked his father, "What is this, Father?" The father responded, "Son, I have never seen anything like this in my life, I don't know what it is."

While the boy and his father were watching wide-eyed an old lady in a wheel chair rolled up to the moving walls and pressed a button. The walls opened and the lady rolled between them into a small room. The walls closed and the boy and his father watched small circles of lights w/numbers above the walls light up. They continued to watch the circles light up in the reverse direction. The walls opened up again and a beautiful 24 year old woman stepped out.

The father said to his son, "Go get your Mother."

- Things aren't always as they appear, especially in Scripture
 - And especially in the genealogy chapters of Genesis
 - Many Bible students are tempted to skip the genealogy chapters like the one before us today
 - In reality, they have much to teach us, though it may take a little more work to uncover the lesson
 - As Chapter 4 ended last week, we came to the end of the line of Cain
 - And in that line we noted that the culmination of Cain's sinful family could be seen in the seventh from Adam; Lamech
 - Lamech embodied the completed, perfected sin nature, in keeping with his position as seventh in Cain's line from Adam
 - His sin displayed how he didn't need God
 - Not for protection, not for honor or anything
 - Yet all the while, Lamech and his fathers gave lip service to God including in the way they named their children godly-sounding names
 - Now in contrast to the seventh man in the line of Cain, Chapter 4 ended with a return to Adam and a look at the other side of the family tree
- Seth, appointed one, is born to replace Abel
 - And through his son Enosh, men began to engage in public worship of God
 - Already, there is a clear distinction between the line of Cain and the one of Seth
- Chapter 5 continues to reveal that distinction

Gen. 5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

Gen. 5:2 He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named

them Man in the day when they were created.

Gen. 5:3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

Gen. 5:4 Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:5 So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

Gen. 5:6 Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh.

Gen. 5:7 Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:8 So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

Gen. 5:9 Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan.

Gen. 5:10 Then Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:11 So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died.

Gen. 5:12 Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel.

Gen. 5:13 Then Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:14 So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

Gen. 5:15 Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared.

Gen. 5:16 Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:17 So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

Gen. 5:18 Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch.

Gen. 5:19 Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:20 So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

Gen. 5:21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah.

Gen. 5:22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

Gen. 5:24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

- Chapter 5 finishes the *toledat* or family record of Adam
 - In Chapter 6 we begin the *toledat* of Noah
 - And this will be the pattern of the book of Genesis

- Moses will select one person in the line of the Messiah and focus on his family for a time before moving to the next focus
 - And the juncture between each person of focus will be a genealogy chapter to stitch the two together
 - So, Chapter 5 is the stitching between Adam and Noah
- Also remember how Moses will zoom in and out in his narrative
 - Here we see him zoom out again – nearly 1,500 years pass in this chapter
- Even before we study the chapter, we might ask the question why does Moses capture these long genealogies in Scripture?
 - Besides the reason I just gave, genealogies serve at least one other major purpose
 - God has promised to bring a salvation to the world through a seed, a seed He has chosen
 - And when that seed arrives, God will have provided a complete genealogy from Adam to the Messiah to ensure we can trace the Messiah's claim
 - Those genealogies are then demonstrated in Luke and Matthew
- Let's look at Chapter 5
 - Moses begins the chapter with a brief reminder of how Adam himself began
 - And then how children began to be born
 - We notice that Seth was born when Adam was 130 years old
 - And then Moses emphasizes that this child was born in the likeness and image of Adam
 - The words likeness and image are important here
 - First the word for likeness in Hebrew is *demuth*, which means in the pattern of
 - And the word for image is *tselem* and means in the appearance of
 - So Adam's children shared Adam's nature and appearance
 - But glance back to v.1 and notice how Adam himself began
 - He was created in the likeness or pattern of God, though not in God's image
 - This is confirmed in Genesis 1, when it only says in the likeness or pattern
 - So God made Adam in the likeness or nature of God, but here we see Adam making his offspring in the likeness or pattern of himself
 - This is a difference created by sin
 - Today, people are not being born in the likeness or God
 - That similarity was lost once Adam sinned and changed his nature
 - Adam was no longer like God, since Adam knew evil and God does not
 - So Moses reminds us here that the generations that came from Adam shared Adam's nature not God's nature
 - It requires the grace of God to grant us a new spirit and a new nature so

that we might be restored to the likeness of God

- This is why Paul says

1Cor. 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- What about the long ages we see mentioned in this account and other places in Genesis?
- Some Bible students have come to assume the numbers are wrong, or at least only symbolic
 - The reason they conclude they are wrong is simply because our present-day experience tells us that people can't live hundreds of years
 - This is a classic example of interpreting scripture through a lens of the world and our experience
 - Rather than interpreting the world and our experience through the lens of Scripture
- If I were to interpret my experience through the lens of Scripture, how would I understand these long ages?
 - First, I apply the Golden Rule of interpretation
 - When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense
 - In this case, there is no indication in the text to suggest that the ages aren't intended to be literal
 - So to seek another sense than the literal sense is reaching past the meaning of the text itself
 - Then I am forced to conclude that men lived very long lives in the beginning
 - And I also notice that later in Genesis the length of life begins to decline rapidly, especially after the flood
 - We'll discuss why when we get to Chapter 9
- Secondly, I formulate reasonable theories out of Scripture for how life could be so long and then decline later
 - First, we know God created Adam and Eve in perfection
 - They had bodies that had no limits
 - The body has amazing regeneration and self-sustaining abilities even today
 - Secondly, we know that death was not a part of God's original design for the human body
 - Death was not a necessity for our bodies
 - Third, we know that the process of physical death was instituted by God's decree that everything would wear out and return to dust
 - He didn't design the death of the body to be an instantaneous process but a gradual process
 - Yes, some die early and unexpectedly, but the usual process is gradual, steady

deterioration until the body gives out

- Taking these three facts together, I can allow Scripture to inform my understanding of the world we see today
 - First, we conclude that physical death is a process that takes hold over time
 - It is a process of weakening and deterioration in the physical strength of the body
 - Secondly, we note that the process took hold slowly over generations to wear down the body
 - Initially, men had very long life spans
 - But over time the deterioration process accelerates leading to shorter and shorter lives
 - The best scientific explanation for how this happens biologically is found in DNA
 - The errors and defects in our genetic code are passed on to the next generation
 - And as the defects grow in number and seriousness, the body's systems weaken and death comes quicker to the next generation
 - We will get more in-depth into this discussion in Chapter 9
- The next observation we can make is that this is not a complete list of Adam's direct descendants (all the names are Hebrew though...)
- In v.4 we're told that Adam has other sons and daughters over his 930 years of life
 - Adam could have easily had hundreds of children, depending on Eve's patience and tolerance
 - And by the time Adam died, he had seen his great, great, great, great, great, great grandchildren born
 - In fact, Adam died only about 125 years before Noah was born
 - Noah was born only 14 years after Seth died
- But notice something else that Moses takes time to emphasize in this account
 - After each man in the line of Seth is described, the record always ends in the same way
 - And he died
 - Though these men live long lives, they always succumb in the end to the curse made necessary by Adam's sin
 - Today men live 75-80 years on average, and even now many people live that entire lifetime with little thought given to the inevitable
 - To the fact that death comes to all and then comes judgment
 - Like an ostrich, many put their heads in the sand and hope that they can ignore this unpleasant fact forever
 - So imagine how easily men of this day could have ignored the obvious
 - After 700-800 years of life, do men perhaps forget that judgment is coming?
 - And add to that, that until Adam died, perhaps only a handful of men had

probably died

- But Moses doesn't want his readers to miss the fact that death is common to every man and it catches up to us eventually
- But then we find a curious exception at the seventh in the line of Seth from Adam
- First, we notice that Enoch lives 365 years and in v.24 God "took" him
 - The age is interesting by itself
 - It's a year for every day in a year
 - It suggests a completing of a whole, the adding up of a number until the complete whole has been reached
- Secondly, we have Enoch's place in the line of Seth, the seventh
 - Remember, Cain's line ended in a seventh as well
 - The record of Cain ended with Lamech, the man who completed and perfectly embodied the sin nature
 - Here we have a genealogy that doesn't end in the seventh, but the seventh becomes a stopping point for comparison purposes
 - While Cain's line was a line of unbelievers living opposed to God
 - Seth's line is the seed line with men of faith who trace to the Messiah
 - And in the seventh position, we see Enoch completing a year's worth of days
 - And he walks with God
 - The Hebrew word for walk is the same for God walking in the Garden with Adam
 - It means fellowship and close companionship
- Finally, we have an intriguing end to Enoch's life
 - The English phrase "for he was not, for God took him" is actually only two words in Hebrew
 - *Elohim* (God) and *laqach*, which means received or caught or took away
 - The meaning is clear: Enoch didn't experience physical death
 - The writer of Hebrews affirms this interpretation when he teaches:

Heb. 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

- This taking away is strange and unique, so it brings us to the important question
 - Why did God choose to end Enoch's life so differently from the normal experience?
 - To get the proper answer we must add in the other clues of Enoch's age and his position as seventh in the line
 - And we must also consider what we know comes soon after Enoch's departure, namely the judgment of the flood on the earth

- More specifically, we need to take note of how the New Testament uses the flood story itself as a picture of the coming judgment of the world
 - This is a comparison we will build more fully in the coming chapters
- And finally, we can't help but make comparisons of Enoch's experience to the promised taking of believers revealed in the New Testament – namely the Rapture
- So let's put these details together
 - As the seventh in Seth's line, Enoch must stand as the opposite example to Lamech, the seventh in Cain's line
 - These two men would have been contemporaries
 - Just as Lamech lived as a testimony to sin
 - Likewise, Enoch's life is immediately recognizable as a picture of man living in faith and walking with God
 - Just as Hebrews 11 confirms
 - Enoch is taken as he reaches 365 years, or a completed year of years
 - Then he is taken by God from the Earth
 - And then a period of time passes for those who remain behind
 - But then God's judgment waters come upon the earth
 - Leaving only a few to be rescued
- Do you see God creating a picture for us through Enoch's experience?
 - Enoch is the symbol of the believer
 - And after an appointed period of time and once a completed number is reached, then Enoch is removed from the Earth
 - Likewise, the NT tells us that once a completed number is reached, the Church will be removed from the Earth
 - We call that moment when the church is removed the Rapture
 - Enoch therefore becomes a picture of God's mercy in removing the believer from the earth in preparation for the pouring out of judgment
 - In Enoch's day, the judgment was water
 - But as 2 Peter 3 says, the future judgment will be fire
 - But as Enoch was rescued from that coming flood, so will the church be rescued before the final time of judgment comes to the earth
 - But not before Enoch warned the world of that coming judgment, as Jude explains

Jude 14 It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,

Jude 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh

things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

- God used Enoch’s life to illustrate His love and mercy for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose
- But finally today, notice that Enoch’s line doesn’t end

Gen. 5:25 Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech.

Gen. 5:26 Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:27 So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

- His own son Methuselah outlives not only dad but every other human being at 969 years
 - His names means “when he dies, it shall be sent”
 - According to the genealogies in Genesis, the year Methuselah died was the same year that the flood came upon the earth
- Enoch declared even in his son’s name, a prophetic message warning of the coming judgment
 - In fact, notice that not one of the men in the line of Messiah dies in the Flood
 - All of them either die naturally prior to the flood, are raptured (Enoch) or are rescued (Noah)
 - This is consistent with Peter’s teaching that God will rescue the righteous from the coming judgment
- When we return to Genesis, we’ll finish Chapter 5 as part of an introduction into Noah and the flood story, which begins in Chapter 6

- We return to Chapter 5 only briefly to see an introduction to Noah and the flood story

Gen. 5:28 Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son.

Gen. 5:29 Now he called his name Noah, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.”

Gen. 5:30 Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 5:31 So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

Gen. 5:32 Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

- Methuselah was the father of Lamech, and he lives longer than his own father, Enoch and longer than his son, Lamech
 - Lamech is introduced here just long enough to connect the dots between Mathuselah and Lamech’s famous son
 - We can see that Moses believes that Lamech’s son is worth our focused attention
 - Because Moses goes out of his way to tell us about the naming of this particular boy
 - When Lamech named his son, he called him Noah, saying he will give us rest from our work and from the toil of the curse on the Earth
 - The boy’s name literally means comfort, in the sense of rest
 - But look at Lamech’s statement
 - Is Noah going to accomplish these things?
 - Will Noah put an end to our work and to the curse on the Earth?
 - No
 - But we can make sense of Lamech’s statement in two ways
 - First, he is likely making the same mistake that Eve made a few generations earlier
 - He must have received a indication from God that Noah would play a special role in God’s plan for redemption
 - But then Lamech went too far and assumed Noah was to be the promised seed, the Messiah
 - So Lamech names Noah and claims he will put an end to the curse and bring our work to an end
 - Clearly, he was wrong

- But by his statement, Lamech does create through his son a picture of the coming Messiah
 - For the coming Messiah does give us rest from our work, the work of trying to earn our own salvation
 - And eventually, the Messiah's reign on Earth will bring the curse to an end
- So now having inadvertently established his son as a picture of the Messiah's saving work, we begin the story of the flood

Gen. 6:1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

Gen. 6:2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

Gen. 6:3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Gen. 6:4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

- Moses now begins the story of Noah and the Flood
 - More specifically, Moses moves from talking about Adam's sons to the daughters of men
 - And the daughters of men become the backstory for why the Flood was necessary
 - Moses sets the scene with an intriguing passage describing intermarriage between daughters of men and the sons of God
 - There is some debate concerning what Moses is describing here, but I believe the answer is fairly straightforward
 - First, notice that whatever Moses is describing in vv.1-2, the obvious point is that this event is notable and unusual
 - Otherwise, why would Moses take effort to describe marriage in the normal sense?
 - Furthermore, the terms Moses uses tell us that this isn't a typical marriage
 - He says daughters of men, which is easy enough to understand
 - Then Moses says these daughters were attracting the attention of the sons of God (*ben elohim*)
 - The Bible never refers to natural men as the sons of God
 - The only other references to "*ben elohim*" are found in Job and all refer to angels
 - Even the Septuagint translated "sons of God" as angels of God

- If these were angels, then we must also conclude that these angels were of the demonic kind – disobedient, fallen angels
 - Jude gives us a confirmation of this event

Jude 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

Jude 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

- Jude says that angels did not keep their own domain but went after strange flesh
 - These demons are now undergoing punishment of eternal fire as examples
- As we look at the text in Genesis 6, we can find an interesting parallel to Genesis 3
 - In Genesis 3 we're told that the woman saw the fruit was good and took it
 - In Genesis 6:2, the demon realm does exactly the same thing to woman
 - They look, see that woman is beautiful and take her
 - It was an act of rebellion and sin
- The question then becomes why would the demonic realm want to mate with women?
 - The answer brings us back to the theme of the book of Genesis: the seed that will fulfill God's promise to redeem men from sin
 - The demons and their master Satan understand that God has promised to crush them with a Messiah, a Seed who comes in keeping with God's promise in the Garden
 - But that Seed will come through woman specifically
 - The promise of the coming Messiah was given to Eve and was a privilege that women would share
 - In fact, the desire of every Jewish girl's heart was that she might have the blessing of birthing the Messiah
 - Therefore, the demons began to mate with women to corrupt the human race and the seed line to the Messiah
 - If the lines of men were sufficiently corrupted, then there would be no seed line available for God to carry through on His promise
 - How could such an unholy union be possible?
 - We remember from other passages of Scripture that angels (demons) have the ability to appear to men in human form
 - And they can convey a convincing illusion
 - In a later account of Abraham, we will see him eat with angels and not know who they are (at least at first)

- In the story of Lot, he is visited by two angels that appear to be men and take Lot by the hand to lead him out of the city
 - So we can accept that demons have the ability to imitate and counterfeit human flesh including the seed of men
- So the prospect of demons mating with women isn't impossible to accept under these circumstances, but what of the offspring
 - The passage gives us a description of the offspring in v.4
 - The Bible calls them Nephilim, which means fallen ones in Hebrew
 - But the Septuagint chose to translate the Hebrew word into *gigantes* in Greek, rather than leaving it as a proper noun
 - *Gigantes* means giant in English, but the original Hebrew was not trying to suggest that the offspring of angels and women were giants
 - In fact, it would have been an even greater danger if the offspring were indistinguishable from normal men
 - They would have mixed in more easily and without being easily detectable
 - In the text of v.4 there is a potentially confusing statement I want to clarify
 - Moses says that the Nephilim were on earth in those days and also afterward
 - Some think Moses is implying that this intermarriage continued after the flood
 - They even cite Numbers and the story of the ten spies who reported seeing Nephilim in the promised land
 - The report of the ten spies was not accurate, as the story in Numbers bears out
 - They were lying to persuade the people of Israel not to enter, since they were afraid of the Canaanites
 - Furthermore, it is the syntax of the Hebrew in Genesis 6 that is the cause for our confusion
 - If we read it in the Hebrew, we find that the phrase “and afterward” is connected to the second half of the sentence, not the first half
 - Listen to the Septuagint:

Gen. 6:4 Now the giants were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants of old, the men of renown.

- So, the “afterward” is simply a connecting word in Hebrew to introduce what happened after the demons mated with women
- The offspring are called Nephilim, fallen ones, but they pose a new and significant threat to God's plan for mankind

- The introduction of fallen angels into the genealogy of mankind would interfere with God's plan to bring Messiah into the world as a man
 - Messiah must share in the nature of man in order to redeem man
 - If man's nature has been corrupted into one that shares the demon nature, God's plan to bring Messiah would be thwarted
- So in v.3, God says His Spirit shall not strive with men forever
 - The Hebrew word for strive is unique, making it difficult to define since it only occurs here in the entire Bible
 - It probably means to remain with man, as in to keep his physical body alive
 - Remember that God breathed His spirit into man to bring Adam to life
 - But that joining of spirit and flesh was no longer permanent
 - Flesh was now destined to perish because of the curse
 - So God is saying that all flesh is destined to die sooner or later
 - And now the flesh of men was being systematically corrupted by angels
 - So God declares that if an end to flesh is inevitable anyway, He now sets a limit to how long flesh will remain on the earth
 - So after 120 years, God will put an end to all corrupted flesh on Earth
 - This becomes the countdown timer until the flood strikes the Earth
 - And it explains the need for such a drastic response on God's part
 - If man's sin alone was reason enough to destroy the world, we should have expected to see it happen many times over

Gen. 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Gen. 6:6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Gen. 6:7 The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

Gen. 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

- To ensure we have a proper understanding for why the flood occurs, Moses describes a second reason for God's actions
 - While the demonic realm was working to undermine God's plan, the sin of men was also growing to unsustainable levels on the earth
 - The wickedness of men was great, we're told
 - Men have always been sinful
 - But in the world that existed after the Garden, there was little to restrain the

power of sin in society

- The only means God provided for the restraint of sin after the Fall was the conscience of man
 - God has not instituted government nor the death penalty
 - God has not yet delivered His Law
 - So man's sin is only governed by his own conscience
- Moses explains that man's internal thoughts and imagination were evil continually
 - The word imagination is *yatzar*
 - It's the same word used in Gen. 2:7 to describe how God created (*yatsar*) man out of the dust of the ground
 - God used His creative powers to produce something good
 - But corrupted man now uses his creative powers to construct evil continually
- The point of Moses' description is that man's conscience has been shown unable to restrain man's sin
 - Apart from the chosen seed line through Seth, men became entirely evil, because the sin nature cannot be restrained by our conscience
 - And now the sheer number of people, combined with their unrestrained sinfulness, has reached a level God no longer can accept
- Then Moses said that God was sad and He regretted making man
 - Some English versions may even say God repented of making man
 - Whenever we see this description of God, we must understand it in light of all Scripture
 - For example, Scripture teaches clearly that God does not change His mind in the sense of a man
 - We change our mind when we learn new information that alters our understanding and leads us to different conclusions
 - This never happens with God
 - So we must understand v.6 in light of this Biblical truth
 - In this case Moses says God was sorry He made man, but the sense of it – in light of all Scripture – is that God was regretful for how His creation had deteriorated
 - This statement does not imply surprise over circumstances, much less a changed attitude toward creation
 - The fact that God planned for this moment doesn't mean that it doesn't pain Him when it finally arrives
 - Rather, God always displays regret or sorrow in the face of sin
 - And so He displays sorrow when He witnesses how man's sin progresses to extreme levels

- In fact, notice in v.7 that God's "sorrow" extends beyond man to include land animals and birds
 - Clearly, sorrow doesn't mean that God feels He made a mistake or changed His mind
 - His sorrow is dissatisfaction in the way sin is overtaking creation
 - And that disappointment was so great that God was grieved and forced to act in response
- God's response is a worldwide judgment that will blot out all these creatures
 - God's response will result in the elimination of all creatures that have *chay nephesh*, or the life blood
 - Notice that fish are excluded, further confirming they are not considered to be creatures with *chay nephesh*
 - So this will be a worldwide judgment from which there is no escape
 - As we progress through the story of Noah, we're also going to take time along the way to examine prophetic clues God has left behind in his story
 - By clues, I'm referring to symbols, pictures, shadows, and other markers taken from the account of Noah that point prophetically to a future moment
 - So as we begin the story of Noah, I want to set the stage for this comparison by highlighting the first clue or marker today
- Moses has opened the story of Noah by describing the times and circumstances of that day
 - And these times share an interesting parallel with something Jesus describes in the Gospels

Matt. 24:37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

Matt. 24:38 "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

Matt. 24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

- Jesus tells us that His second coming will occur at a time and under circumstances similar to the days of Noah
 - In what way are they similar?
 - There are three ways in which they are comparable, one of which Jesus gives us in vv. 38-39
- First, the days of Noah are marked by hyperactivity among the demonic realm
 - In Noah's day, demons were mating with women
 - In the days immediately before Jesus' return, the Bible in Revelation describes a world in which the Antichrist has been revealed

- And this man will die in the middle of the seven year tribulation, and after three days his body will come back to life
- The source of his new life is actually the indwelling of Satan
- The Antichrist's soul remains in hell, but the body is used by Satan to construct a counterfeit resurrection
- This is the kind of extreme demonic mixing with humans that mirrors the activity of Noah's day
- Secondly, the depravity of men will reach extreme levels
 - Paul describes the seriousness of this future in 2 Timothy

2Tim. 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2Tim. 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2Tim. 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

2Tim. 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2Tim. 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

- Remember, Paul isn't saying that these kinds of sin are unique to the end times
 - He's saying that the last days are marked because all men become this way
 - The world as a whole acts this way, rather than just the worst of society
- It seems clear to me that we're moving steadily in this direction
- Finally, Jesus gives us a third way in which the circumstances of Noah's day mirror the times of His return
 - The world is oblivious, and even hostile, to the notion of His return
 - In v.39, Jesus says they didn't understand until the Flood came
 - They didn't understand that Noah's warnings were true
 - They didn't understand that God would bring judgment for sin
 - They didn't understand that they would be included in the judgment
- Today it's easy to see the same kind of attitude in the world
 - The recent predictions of a Rapture by false teachers, and their misguided and deceived followers, gives us memorable proof

A Facebook page titled "Post-rapture looting" offers this invitation: "When everyone is gone and God's not looking, we need to pick up some sweet stereo equipment and maybe some new furniture for the mansion we're going to

squat in." By Wednesday afternoon, more than 175,000 people indicated they would be "attending" the "public event."

In the Army town of Fayetteville, N.C., the local chapter of the American Humanist Association has turned the event into a two-day extravaganza, with a Saturday night party followed by a day-after concert.

The Rapture -- the belief that Christ will bring the faithful into paradise prior to a period of tribulation on earth that precedes the end of time -- is a relatively new notion compared to Christianity itself, and most Christians don't believe in it. And even believers rarely attempt to set a date for the event.

- So as we dive into the story of Noah next week, we will continue to look for these parallels

- Having studied the reasons for the flood last week, now we're ready to move into the Flood story
 - And the story begins with a man, Noah

Gen. 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Gen. 6:9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

Gen. 6:10 Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Gen. 6:11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.

Gen. 6:12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

- We remember that the earth has filled with sinful men, each left to his own conscience to choose right from wrong
 - And our conscience fails us every time, for the world is filled with violence
 - Even the demon realm has crossed a line
 - And God is regretful that His work of creation has come to this
 - So as He contemplates the world's condition and how to respond, we're told that one man gains God's approval
 - Noah finds favor in the eyes of the Lord
 - The word for favor is *chen* which is simply grace in Hebrew
 - Noah receives God's grace
 - Noah is also from the line of Seth, and so he is the seed line continuing from Adam
 - The seed line is the line through which God will fulfill His promise, and this line will be men who know and follow the Lord
 - Knowing and following the Lord is something that only God can make possible through His grace
 - Here we see God taking that step again
 - He has intervened in the normal course of a man's life and brought faith into the man's heart so that he might receive God's grace
- Once God's grace has rested on Noah, we see what follows in the next verse
 - Noah is called a righteous man in v.9
 - And Noah is said to be blameless in his time
 - The Hebrew word for blameless means without blemish, with integrity and upright
 - We're not talking about a perfect person, but a godly person

- And he walks with God
 - A man who knows and follows the living God
- Make sure you notice the order of those descriptions
 - First Noah finds favor, grace
 - Secondly, Noah is declared righteous
 - Third, Noah leads a godly life and follows the Lord
- This is the pattern for all men who follow the Lord
 - Hebrews says this:

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Heb. 11:2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

- Noah, like all men, gained God's approval by faith not by his performance
 - It's been the same for OT and NT, for there is no other way
- Why is Noah in this position?
 - By God's gracious choice and so that God may be faithful to His promise to bring a seed through men
 - Noah was to be the one through whom the seed promise would be fulfilled
 - You might remember that Noah was the tenth in the line from Adam
 - And in the numerology of the Bible, the number 10 is a number of testimony
 - While nine is the number of judgment
 - So the generations before Noah are wiped out by the Flood
 - But Noah's family, the tenth generation, will live on as a testimony to God's grace
- Moses takes a moment to list Noah's sons because these sons had been born before the Flood
 - Moses is singling out the family of Noah to make a point here
 - You have Noah and his three sons
 - And in the culture of the times, listing the men implied their wives too
 - So you have four men, and four women...a total of 8
 - Eight people are listed in the genealogy of Noah
 - And by contrast, the rest of humanity are corrupt
 - Notice the language in vv.11-12
 - It's complete without exception
 - All flesh is corrupt, filled with violence

- The sense is that there is nothing worth redeeming other than the 8 in Noah's family who received God's grace
- Having introduced Noah and his family and explained why Noah escapes the judgment, we now hear the commission God gave Noah

Gen. 6:13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

Gen. 6:14 "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.

Gen. 6:15 "This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

Gen. 6:16 "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

- Noah receives his famous call to build an ark
 - First, God gives Noah the reason for the call...the end of all flesh has come
 - This announcement begins the 120 years that God decreed earlier
 - In this period of time God is going to give Noah time to prepare the Ark, collect food and animals, and enter it
 - Now we see that the point of the delay is so that a time of preparation can take place in the meantime
 - As we saw last week, the story of Noah is a shadow for a later time of judgment
 - Many of the details of this account are intended to foreshadow the coming judgment at the Lord's Second Coming
 - Here we see another of those shadows
 - The shadow is explained clearly by Peter

2Pet. 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,

2Pet. 3:4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

2Pet. 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

2Pet. 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

2Pet. 3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2Pet. 3:8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

2Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

2Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- Peter says that those who ignore the signs of the coming judgment are forgetting the lesson of Noah's flood
 - God isn't slow in keeping His promise to return and judge the world
 - He is patiently waiting so that none of His children will perish
 - Just like He patiently waited for Noah to build the Ark to save his family, God is waiting now
 - When the last appointed believer has entered the family of God by faith, then the end can come
 - Because all the righteous will be safe
 - In Noah's day, the righteous were saved by entering an Ark
 - In our day, we are saved from judgment by entering Christ
 - In that way, we begin to see that the Ark itself is a picture of Christ, something we will develop more as we go through the story
- God says all flesh must come to an end
 - Flesh refers to all living creatures with the breath of life
 - Land animals and man
 - And God says He will destroy both them and the earth itself
 - We might ask why the animals are caught up in this judgment?
 - Well, all the earth was placed under the same curse when men sinned
 - And both the land animals and men came from the dust of the ground
 - So both are suffering the effects of sin
 - Here we also see clear evidence that the animal kingdom is part of the earth created for man
 - And if man is to be destroyed, animals have no reason to exist apart from serving man
 - The only animals that will survive are those that accompany the family of Noah
- So Noah is told to construct an Ark
 - The word for ark in Hebrew is literally chest or box

- The same word is also used to described the basket that Moses floated in as a baby
 - But other than that, it's never used for anything else
 - Only after Noah heard the dimensions would he have realized this would be no ordinary box
- Why does God call it an ark and not a boat?
 - The simple answer is that a boat didn't exist in Noah's day
 - There is no evidence that man had ventured off the land
 - Remember all land is still connected so there is no need to get in a boat
 - There was no where you couldn't travel by land
 - Traveling by boat led you back to the same land
 - And fishing was pointless as well, since people ate plants
 - So there was no word for boat, nor would Noah have understood what it meant
- We can also assume that the exact manner of construction was something Noah received from God as Noah progressed through the project
 - He may have had great skill in wood work
 - But we can assume he still would have needed some outside expertise to construct something on this scale for the first time
- The ark itself is an impressive ship
 - It was 450 feet long (1½ football fields), 75 feet wide and 45 feet high (a four story building)
 - With three decks, it had 100,000 square feet and a million cubic space
 - Equal to 800 railroad box cars
 - In appearance, it was a floating box, very stable and almost impossible to capsize, especially when loaded
 - We don't know what gopher wood was, so the type of wood is a mystery
 - It was to be covered inside and outside with pitch, or *kopher*
 - The ark was covered with pitch or tar to make it waterproof and to seal the wood so it wouldn't become water logged or leak
 - This was an essential step
 - If the boat wasn't watertight, then even after it began to float, it would eventually sink in the judgment waters
 - Interestingly, the word *kopher* is the same word for atonement in Hebrew
 - So the Ark provided salvation for Noah and his family from God's judgment on the world's sin
 - And the key component that made Noah's salvation possible was the covering (*kopher*) or atonement that ensured they would remain safe when judgment came

- Again, the Ark is becoming a greater picture of Christ
 - For Christ is our atonement for sin
 - Were it not for Christ's atonement, we wouldn't stand a chance when God's judgment fell
 - But if we are in Christ (like Noah was in the Ark), we are protected by Christ's atonement
- Now at about this point, Noah is probably wondering why he needed to build such a large ship

Gen. 6:17 “Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

Gen. 6:18 “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

Gen. 6:19 “And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

Gen. 6:20 “Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.

Gen. 6:21 “As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.”

- God's explanation is that His judgment will take the form of a flood of water on the earth
 - It must be water, because God is intent on taking away the breath of life
 - Obviously, breathing will end when the flood comes
 - This is not to say that there is no collateral damage to sea creatures, but they are not extinguished in the same way as land animals were
 - As God describes this event, He uses a unique Hebrew word for flood –used only of the Noahic event
 - The Greek word used in the NT for Noah's flood is also unique = *cataclysmos*
 - In both cases, these words are not the normal words used for local floods
 - They are specific to a worldwide event, something unparalleled
 - One question to consider at this point is why does God use a flood to take everyone's life?
 - Since the Bible says that God must actively uphold life or it would end instantly
 - Col 1:17 says that all things are being held together by Christ's creative power
 - If God wants to destroy life, couldn't He just make it happen instantly without using a Flood?

- People and animals would just drop dead, except for Noah's family
 - Yes, of course He could
- But there are at least three reasons why God does it with a flood instead
 - First, the flood gives opportunity for God to create the pictures and shadows He wants so He can teach concerning the final judgment
 - Secondly, the flood waters become an effective mechanism to bury the carcasses of so many dead men and animals
 - The mass burial of all these living creatures becomes the fossils we see today in the geological record
 - Thirdly, the forces required to create the flood will tear apart the world
 - Continents will be reshaped, climate will change, and natural features like mountains and oceans will become barriers
 - These changes along with others that come after the flood will support God's purpose in making it harder for man's sin to escalate out of control again
- Since this news must have been disturbing to Noah, God also gives Noah some assurance that all is not lost
 - God will preserve Noah and his family because of a covenant
 - When Noah leaves the Ark, God will enter into a covenant with Noah in Chapter 9
 - This is the first use of the word covenant in the Bible
 - Though that doesn't mean this is the first covenant in force
 - We've already seen God make promises, which are the basic elements of covenant
- Finally, God gets to the most memorable and incredible part of the commission
 - Noah will bring along a menagerie of land creatures
 - God will ensure that a male and female of each will be included
 - Notice how God says they will find their way to the Ark
 - In v.20, God says these animals will come to Noah
 - If you've ever wondered how Noah could collect so many animals, here's your answer
 - God directed animals to Noah once the Ark was ready
 - Also, remember that all land is in one place, so all animals live on the same continent
 - Some might discredit the story of Noah on the question of how did he fit so many animals in the ark
 - People have grossly overestimated how many species/kinds of animals there are

- Kind is a broader word than species and reflects the way God made animals originally
 - One kind would eventually diversify into many subkinds or species
 - So Noah only needs to preserve one pair of a given kind, to ensure many subkinds will eventually exist after the flood
- Excluding sea creatures and plants, there are only about 200,000 hundred thousand species of animals and insects in the world
 - And if we assume that only two species per “kind”, we could easily put 100,000 animals in the Ark and have 30% of the boat left over for the people and food supplies
- But why don’t the lions eat the zebras?
 - Because they all eat plants
 - Remember, the animals do not have a predator-prey relationship yet at this point
 - That won’t be established until Chapter 9
- Finally, we see Noah’s reaction to God’s instructions

Gen. 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

- Noah is perhaps the most remarkable man in the Bible, save Christ Himself
 - In the three chapters that cover the flood account from front to back, God speaks to Noah seven times
 - And in all that time, the Bible records Noah speaking back to God exactly zero times
 - Noah is never recorded to say a word to God in response to His instructions
 - No other patriarch receives so many revelations from God and says nothing in return

- As last week ended, we came to the end of God's instructions to Noah

Gen. 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

- What a remarkable testimony to the faith of Noah
 - In the entire story of Noah, there is never a moment when Noah is recorded speaking to God
 - Noah is a man who listens and obeys
 - He doesn't question, he doesn't argue, he doesn't make excuses
 - Noah had probably the most difficult assignment in all the Bible
 - And he said not a word to question the instructions
 - And he obeyed doing all that the Lord commanded him
 - The only thing the Bible ever says about Noah's response is what we see in v.22 (repeated today in 7:5)
 - Noah did all that the Lord commanded him
 - In fact, the Hebrew in this verse is repetitive to emphasize Noah's utter obedience
 - Noah is arguably the most obedient man in the Old Testament
 - Other men received much easier instructions
 - Like Jonah, or Gideon
 - And those men questioned God or even rebelled entirely
 - I think Noah amazes me so much because the combination of how great a thing he is given, and how perfectly he obeys
 - Even when facing the most extreme and difficult instructions, remember Noah was called to build a giant boat
 - In a world that hadn't seen rain
 - And Noah obeyed without hesitation
 - And now add to that fact...there is no evidence that God spoke to Noah again during the intervening 120 years
 - Can you take God's instructions and obey them without questioning for decades if not millennia?
 - There is an example of faith!
 - Often when people ask how they know when it's time to leave, or time to move on... I tell them to look to Noah
 - Do the last thing you heard God tell you, until you hear something else
 - We could do worse than to model our own obedience after this man

- Especially since obedience isn't valued today the way the Bible values it

A father had a rough day, and when bed-time finally came for his young daughter, he laid down the law: "We're putting on your p.j.s, brushing your teeth, and reading ONE book. Then it's lights out!"

Her bottom lip began to quiver, and she put her arms around his neck in a gentle embrace, and she said, "We learned in Sunday school about little boys and girls who don't have mommies and daddies."

The dad's attitude immediately began to soften. He thought to himself that even after he'd been so stern and strict with his daughter, she was still grateful to have him as her father. He felt tears beginning to well up in his eyes, and as he began to rethink his commands, she whispered, "Maybe you could go be THEIR dad?"

- So obedience just isn't as appreciated much, but Noah models it perfectly

Gen. 7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.

Gen. 7:2 "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female;

Gen. 7:3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

Gen. 7:4 "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

Gen. 7:5 Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.

Gen. 7:6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

Gen. 7:7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

Gen. 7:8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground,

Gen. 7:9 there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

- The time has come to enter the Ark
 - In Chapter 6 God said He would only strive with man for 120 years
 - Since the flood is now about to begin, we know it's been 120 years since God

made that declaration

- Now that the Ark is ready, God gives Noah new instructions for entering
 - Earlier, God had instructed Noah to bring in two of every land animal
 - Here God adds new instructions to Noah that he should bring additional numbers (7) of clean animals
 - While the Mosaic Law had yet to be established, God has obviously revealed to Noah what were clean animals
 - So God's Law, while not yet fully revealed, still existed and Noah was aware of it to some extent
- Why does God ask Noah to bring these additional clean animals?
 - We can jump ahead in the story of Noah to see the answer
 - After Noah leaves the Ark, we read

Gen. 8:20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

- The moment God speaks to Noah in 7:1, we have reached a point on earth where there is none righteous but Noah and his family
 - The line of Seth, the seed of the Messiah, has been reduced to only Noah
 - Methuselah must have died at the moment of v.1 so now the flood can come without jeopardizing the righteous
 - Only Noah is left
 - Consider the patience of God and the wisdom of His work through men
 - 969 years ago, God directed a father to name his son Methuselah, which means when he dies, it will come
 - God was at work planning a flood
 - Then 600 years earlier, God brought Noah into the world with the name rest
 - And 120 years earlier, he directs Noah to begin building
 - 20 years after Noah begins building, he receives his three sons
 - God has set in motion all these events so that on a day He appointed, they would culminate in the flood and the destruction of ungodly men
 - What is God doing in your life even now in preparation for something years from now?
 - The Lord may not do what we want when we want Him to, but His timing is always perfect
 - He is always at work in our lives, and He invites us to participate and join Him in that work
 - He calls us into a relationship with Him and then He brings us an awareness

of His work around us and calls us to join Him

- Obedience is defined as working God's plan instead of our own
 - But as Jesus said, we must be willing to set down our own work first, before we can pick up His cross and follow Him

Luke 9:59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."

Luke 9:60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:61 Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

- Speaking of timing, in v.7 God announces that Noah and his family of seven must enter the Ark because He will bring rain in seven days
 - This is the first time rain will have ever fallen on the Earth
 - Until now, the earth has been watered with a mist, as was described in Genesis 2
 - But God is about to change that pattern in a dramatic way, which we'll examine more in a minute
 - But first notice that Noah and his family are entering the Ark well before the rain begins
 - Seven days beforehand
 - They haven't seen anything change yet, nothing that would indicate that the disaster God predicted will actually come about
 - Can we imagine how difficult it might have been for them to enter this giant boat filled with animals while the sun was still shining?
 - What compels someone to enter under those conditions?
 - Faith
 - The world is filled with people, but God has declared only 8 are righteous
 - And we know that righteousness is not earned
 - It can only be given to us by God on the basis of our faith in the One Who earned it on our behalf, Jesus
 - So Noah and his family are righteous because they believed – had faith in – God's word
 - So what did they believe in? Did they believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
 - No, they believed in the word they had been given by God
 - They believed in the reality of a coming judgment by flood waters

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

- Rain had not yet been seen on the earth, yet Noah and his family entered seven days early
 - Why did God call them in so early?
 - So that there might be a visible proof of their faith
 - If you didn't believe in the promise of God, you wouldn't enter that Ark
 - You might consent to help build it
 - But if each member of the family hadn't personally accepted the truth of God's word, they would have never entered that boat under clear skies
- Faith brings a response to God's word, and the response by Noah and his family was to enter this Ark
 - It was a harder step than I think we can imagine, and it no doubt brought great ridicule by those in that day
 - And each of those who saw them enter heard Noah's testimony that the end was near, but there was no longer any hope for them
- Here we find another parallel and picture for the future judgment
 - In a future day, perhaps a day very soon, those God has declared righteous will be removed from the world for a short time
 - Seven years to be exact
 - And those seven years will be a time of waiting for the world before judgment falls at Christ's return
 - The entering of Noah and his family into the Ark – the world's entire righteous population – pictures the rapture of the Church
 - All the world's righteous are removed in an instant, gathered together with Christ – Who is pictured by the Ark itself
 - And we are hidden from the world for a period of seven years
 - And we are taken early as testimony to the world and so that we can escape the coming judgment

Gen. 7:10 It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

Gen. 7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

Gen. 7:12 The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

Gen. 7:13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

Gen. 7:14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds.

Gen. 7:15 So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

Gen. 7:16 Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed it behind him.

- True to His word, God brings the flood
 - We will study this event from a couple of perspectives
 - First, let's examine the facts as they relate to the pictures and shadows that God is presenting through the story
 - Next week, we'll look at the nature of the physical events themselves and how God accomplishes this remarkable moment
 - In v.11, the monumental significance of this event is emphasized with Moses' careful accounting of the day on the Jewish calendar
 - It was the second month, the seventeenth day of the month
 - Moses seems to be imposing the Jewish civil calendar onto the events of Noah's day, based on divine inspiration
 - By that same calendar, Jesus resurrected from the grave on the seventeenth day of the second month
 - Again, Jesus is the Ark, the one who saves us from the coming judgment
 - And that saving work was done for us when Jesus was raised from the dead, proving His power over death
 - And Noah and his family were saved the day they entered into the Ark
 - Though the flood water didn't come for another seven days, Noah and his family were saved on the day they entered
 - It mattered not what day the flood actually arrived, it only mattered that they be in the Ark
 - Having entered, they were immediately saved from any future judgment, whenever it came
 - And notice that everyone entered on the same day, a particular day
 - There is a specific day appointed for them to enter
 - It's not enough to stand near the Ark, or lean against it
 - We can't come up short...you can't be half in and half out

Heb. 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

- The call of the Gospel is an invitation to enter, but the invitation is all or nothing
- And it comes with the same assurance that Noah's family received
 - Having entered our Ark, Christ, we have been saved from the coming judgment
 - This is why Paul can so confidently declare:

Rom. 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- But there is only one way to enter this protection, through its one and only door
 - We can't make our own entrance or devise our own plan
 - We can't hang on the side of the ark or climb aboard later
 - The door is the only way in, and once that door is closed there is no second chance
 - Jesus made the connection between the one door and Himself in John 9-10

John 9:39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

John 9:40 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?"

John 9:41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

John 10:1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.

John 10:2 "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.

John 10:3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:5 "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

John 10:6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

John 10:7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

John 10:8 "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

John 10:9 “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

- There is only one way to access salvation – through Christ
 - There was only one way onto the Ark, to save yourself from the flood – through the door
 - Those who claim there is another way are like thieves and robbers, hoping to jump over the wall
 - These men won’t be recognized by the sheep, who only follow the shepherd
- Notice that the door of the Ark was closed by God
 - There is no going back now
 - The family isn’t leaving the Ark
 - Nothing can remove them, even their own doubts or second thoughts
- Our salvation in Christ is equally assured
 - For we are in Him and God has sealed us with His Spirit

Eph. 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

- Our study in Chapter 7 of Genesis began last week, as we noted the spiritual parallels
 - Between the account of this worldwide judgement and the future judgment to happen at Christ's Second Coming
 - We also noted the pictures of Christ seen in the day the flood began
 - And in the way the family of Noah entered the Ark through one door
 - And the way the door was closed by the hand of God ensuring they remained in the safety of the Ark
- Last week I also mentioned that we needed to examine the events of this chapter a second time considering the physical description of the flood
 - So we could better understand what God is doing here and how He accomplishes it
 - Let's reread part of last week's text from the point when the water arrives
 - And then move forward to finish the chapter

Gen. 7:10 It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

Gen. 7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

Gen. 7:12 The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

Gen. 7:13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

Gen. 7:14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds.

Gen. 7:15 So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

Gen. 7:16 Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed it behind him.

Gen. 7:17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

Gen. 7:18 The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.

Gen. 7:19 The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered.

Gen. 7:20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

Gen. 7:21 All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind;

Gen. 7:22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of

the spirit of life, died.

Gen. 7:23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

Gen. 7:24 The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.

- We're going to examine the events portrayed here, in four steps
 - First, let's review the details of the text so we can be sure we have a full understanding what Scripture tells us concerning the flood
 - Secondly, let's consult other Scripture to learn the source for the water God used to destroy the earth
 - Third, let's understand the effects of the Flood on the earth
 - Fourth, we'll learn where the water went after the flood had ended
- Beginning in v.11 we hear that the flood began with the fountains of the deep bursting open and the floodgates of the sky being opened
 - The Hebrew words for fountains and floodgates gives us a clear picture of the event
 - Fountains means a spring of water coming from the ground
 - Floodgates is the word *arrubbah*, which means chimney or window
 - Imagine a hole in the clouds and water literally pouring through the hole or opening
 - So water fills the world from two directions, up and down
 - The water from above falls for forty 24-hour periods
 - And it falls across the entire globe for that time
 - There are no present-day meteorological conditions that could produce such an event
 - Today, rain clouds drop water that was collected through evaporation elsewhere on the planet
 - If the entire planet were experiencing rain simultaneously, it would quickly come to an end
 - Because there would be no new source for the water, since the evaporation of water could not happen while the entire Earth was experiencing rain
 - Clearly, there must have been a source for the water above, which is different than what we experience in the world today
- Then in v.14, we hear that the animals God has delivered to Noah voluntarily enter the Ark in pairs
 - There is no indication that Noah led, chased, prodded, dragged or coaxed the animals into the Ark
 - The text indicates they went in on their own, on the appointed day

- God clearly delivered them and brought them into the Ark
- Every animal we have today was represented on the Ark, for the Bible says that every land animal after its kind entered the Ark
 - You might take time to note how similar the language in v.14 is to the language used in the creation account in Chapter 1
 - Just as God created all land animals, now He is working to preserve them all
- We also note that the animals were selected by “kind”
 - This special Hebrew word describes an animal type that was designed to diversify into many subtypes over time
 - For example, from one animal kind we may have received all canines
 - By bringing kinds to Noah, God ensured all sub-kinds would be preserved as well – without the need for as many animals to enter the Ark
 - Some of those subkinds exist today while others that left the Ark later went extinct
- Finally, we also understand that the animals that were left on the earth perished in the flood
 - And their bodies were buried by the mud and sediment deposited by the flood waters
 - Thousands of years later, these skeletal remains were discovered by archeologists, deposited in layers piled atop one another
- Next in vv.17-20, Moses describes the Ark being lifted up by the water and floating on the water
 - The water kept rising until even the tops of mountains were covered
 - In fact they were covered to a depth of 22 ft
 - Moses tells us the depth of the water so we can be sure that the Ark cleared every mountain as it floated on the water
 - Based on the Ark’s dimensions, even if half of the ark were submerged, it would still have cleared the mountains
 - Later in Chapter 8 we will discover that the mountains before the flood were much lower than the ones we see today
 - Archeologists have been puzzled by the way woolly mammoths, preserved frozen in ice, are often found clustered together on the tops of mountains or hills
 - The logical answer is they fled from the water to the highest point and then drowned when the water finally engulfed the peaks
- Finally, God confirms that the flood met its intended purpose
 - Every land animal and every person who remained on earth perished under the flood waters
 - Even birds died when they lost a landing place and could not remain aloft any longer

- To ensure that every creature died, and to allow time for the decomposing remains to settle under the mud, the waters remain on the earth a long time
 - Specifically, the earth remained as a ball of water for 150 days
- Before we move to our second point, take note of how the world looks at this point
 - It's all water
 - If viewed from space, the earth would be nothing but blue
 - And remember how the book of Genesis began
 - The earth was formless and consisted of a formless deep
 - And the Spirit of God floated or fluttered over the surface of that deep
 - Now we see God restarting creation in a sense
 - The world is again covered in water and now the Ark (which is a picture of Christ) floats above the surface of the deep
 - The imagery is similar to draw a point for us
 - This is a restart of the world, made necessary by the sin of man
- Having examined the text, let's turn to answer the question where did the water come from?
 - First, we need to remember that all the work of Creation was completed on the Sixth Day

Heb. 4:3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,

“AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,

THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,”

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Heb. 4:4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: **“AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS”;**

- Therefore, no new water was created on the day of the Flood
- All the water used in this event already existed somewhere in Creation
- Secondly, we remember that the world has never experienced rain before this moment
 - So the source of water must be something unique and not like what we experience today, as we've already noted
 - The normal water cycle of evaporation, clouds and rain isn't happening yet
- Looking to Scripture, we find the source
 - First, there is a clue in the creation story itself

Gen. 1:6 Then God said, **“Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”**

Gen. 1:7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below

the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.

- Clearly, as the world was being created, God placed water above the expanse of the air in the world
 - When we studied this chapter, I referred to this suspended water as the atmosphere, which is true
 - But it is also clear that God stored more water above the Earth than we see suspended today
 - The atmosphere must have been especially rich in moisture
 - Or there was a supernatural suspension of large quantities of liquid water stored above for this very moment
- Scripture seems to support the latter conclusion
 - The Psalms alludes to such a storage:

**Psa. 148:4 Praise Him, highest heavens,
And the waters that are above the heavens!**
**Psa. 148:5 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.**

**Psa. 33:6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.**
**Psa. 33:7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.**

- We also have Peter's testimony concerning the waters of creation

2Pet. 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,
2Pet. 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

- Peter notes that the world was created "out of water"
 - This is in keeping with Genesis 1
- But then Peter adds something interesting – "and by water"
 - In v.6 he's talking about God's judgment of the Flood
 - Peter is teaching that some of the water of creation was set aside in the heavens and reserved for this day of judgment
 - God knew it was coming and make plans for it by storing water above the

heavens

- And then He released that water on the appointed day
- So the source of the flood was water stored water in the heavens
 - But remember we've already seen that there was a second source
 - The great springs of the earth were opened up
 - In v.11 the word for opened is *baqa*, which means to cleave open
 - To split open, like splitting a log of wood
 - This description suggests that God tore open the face of the Earth
 - Looking at the world after the Flood, we can see the result of that ripping open
 - The continents were formed by the splitting of the Earth
 - And buried under the earth were springs of water set loose by the movement of the land masses
 - Imagine the destruction created by this sudden, violent movement of the continents?
 - It would dwarf any earthquake we've ever seen
 - It was likely accompanied by great volcanic eruptions
- Since we're already talking about the remaking of the Earth's features, let's move to point three: the effects of the Flood on the Earth
 - We've already noted the movement of the continents
 - And the deposits of fossilized animals around the world under layers of mud
 - Also, the movement of so much water across the Earth – both during its arrival and later when it receded – would have resulted in massive erosion
 - Especially when the continents drained (in Chapter 8), the weight of all that water would have cut huge channels and canyons in the surface of the earth
 - Similar large-scale erosion was witnessed in the days following the Mt. Saint Helens eruption and the melting of snow from the mountain
 - This explains the formation of places like the Grand Canyon and the creation of river valleys and cliffs
 - Next, we mentioned how the atmosphere before the Flood would have been very different due to the huge storage of water above the heavens
 - Now that all that water has dropped, the atmosphere must be very different
 - Drier and with fewer clouds
 - Furthermore, the storehouses of water below the ground have been released
 - So the mist that rose up to water the ground will no longer be available
 - Instead, rain will now be a regular feature on the Earth
 - Furthermore, the movement of some continents to farther reaches north and south will lead to a wider variety of climates

- Some with harsher weather than before
 - Before, all the land was located in the same place and experienced a consistent and likely similar weather pattern
- Now the continents have split, water scattering animals and plants everywhere, and the new land experiencing new climates
 - This explains why scientists find fossils of tropical plants in the middle of deserts
 - Or fossils of fish on the tops of mountains
 - Or woolly mammoths flash frozen in ice
- Finally, let's answer the question of where did the water go?
 - At first glance, it's a tough question because it seems an impossible problem to solve
 - How do you eliminate enough water to expose the seven continents, leaving a third of the world's surface exposed?
 - In Chapter 8 Moses will tell us that the water recedes over a period of months
 - And then in Psalm 104, we get a concise description of where it went

**Psa. 104:5 He established the earth upon its foundations,
So that it will not totter forever and ever.**

**Psa. 104:6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters were standing above the mountains.**

**Psa. 104:7 At Your rebuke they fled,
At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.**

**Psa. 104:8 The mountains rose; the valleys sank down
To the place which You established for them.**

**Psa. 104:9 You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
So that they will not return to cover the earth.**

- In v.5 the psalmist credits God with creating the earth
 - Then in vv.6-9 he describes the flood upon the earth
 - First, the psalmist says God covered the earth with the deep (*teholm*) meaning the waters of the flood
 - It was like throwing a garment over the Earth
 - The waters were covering the mountains, as Genesis 7 tells us
 - He says the waters fled the land at God's rebuke
 - They hurried away, which communicates a clear image of the water receding quickly in a violent rush creating those canyons
- Now notice the key part: the mountains rose and the valleys sank

- This happens as the waters recede
 - God takes parts of the land and makes them taller
 - And other parts of the land and makes them lower
 - No new material is being created – land is simply being displaced
 - The mountains on Earth now are much taller than those in the time before the flood
- And the valleys God deepened are the trenches in the sea
 - The deepest valleys on Earth are in the sea, including the deepest of all, the Marianas Trench
 - It extends 7 miles down
 - If Mt Everest were placed in the trench, its peak would still be a mile and a half under water
- As God created these trenches in the basin of the oceans, the water did what water naturally does
 - It seeks the lowest point
 - It ran off the high slopes of the mountains and into the valleys in the oceans
- Today's lesson gave us the chance to focus on the "how" of God's work in the Flood
 - We didn't take time to make many applications or ask questions about how God wants us to put this knowledge to work
 - But let this lesson draw your mind to the awesome power and wisdom of the God we serve
 - If God has the power to work these wonders on a worldwide scale, is there anything He can't do in response to our needs or circumstances?
 - And knowing His wisdom, can we ever doubt that whatever may happen in our daily lives, it must be according to His wise and masterful plan?
 - Glory be to God!

- When we last heard from Noah and his family, they were floating in the ark while the waters above and below poured onto the Earth
 - The water level rose for 150 days
 - And now we reach the pinnacle of both the flood waters themselves and the story of Noah

Gen. 8:1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.

Gen. 8:2 Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained;

Gen. 8:3 and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased.

Gen. 8:4 In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.

- The chapter opens with the statement that God remembered Noah and those who were with him on the Ark
 - If you think that Moses was implying that God forgot about Noah, think again
 - The phrase simply means that God turned again to attend to Noah
 - God was finished with bringing His wrath upon the Earth, and now it was time to attend to the survivors
 - At this point, it's been 150 days, or half a year according to the Jewish calendar
 - So the waters prevailed for 150 days, and then God began to reduce the waters
 - And after 150 days, the Ark rests on the mountains of Ararat in present day Turkey
 - This is now the seventh month, the seventeenth day
 - The Jewish people have had two different calendars in their history but both are based on the moon rather than the sun
 - There have been two calendars because God altered the Jewish calendar during the Exodus
 - The calendar was shifted six months, so that the seventh month of the civil calendar became the first month in the new religious calendar
 - So notice here that the ark rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month - probably according to the civil calendar
 - Since the religious calendar hadn't been given yet
 - So this is also the first month under the religious calendar
 - So the ark rested on the same day that Jesus was resurrected
 - Knowing that the ark pictures Christ, here we see the ark resting on the

mountain

- Resting from the work of saving Noah and his family from God's judgment
 - Just as Jesus rested from His works to save believers from the coming judgment
- The actual process of drying up the water is interesting as well
 - It begins, we're told, with a wind that God causes to blow
 - The word for wind in Hebrew is *ruach*, which is the same Hebrew word for Spirit
 - We see that same word used in Genesis 1:2 when the earth was also a formless deep of water
 - And the Spirit (*ruach*) was moving over the surface of the waters
 - As we said last week, there is a deliberate parallel between the creation account and this story
 - God is "recreating" the world in a sense
 - But the word *ruach* probably means wind in this case
 - Indicating that the new climate has emerged
 - Producing winds, clouds, evaporation and the new water cycle that produces rain
 - We looked last week at how God accomplished the removal of so much water
 - According to Psalm 104, the mountains were raised and the ocean floors lowered
 - And the water ran down into the trenches as the land rose above the water
 - Naturally, as this great run off happened, gorges are cut into the land and a few pockets of water were left behind
 - These created many of the lakes we see today, including the Great Salt Lake
 - Interestingly, we have proof today that many very tall mountains were once under water
 - Scientists today can find fossilized sea creatures deposited on the highest mountains around the world
 - Also, many mountains are volcanic, indicating they were created by volcanic eruptions, as would have occurred during the upheaval of the continents moving
 - Mt. Ararat is a volcanic mountain, but the volcanic rock itself is an unique form of volcanic rock – pillow lava
 - Pillow lava is a bulbous form of lava rock that can only be formed when hot lava emerges from the Earth's crust while under water
 - In other words, Mt. Ararat was formed by an underwater volcano – yet today is 17,000 ft high

Gen. 8:5 The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

Gen. 8:6 Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made;

Gen. 8:7 and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.

Gen. 8:8 Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land;

Gen. 8:9 but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself.

Gen. 8:10 So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark.

Gen. 8:11 The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.

Gen. 8:12 Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

- At the point the Ark is resting on land, there is still water in the distance as far as the eye can see
 - Noah can tell he isn't floating any longer, but he is still waiting for a sign he can leave the ark
 - After 2 1/2 months, the tops of mountains become visible
 - Then after another 40 days pass, Noah releases a raven
 - It flies back and forth, as Noah observes, but it never returns to the ark
 - Ravens are unclean animals, so Noah had only two of these birds
 - Why did he risk releasing one and what was the purpose?
 - Ravens feed on the carcasses of dead animals
 - So if the bird is moving back and forth over the waters, it's an indication to Noah that there is still rotting flesh floating
 - The bird is moving from carcass to carcass
 - If the bird had a lack of food, it would have returned to the Ark to be fed
 - When the bird needed to rest, it would have landed on the mountain tops
 - It stayed away from the ark entirely until the land was dry
- After seven days, Noah begins to send out doves
 - We know Noah waited seven days between birds, because when he releases the second dove in v.10, the text says "another" seven days
 - Indicating that Noah waited seven days between each bird

- Why release the dove and why did it return?
 - Doves are clean animals, and they are particular about where they land
 - They will only land on dry, clean ground or trees
 - They do not eat meat
 - And they prefer valleys and low areas to mountains
 - So if the dove found no where to land but returned to the boat, then as v.9 says, the ground was not yet dry enough
- When Noah releases the dove a second time, it returns with an olive twig
 - Olive trees are unique in that they will grow while submerged under water
 - The trees also prefer mountain sides, so this dove found an olive tree growing on the mountain side that was dry and growing
 - So the olive branch tells Noah that the waters have receded more and plant life is returning to the world
 - But since the dove returns, it indicates that the water is still too high, as the dove didn't want to remain away from the ark yet
- Finally, after another seven days, the dove is released a third time and doesn't return, indicating that the valleys are appearing and have dried up
 - The water is moving very quickly, hundreds of miles of land are being exposed each day it would seem
- There have been numerous ideas proposed for what God is picturing or symbolizing through the release of the raven and the dove three times
 - The idea I prefer sees the birds as having meaning in relationship to the ark itself
 - The ark is Christ, as we've already established
 - The Ark is still holding the believers who are waiting for the period of God's judgment to end on the Earth
 - And these birds are sent forth from the Ark during this time of judgment
 - Looking at the raven, this bird is closely associated with Elijah in the Old Testament
 - In 1 Kings 17, Elijah is fed by ravens during a famine brought about by the Lord
 - That connection seems to be present here, where we know that before the second half of Tribulation, we should expect to see a visit from Elijah

Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

Mal. 4:6 “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

- The reference to the “great and terrible day of the Lord” is a reference to the last half of Tribulation
 - So the raven flying around the world crowing is a picture of Elijah appearing to the world in those last days and announcing the Second Coming of Christ
 - In the day the Lord returns, we will appear with him, and just as the moment the flood is over, the family of Noah will emerge from the ark
- Next we have the three releases of dove
 - The dove is often a picture of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as when the Spirit came upon Christ at His baptism
 - In the case of the first dove, it leaves the world and returns to the ark
 - This could picture the way the Holy Spirit is removed from the world for a time at the rapture
 - When the Spirit is only present in Heaven with the raptured Church
 - The second dove returns with an olive twig, indicating that an olive tree is growing in the world
 - Since the olive tree is a picture of Israel, this could be a picture of how the Spirit begins again to bring faith into the world starting with Israel
 - The first fruits of evangelism during Tribulation will be 144,000 Jewish men
 - The final dove leaves the ark and remains in the world
 - This release might picture the Spirit going back into the Gentile world to bring many tribes and nations and tongues to faith
 - Just as Revelation 7 describes happening during Tribulation
 - These are interesting parallels, and though they might be accurate, we shouldn't be too sure about drawing such connections
- Finally, the flood comes to an end

Gen. 8:13 Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up.

Gen. 8:14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

Gen. 8:15 Then God spoke to Noah, saying,

Gen. 8:16 “Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.

Gen. 8:17 “Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

Gen. 8:18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him.

Gen. 8:19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

- The flood began in Noah's 600th year, and now in the 601st year of his life, we reach the end
 - On New Years day, 29 days after the third dove release, Noah removed the cover to the window and noticed the earth was dry
 - This means that as far as Noah could see, the water was gone
 - Then he waited another 57 days before leaving the ark
 - This was time to allow the uncovered land to dry up and become firm again
 - So the total time Noah spent in the ark was 378 days
 - If we remove the extra week they spent before the flood arrived, then the total was 371 days
 - Since the Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, the 371 days correspond to 365 days on the solar calendar
 - In other words, the flood event has lasted exactly one solar year
- Now the Lord speaks to Noah, probably for the first time since Noah entered the ark
 - The last thing Noah heard from God was "Go in."
 - Now the next thing Noah hears is "Go out."
 - And take your family and animals with you
 - And let them fill the earth again
 - Because Noah heard the first command so clearly, he waited obediently to hear the next – a reminder for us all
 - As we hear this command, keep in mind that all the families of the earth descend from just three families
 - Shem, Ham and Japeth produced all the families of the earth
- From this point, mankind experienced a dramatic change in the length of life
 - Noah himself lives 950 years
 - His sons live into their 600s
 - These ages are consistent with the lifespans of men before the flood
 - But the next generation only lives half as long
 - Three generations later, lifespans have been cut in half again
 - And three more generations later, life spans have been cut in half once more
 - Many have proposed theories for why length of age dropped off so quickly after the flood
 - Some favor a prominent theory related to the loss of the water stored in the heavens above

- Somehow the canopy helped men live longer, but then without it, they died
- But that theory doesn't make sense scientifically
 - First, if the long life spans were created by environmental conditions, then Noah and his sons should have seen their own lives cut short after the flood
 - Instead they live as long as those before the flood
 - Secondly, we would expect the length of life to drop immediately to present day levels since the atmosphere changed immediately
 - For example, if Seth's children could live over 400 years under present atmospheric conditions, why can't we?
 - Instead, it took almost 1,000 years before men's lifespans dropped to present day levels
- I believe the answer is much simpler
 - First, we know that all the earth is wearing out and growing weaker as God intended due to the curse on the ground
 - This curse also affects men's bodies, as we taught in Genesis 3
 - Our bodies will weaken over time according to this curse
 - When they were created, Adam and Woman were perfect, so the effects of this curse on their bodies was to slowly introduce weaknesses
 - These weaknesses have taken the form of genetic defects in our DNA
 - As these defects are introduced as a result of the curse, they are transferred to our offspring and build up in the human population of DNA
 - At first, these defects were few and far between, so men lived very long lives, as God designed the body
 - Between Adam and Methuselah, the lifespan of men hardly changed at all
 - But after the flood, the DNA pool for mankind had been severely restricted
 - Now all future generations of men would come from just three families, who shared much of the same DNA
 - And therefore, they shared the same defects
 - Under these conditions, we would expect defects to build up in the population of men much faster
 - And as these defects accumulate in the population, they lead to more vulnerability to disease and a weakening of body tissues, etc.
 - Because Noah and his sons were born before the Flood, they had few defects and lived the usual long life of their ancestors
 - But immediately, their children and especially their grandchildren and great grandchildren saw steep declines in lifespan
 - If you chart the drop-off rate of life spans, it is a near perfect exponential curve, as you would expect for the propagation of DNA errors
 - This also explains today why we see so many diseases growing

- Lifespans have been shrinking since the time of Noah
- And the only reason we saw a temporary rise in lifespan in the last century was because recent advances in medical science have masked the effect
 - But even now that effect is reversing
 - Now even modern medicine is powerless to stop the march of God's curse in reducing the vitality of the body
- Finally, Noah exits the ark

Gen. 8:20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Gen. 8:21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

Gen. 8:22 "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease."

- After leaving the Ark, Noah's first act is to build an altar and make a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord
 - This is the first mention of altars in the Bible
 - The Flood destroyed, among other things, the Garden of Eden – and the glory of God is no longer resting on the Earth in that place
 - In that time, men could approach the Garden though not enter
 - And the Garden served as a type of temple, in that it was a house for God and a place for men to see God's visible glory
 - With the Garden gone, now men would meet with God on altars of sacrifice
 - This act of obedience and worship pleased the Lord, and because of Noah's obedience, God makes a promise
 - He promises to never again destroy the Earth with water
 - He will still destroy the Earth as required by the curse in the Garden
 - But He won't cover it in water again
 - In fact, in v.22 God says that all will remain predictable on the earth from this point forward
 - But notice this promise for regular predictable patterns only continues as long as the earth remains

- It doesn't guarantee that the earth itself remains
- But most importantly, notice the short phrase in v.21 that God adds
 - He says that though He will never destroy the Earth again with water, don't think that this means the flood has cured man's sin problem
 - God adds that the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth
 - All his life, man has an evil heart, and this promise doesn't change that fact
 - Therefore, it doesn't change God's need to address the sin of mankind
 - Ultimately, God will judgment it completely and destroy every last remnant of it
 - But He will also provide a way to escape this judgment through faith in a Messiah Who removes the penalty of our sin

The minister was preoccupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to come up with more money than they were expecting for repairs to the church building. Therefore, he was annoyed to find that the regular organist was sick and a substitute had been brought in at the last minute. The substitute wanted to know what to play.

"Here's a copy of the service," the pastor said impatiently. "But, you'll have to think of something to play after I make the announcement about the finances." During the service, the minister paused and said, "Brothers and Sisters, we are in great difficulty; the roof repairs cost twice as much as we expected and we need \$4,000 more. Any of you who can pledge \$100 or more, please stand up." At that moment, the substitute organist played "The Star Spangled Banner." And that is how the substitute became the regular organist!

- As we enter Chapter 9 today, we see Noah entering a strange, new world
 - Noah's experience continues to mirror the story of Creation and Adam in the Garden
 - The world has been made new out of water
 - And Noah has come into a world with no one else, a new beginning
 - Not coincidentally, there are 8 people on the Ark, and the number 8 in the Bible is associated with new beginnings
 - But more than just looking different, Noah's world will be different in several important and fundamental ways
 - God is now about to change His dispensation of grace from what existed prior to the flood, to a new order
 - And He does this in conjunction with a new covenant given to Noah and the world

Gen. 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

Gen. 9:2 "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.

Gen. 9:3 "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.

Gen. 9:4 "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Gen. 9:5 "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

Gen. 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood,

By man his blood shall be shed,

For in the image of God

He made man.

Gen. 9:7 "As for you, be fruitful and multiply;

Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

- You may remember a few weeks back I briefly mentioned that God has determined to work with the sinfulness of men through a series of covenants or dispensations
 - Each of these periods in human history have operated under a different set of conditions, but each has been designed to teach the same principle
 - The first period was a period of innocence before the Fall
 - But man couldn't remain faithful and he sinned
 - The next period was the dispensation of conscience, in which sinful man was left to his own in choosing right over wrong
 - But man couldn't rule over his flesh nature, so it led to the Flood
 - Now we come to the third period or dispensation
 - God will no longer rely on human conscience alone
 - Now He adds a new element for controlling man's sin: His covenant with Noah
- As with His previous covenant with Adam, God's covenant takes a certain form
 - First, we notice that God is issuing this covenant, not inviting Noah into it
 - This is a “one-way” covenant, which we call a suzerainty covenant
 - It is a covenant given by a greater party to a lessor party
 - The other type of covenant is a parity covenant, where two equal parties agree to terms
 - A suzerainty covenant doesn't require the lessor party to do anything in order for the covenant to be in force
 - It remains in force strictly on the faithfulness of the strong party, in this case God
 - So we can be sure this covenant will remain in force forever, since God is the only party Who must remain faithful to its terms
- Speaking of its terms, God gives mankind three terms and God assigns Himself one
 - He begins by blessing Noah and his sons, saying be fruitful and multiply
 - God appoints these men to repopulate the earth, and they will have the capacity to do so
 - Secondly, God changes the relationship between men and animals
 - In v.2 God declares that the beasts of the earth and the birds and all creeping things and all sea creatures will now instinctively fear man
 - Take note that there is one category of the animal kingdom missing from that list, and I don't mean poodles
 - God doesn't mention the category of “cattle”
 - Remember that beasts refers to wild animals while cattle refers to

- domesticable animals like livestock
 - All wild animals now will fear man
 - We see this command present in the world we know today
 - Wild animals will instinctively flee men
 - Even large wild animals fear men under most circumstances, even though they could overpower us
 - Have you stopped to wonder why? Genesis 9 tells us
- Next we see the reason why God wanted wild animals to fear man: He wanted to level the playing field
 - While God instructed Adam to only eat plants, now men are told that every beast or bird or creeping thing or sea creature is available for food
 - God says meat can now supplement the vegetable diet
 - Notice that God reiterates in v.3 that green plants are still available
 - But meat is now added to man's diet
 - We can't be sure that some men didn't try eating meat before the Flood in disobedience to God's instructions in the Garden
 - But we have no evidence that animals were seen to be food prior to this moment
 - I wonder what Noah and his family thought when they heard God tell them they could eat meat..."you go first"
 - These kinds of changes to life and behavior become markers to help us distinguish changes in God's way for ruling over men
 - God is always showing men grace, but He dispenses His grace in various ways over human history
 - As an example, we know that when the Law is given to Israel, the rules for eating change again
 - Israel will not be permitted to eat certain animals following the giving of the Law
 - Why do animals become food for men at this point?
 - We can see one reason immediately and one for the future
 - Immediately, we have Noah facing a world without much food
 - Many of the trees will have survived and will flower and bring forth fruit in the coming months
 - Other seeds will have been buried and will begin to grow again
 - But still, during the early years after the flood, Noah's family and those who follow will need the nutrition that eating meat will provide
 - Secondly, God is planning to institute feasts and other celebrations to picture important things

- And in these feasts, animals will be consumed, like the Lamb at Passover
- God wanted a powerful picture to communicate the power of Christ's physical death and our need to partake of Him, like eating the lamb at Passover

John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

John 6:53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.

John 6:54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.

John 6:56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

John 6:57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.

John 6:58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

- Some listening in the crowd took this message literally i.e. cannibalism, but Jesus was speaking in metaphors
 - When we eat an animal as food, that animal's life becomes part of our life
 - In the same way, our spiritual life is made possible by receiving (taking in) the work of Christ on the cross – we consume it and make it part of our own life
- Having given animals fear and men permission to begin eating animals, God then moves to His second term for men: they may not eat blood
 - God tells Noah that when eating meat, man must not eat meat with its life, that is the blood
 - To be specific, God is saying that the slaughter of animals must include a process of draining the blood that runs through the veins
 - God isn't prohibiting eating meat that's rare or even raw
 - God's concern is in slaughtering an animal in such a way that the blood remains in the veins and is consumed intentionally
 - Mankind has been following this rule throughout the world since the day of Noah
 - Slaughterhouses everywhere drain the blood of an animal as part of the process of preparing the meat
 - Only cults or similar groups routinely consume blood, in disobedience to God's command

- God has prohibited consumption of blood because blood is both the literal and figurative representation of life
 - Literally, blood carries the nutrients that keep our flesh alive
 - It carries energy for muscles, carries away waste products from metabolism
 - It transports hormones and other essential chemical agents
 - It delivers oxygen and fuel to the brain, without which our mental activity ceases in a matter of seconds
 - Spiritually, God uses blood to picture the pouring out of life, just as blood loss leads to death
 - When blood is poured out on the altar, the symbolism communicates that life is leaving the body and is returning to God
 - And that's the point of God's prohibition...He is the One Who gives life and takes it away
 - Therefore, we can't direct life by our own power
 - We can't take it from another apart from God's decree
 - And we can't gain it for ourselves by our own efforts
 - When a person drinks another's blood, the symbolism is clear: we are trying to acquire life in some sense
 - But this is not possible, and it offends the Life Giver Who alone gives life
- Finally, God gives mankind a third mandate: human and animal life may now be required as justice for taking life
 - God decrees that He now requires that a life be taken, whether of beasts and of men, when man's blood is shed
 - In v.6 God gives His reason behind the decree
 - God is the One Who made man, and therefore God is the life-giver
 - As the One who gives life, God is also the One Who has the right to end life
 - And if a person should step in and assume God's authority over life and death, that person must be put to death
 - Simply put, God is instituting capital punishment
 - Since there is so much controversy today over the practice of capital punishment, let's take a moment to be sure we understand God's instructions
 - First, we have to begin where God begins: God says He requires this be done
 - In v.5 it says God "requires" this action (literally: calls for)
 - Capital punishment isn't contrary to our belief and values as God's people
 - On the contrary, it was God Himself who required this step be taken
 - Secondly, God's principle is that taking a life has only one punishment: giving a life for a life
 - Later in giving the Law to Israel, God will expand this rule to incorporate

additional offenses that warrant death

- But in its inception, the principle is pure: a life for a life
- If we look ahead to the Gospel story, we can see why God wanted to draw this connection in our understanding
 - The sin we have requires that a life be given for our life of disobedience
 - That's where the life of Christ came in, His life given so that we might gain our lives
- Third, God decrees in v.6 that this punishment will be carried out by the hand of man
 - Though this reference is a bit hard to see at first glance, in fact this statement is the beginning of human government
 - If man is going to carry out this decree, he must establish rules and processes for executing this decree
 - Obviously, it starts small, but as government is wont to do, it grows over time
 - And this structure is something God puts in place at this point
- Remember this is the beginning of a new dispensation: the dispensation of government
 - Where before God ruled men through their conscience directing them in judging right from wrong
 - But that dispensation only served to prove that men's conscience is incapable of taming the evil of their hearts
 - So God stepped in and brought the flood and a fresh start
 - But that fresh start didn't cure sin, nor was it intended to do so
 - So, God brings a new control for sin: human government with the power of the sword
 - Paul elaborates on this truth in Romans

Rom. 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Rom. 13:2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

Rom. 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

- Paul confirms the principles we see established here in Genesis 9
 - Paul says that there is no authority on earth except those established by God
 - And if we resist – meaning act in defiance – to authority, we are resisting God Himself
 - And then Paul says government doesn't bear the sword for nothing
 - He's saying that God has given government the right to take life for a reason: to punish evil doers and to encourage law keeping
 - Here's our confirmation that the arrival of government coincided with the arrival of capital punishment
 - And they were both given as checks on man's sin, to help control the evil of men's hearts
 - They are new dispensations of God's grace
- But as before, they are not solutions for man's sin
 - Government isn't the solution to the evil of man's hearts
 - And no government is good enough to solve a problem that only finds its solution in a spiritual change
 - God is at work teaching mankind over and over again that the only solution is found with God Himself
- Having given men the three decrees, God now turns to Himself and obligates Himself to one important promise

Gen. 9:8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

Gen. 9:9 “Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you;

Gen. 9:10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

Gen. 9:11 “I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

- God states plainly that He is making this agreement by His own hand: a suzerainty agreement
 - And the agreement is between Noah and all Noah's descendants
 - Under these circumstances, this means all mankind
 - Remember, like Adam, every human being descends from Noah
 - God even goes a step further and obligates Himself to every creature in Creation, not just man
 - This is the last covenant in Scripture made between God and all mankind or

creation

- Thereafter, God's promises of grace begin to narrow and become exclusive to a portion of humanity
- God's dispensation of grace to mankind will become a function of His work with a single people group
- But at this point, God offers His word of promise to all humanity
 - He will never again cut off life with a flood of water
 - The earth will never see such a destruction again
 - But God leaves open the option of destroying the world other ways
- In Isaiah and 2 Peter, we hear that the world is destined for another destruction
 - And this time, the destruction isn't merely for the purpose of ending sinful life
 - In the next worldwide destruction, God puts an end to the physical Earth itself
 - And He replaces it with something completely new and different
- And by faith we are assured to be a part of that new world
 - And we will survive that coming judgment just as Noah survived this one: secure inside the Ark of Christ

- Our focus as we ended last week was the covenant between God and Noah
 - The covenant was a one-way, suzerainty covenant God decreed to Noah and all Creation
 - The terms created a new dispensation or period of God's grace ruling over sinful men
 - Included in the terms was the allowance that men could eat animals for food
 - While animals for their part were changed by the covenant to now have the fear of men
 - Also, men would now rule over each other with the authority to shed a man's blood as penalty for taking life
 - Meanwhile, Noah's family would again fill the earth as Adam did once before
 - God took upon Himself one term
 - That He would never again destroy the Earth with water
 - Leaving open the right to destroy the Earth in other ways
 - The covenant depends only on God's faithfulness, and so long as God remains faithful to His term, the rest of the covenant will remain in effect as well
- The Noahic Covenant begins a new dispensation in God's plan for mankind, one that lasts until God's call of Abraham and the patriarchs
 - Like all covenants, this agreement came with certain features to help set the agreement apart and mark its establishment
 - This morning as we finish Chapter 9, we'll see one of those markers
 - And we also want to consider a question: what did the Flood ultimately accomplish on Earth?
 - It came in response to the extreme nature of man's sin on Earth, but what did the Flood achieve toward that end?

Gen. 9:12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;

Gen. 9:13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

Gen. 9:14 "It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud,

Gen. 9:15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Gen. 9:16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is

on the earth.”

Gen. 9:17 And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

- Covenants usually include certain features to help mark or denote the covenant’s existence and remind the parties to observe its terms
 - Some Bible covenants highlight these features more clearly while other examples given in Scripture skip over the details
 - Rest assured that every covenant included at least a few common, basic elements
 - One of the those basic elements was a sign or token
 - Signs could be compared to a receipt or a signature
 - When I drop off my dry-cleaning at the cleaners, I have entered into a contract with that business
 - The terms of the contract are simple and mostly unspoken
 - The cleaners will clean my clothes without ruining them and I will pay their advertised fee
 - When I leave my clothes at the counter, the clerk will hand me a receipt for the clothes
 - This receipt is a sign of our contract
 - Every time I look at that receipt, I see visible proof of our contract
 - I also see a reminder to pick up my clothes!
 - The sign is not the same thing as the agreement itself
 - For example, if I were to lose my receipt, the contract is still in effect
 - The receipt was merely a representation of the contract, not its substance
 - Likewise, covenants use signs to remind the parties that an agreement existed between them
 - It wasn’t the substance of the covenant, but it pointed to it
 - And these signs served the same purpose as signatures on modern contracts
 - The parties respected the sign of a covenant as a solemn guarantee from the other party
 - We can see this in another example, when Abraham receives his covenant and when Israel receives the Law
 - These covenants also had signs
 - Abraham’s sign was circumcision
 - Israel’s sign was the Sabbath Day

- Both circumcision and the weekly Sabbath were reminders given to mark their respective covenants
- Now in v.12, the Lord declares the sign for the Noahic covenant will be a rainbow
 - In keeping with the nature of the covenant itself, the Lord selected an appropriate sign to communicate to every member of Creation
 - Signs should share certain characteristics if they are to mark a covenant properly
 - First, a sign should last as long as the terms of the covenant itself
 - It does no good if the chosen sign disappears before the covenant itself runs its course
 - Secondly, the sign should be visible to every party of the covenant, so that all who participate can see the reminder and understand its meaning
 - Finally, a sign must stand out from the normal everyday
 - It serves no purpose to select as a sign something that doesn't draw attention to itself
 - If we select an everyday normal event as a sign, then it cannot communicate that something new has come into existence
 - The rainbow meets these requirements perfectly
 - The rainbow is everlasting
 - As long as the Earth remains and water falls from the atmosphere, rainbows will exist
 - The rainbow is universal
 - Every continent, every location on Earth sees rainbows
 - Every person and even every animal has opportunity to see this sign, and by God's word understand its meaning
 - Finally, the rainbow is uniquely associated with the end of a rain storm and the appearance of the sun
 - Since we know the arrival of rain was the cause of the Flood
 - And the promise of this covenant is that rain will never again bring a worldwide flood
 - The rainbow is a perfect way to communicate the covenant still at work, God relenting from ever bringing too much water
 - This also leads us to conclude that rainbows were entirely new in Noah's day, probably since rain itself was new
- With v.17 we reach the end of the covenant
 - God has instituted human government with its implied laws and penalties
 - God has stated that the acts of human government are ultimate acts of God in that they serve His divine purpose on Earth
 - God has established that a life must be given for a life, and that shed blood is the way that life may be poured out

- Yet men cannot take in blood as food
- All these terms foreshadow future covenants created by God
 - If we took time, we could identify similarities between this covenant and the Old Covenant and the New Covenant
 - As in the way this covenant established human laws and human rulers
 - But the Old Covenant established God's Law and the New Covenant brought God's Ruler
 - As in how this covenant showed us that crime against man required a man's life be given
 - But the Old Covenant showed a merciful God would make a sacrifice available for sin
 - And the New Covenant revealed a permanent sacrifice capable of removing all sin
 - As in how this covenant taught men to pour out blood of animals
 - But the Old Covenant taught that the pouring out of blood was an act of sacrifice to atone for sin
 - And the New Covenant taught that the blood of Christ was the necessary sacrifice to remit for the sins of men
- There are other similarities and connections, but the sum of it all is a greater point
 - God is at work to reveal His plan to men, but in small steps
 - And with each new revelation, God fills in a picture of His plan to address the sin of the Garden once and for all
 - The writer of Hebrews describes it this way:

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- And this leads us to the second question for the morning: what has this Flood event accomplished in God's plan for the Earth and for men?
 - We get the answer in the course of the rest of Chapter 9, in a story of what happens immediately after the Flood

Gen. 9:18 Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan.

Gen. 9:19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

- Moses reminds us of the men who left the Ark
 - Shem, Ham and Japheth were Noah's sons
 - And Moses adds that Ham was the father of Canaan
 - This statement serves two purposes
 - First, it tells us that enough time had passed since the Flood that the first of Noah's grandchildren have now been born
 - Remember there were no grandchildren around when they entered the Ark
 - Consider how merciful God was to ensure that no children were forced to endure the Ark adventure
 - Secondly, it sets the scene for the rest of this chapter, since Canaan becomes a focus in the story
 - From these three men, the whole Earth was populated
 - We'll learn in the next chapter how these men spread out and what families came from them
 - But for now consider that the full diversity of humans we see today came from the same family
 - We can safely assume that Noah's children looked very similar
 - One wasn't caucasian, the other oriental and the other black skinned
 - And yet these variations emerged from these families
 - As we contemplate this fact, we find the Bible challenging us on our deeply held prejudices toward other people groups
 - Race is not a biological distinction
 - There is no marker for race in DNA
 - All men came from the same family
 - In the NKJ, Paul says it this way:

Acts 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

- So our attitudes toward others must be entirely blind to differences in physical attributes, since these differences are incidental
 - They came as a result of how these men migrated away from each other
 - And their physical isolation eventually caused their genetic differences to concentrate into different races, or nations of people
- But at the end of it all, we are no different to God nor should we be to one another
- Now that life is beginning to return to normal, Noah returns to farming

Gen. 9:20 Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.

Gen. 9:21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

Gen. 9:22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

Gen. 9:23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

- Noah plants a vineyard, and eventually it produces grapes
 - From the grapes, Noah makes wine
 - Clearly some time has passed since the Flood, several years at least
 - And it's from that vantage point that we gain enough perspective to assess the impact and purpose of the Flood
 - In enjoying the harvest of his vineyard, Noah becomes drunk one night
 - This is the first mention of wine in Scripture, and it is not a coincidence that drunkenness follows closely
 - We could take a long side trip on this topic, but I won't do so here
 - Suffice to say that wine itself is never cast as the enemy in the Bible
 - Drunkenness is the evil we are told to avoid
 - And Noah's story is a great testimony to this truth
 - If we cannot enjoy wine (or any alcohol) without drunkenness, then we should refrain from it altogether
 - Noah's drunkenness leads him to pass out in his tent with his robes open or otherwise, exposing him to his children
 - In his nakedness, Noah is exposed in a shameful and sinful way
 - The sons eventually cover their father's body to lessen his shame
 - But not before one of the sons increases the shame through his own sinful response
- Before we look at the details of this story I want to remind you of an earlier moment in Genesis, in the story of Adam in the Garden
 - At the beginning of Adam's time on the new Earth, his life was simple and solitary, living only with his wife
 - He enjoyed God's provision, and Adam had a testimony of blamelessness and innocence before God
 - But he wasn't to remain that way
 - In a moment of weakness, and influenced by the Enemy, Adam took a fruit of the field

- And through its abuse brought himself shame before God and men
- In response to his shameful state, Adam and Woman tried to cover themselves – though their efforts couldn't satisfy God
- And by his fall, men suffered a lasting penalty
- Now returning to Noah's story, the parallels jump out at us
 - We immediately see that God orchestrated these events to reinforce the basic story of man's sin and God's plan for redemption
 - Noah has become a farmer in the post-Flood age, though he was not a farmer before
 - Obviously, farming would have been a necessity for Noah and his family after the flood wiped out so much
 - Just as Adam was given the responsibility to tend the Garden in his day
 - Then Noah makes an uncharacteristic mistake: he becomes drunk
 - Noah's mistake was to partake of a fruit in excess
 - Obviously, this is similar to Adam's taking of a fruit in the Garden
 - And both are sins in that both are acts prohibited by God's standards
 - Drunkenness is a sin, according to the Bible, and it's a particularly insidious one
 - It breaks down the barriers erected by our conscience which God gave us to protect us from sin
 - It overrides our willingness to hear and follow the Spirit of God as He directs us
 - It tempts us into further sin
 - And its consequences extend far beyond ourselves and into the lives of others
 - Noah's experience reflects all these Biblical truths
- One son, Ham, sees Noah naked
 - Nakedness in our culture today is losing its sense of shame
 - People glory in showing their bodies, especially to an inappropriate degree
 - It's the ultimate sign of Christian immaturity and selfishness when we see a man or woman wearing revealing clothing, especially to a gathering of believers
 - Because it tempts others into lust and gains the person nothing with respect to their testimony
 - But in the day of Noah, and even into this day by and large, revealing the body was a particularly sinful and shameful act
 - To be seen naked brought shame on the person and upon the one who witnesses the indiscretion
 - For Noah, his son Ham will never look at him the same way again
 - And should Noah learn of Ham's discovery, the shame is magnified for both

of them

- So it's particularly horrifying to hear that Ham goes outside the tent and tells his brothers what he saw – that his father is naked
 - Ham had a choice when he discovered his father
 - Having seen him, the damage had been done for Ham, but he still could have preserved his father's dignity
 - And he could have avoided drawing his brothers into the event
 - Instead, Ham gloats in what he finds
 - He tells his brothers what he saw, which spreads the father's shame deeper into the family
 - Secondly, by not covering his father, he invites his brothers to see it for themselves
 - Fortunately for Noah, the remaining brothers do all they can to preserve what little dignity remains for Noah
 - They walk backwards into the tent and lay a coat on Dad
 - Though they knew of their father's shame, they didn't choose to see it themselves
 - Clearly Ham's response is very different from his brother's
 - While he glories in His father's shame, the others do what they can to preserve dignity
- Here we see more parallels to the story of Adam
 - In the Fall of the Garden, there were three actors
 - One who was responsible for the shame of the Fall, one who tried to mitigate against it, and behind the scenes one who inspired it
 - Here we have a similar trio
 - First, we have Ham playing the part of Adam
 - He made a conscious choice to disregard his father's glory and brought shame to him instead
 - Then we have Shem and Japeth playing the part of Woman
 - Caught up in the events and unable to avoid the sordid affair
 - But they do what they can to minimize their father's shame and try to defend him as best they can
 - Finally, we have Satan working behind the scenes, both in the Garden and here
 - In the Garden he deceived the Woman
 - And here he deceived Noah, bringing the occasion of Noah's sin
- What is God teaching in this section?
 - First, that the power and enormity of the Flood still wasn't enough to wipe out the effects of sin on Earth

- It will require more than a Flood of water to do away with sin
 - For example, remember when Noah was described as blameless and upright?
 - Now we see vivid evidence he was anything but sinless
- Secondly, the root cause of sin – Satan – is still present and working in the sons of disobedience
- Thirdly, men cannot produce an acceptable covering to reverse the shame of sin
 - Even after Noah is covered by his sons, he is nevertheless still shamed by the act, and the covering didn't erase that shame
 - Only a spiritual covering can affect that change
- Finally, the dispensation of human governing won't be an answer to sin any more than the period of human conscience
 - Each new dispensation brings a new measure of control to mitigate against man's sinfulness
 - But at the end of the day they are not solutions



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 9C

Chapter 9:24-29

814 Arion Parkway, #410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
210.319.5055

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- Today we move on from the Flood story and transition to the next *toldat* or genealogy in Genesis
 - But first we have some unfinished business in the family of Noah
 - Noah has unfortunately given into his flesh, become drunk and uncovered himself
 - Thus proving that Noah was not perfect, not sinless, though he was a man of great faith
 - Then his son Ham saw his father and magnified his shame
 - Ham celebrated his father's sin rather than showing discretion and endeavoring to cover the shame
 - His brothers, on the other hand, show mercy and do their best to help their father recover his dignity
 - Next we watch Noah's response to how his children reacted
 - Noah responds by making prophetic statements concerning the boys and the future of their respective family lines
 - As we read these pronouncements, remember that Noah would have understood the seriousness of what he was saying
 - Noah understood that his boys would repopulate the earth
 - He knew that each son would produce a multitude of people over time
 - Which explains why Noah chose such sweeping pronouncements
 - And we must assume that Noah's impetus to make these statements was the Spirit's influence and direction
- So now look at Noah's response:

Gen. 9:24 When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

Gen. 9:25 So he said,

**“Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.”**

Gen. 9:26 He also said,

**“Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.**

Gen. 9:27 “May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

Gen. 9:28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

Gen. 9:29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

- As Noah awoke, he learns of his indiscretions of the prior evening

- My English text says the “youngest” son
 - But the Hebrew word can also be translated younger, which is more accurate since Ham is the middle child
- Some of us may be able to identify with Noah, perhaps as a result of past decisions and indiscretions
 - The sinking feeling as we replay the previous night in our memory, piecing together what was said and done
- In Noah’s case, he probably noticed that he wasn’t wearing his normal sleep attire
 - Instead, there was a cloak thrown over him, something he wouldn’t have done for himself under normal circumstances
 - It probably didn’t require much thought to recognize that someone else had covered him
 - And with that recognition, Noah would have been horrified and embarrassed and ashamed
 - Perhaps he approached the boys to apologize or to ask for an explanation
 - In the course of that discussion, v.24 says Noah knew or understood what his youngest son had done
- And what Ham had done was disrespect his father
 - More than simply disrespect, Ham had shown a willingness to enjoy and even celebrate the sin of another
 - And in that behavior he had shamed Noah and himself
 - Ham’s example is a good one for us to consider ourselves
 - Do we glory in another’s sin?
 - Our first answer might be, “Of course not...”
 - But before we rush to that answer, let’s ask ourselves a few questions
 - When we learn embarrassing or shameful news of another person, do we ask ourselves who can I share this with?
 - If we’re out with friends and one person begins engaging in mischief, do we encourage them on hoping to see them do something outlandish or risk getting into trouble?
 - Do we look the other way when a friend breaks the rules or even the law rather than correcting them kindly and reminding them of their Christian witness?
- In all these cases, and others like them, we repeat the mistake of Ham, certainly in manner if not in degree
 - We glory in another’s sin, encouraging, feeding it or at least enjoying it vicariously
 - Paul said he prayed that the church would act differently

Phil. 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,

Phil. 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

- Paul's concern for the church was that we wouldn't be a Ham, so to speak
 - We would abound in love based on knowledge and discernment
 - Which would lead us to approve of excellent things
 - And we would be blameless until our judgment day, filled with righteousness
 - We are not blameless if, by association, we encourage others into sin - that was Ham's problem
- Noah certainly didn't approve of Ham's behavior, and in response Noah pronounces a curse
 - The first thing we notice is that the curse is directly against not Ham but Canaan
 - Since the beginning of this chapter, we've noticed that any mention of Ham has included the phrase "the father of Canaan"
 - Here we see why Moses has been making that connection throughout the chapter
 - Moses was helping us understand the connection between Ham and the curse Noah gives
 - Noah is upset at his son Ham, but Noah directs his curse at Ham's son rather than at Ham himself
 - Why?
 - Do you remember what we learned in Chapter 3 concerning curses?
 - A curse is a pronouncement of eternal damnation
 - And when it comes from God (in this case by the power of the Spirit), it is a permanent and irrevocable verdict
 - Could God pronounce a curse – eternal damnation – upon Ham?
 - Remember Ham was one of the eight on the ark
 - Peter testifies that all eight on the ark were righteous by faith

2Pet. 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2Pet. 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

...

2Pet. 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- So if Ham is a man saved by God's grace, then God cannot pronounce a curse upon Ham
 - This is the same situation as God faced with Adam and Woman in the Garden

- Adam sinned yet God pronounced curse not upon him but upon the ground, Adam's source
- Similarly here, God pronounces a curse through Noah upon Ham but indirectly
 - In this case it lands on Ham's son, Canaan
- Remember, being a believer doesn't assure us of a perfect life
 - A believer can sin, and a believer can find life taking terrible turns
 - Saving faith isn't an insurance policy against the horrors of a sinful world
 - Looking in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11, we might notice that the first three men listed were Abel, Enoch and Noah
 - Noah dies of old age, but not before enduring a traumatic disaster and an embarrassing sinful episode
 - Enoch is preserved from even experiencing death
 - Abel was murdered at a young age
 - If these men can experience such different outcomes in life yet be listed in the Hall of Faith, then we can know anything can happen to us
 - But no matter what happens, we're assured that death won't conquer and we will receive an eternal inheritance
- So now we understand why Noah doesn't directly curse his own son Ham, but why place the curse on Canaan?
 - The answer is simple, but it may not be satisfying for us – at least not at first
 - God is intent on bringing a consequence for this sin
 - And the consequence must come from Noah, the man who now represents human government
 - But it can't come against Ham
 - And so it will flow from Ham to the next generation
 - And it doesn't really matter where it lands
 - God is sovereign over the life of each person and He determines how each life will serve His purposes
 - In God's wisdom and providence He determined that Canaan was the proper recipient of His wrath for Ham's sin
 - You might say that isn't fair, but remember that Canaan was born a sinner like every man
 - He was already on a path to judgment for his sins, like every unbeliever
 - Ham's sin didn't put Canaan under judgment
 - Canaan's own sin did that for him
 - But God's pronouncement means that Canaan will not receive God's grace so as to overcome his sin
 - He will be left in his sin, cursed as everyone who dies a sinner will be
 - Yet still we ask why Canaan? Why not Ham's oldest son Cush? Or the second or third children?

- Many commentators have tried to answer that in inventive ways, but I think the answer is simple
- When God responded to Adam's sin in the Garden, He didn't curse Adam, but He cursed the ground
 - God's choice communicated that though Adam's sin required God's judgment, nevertheless God would turn that into good for those who love God
 - So by cursing the Earth, God was putting an end to our corrupted physical body, which came from the earth
 - And God was promising to replace the physical world, which itself was infected by sin
- So now as God selects a son of Ham to curse, God selects the fourth son
 - And the number four in Scripture is the number associated with Earth
 - Like we see four compass directions, four seasons, four winds, four corners of the earth, etc.
 - Therefore, God repeats His pattern of cursing the earth, so to speak
- And like in the Garden, the curse against Canaan ultimately has a positive impact for those who love God and are called by His purpose
 - The family that descends from Canaan will become poster children for depravity in the land later occupied by Israel
 - They were sexually depraved and idolators with extreme practices
 - And when God's chosen people entered into the promised land under Joshua, God made Israel's army an instrument of punishment
 - They were conquered by God's people and they were in a position of slavery or inferiority until they were finally enslaved and destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC
 - Noah's pronouncement said Canaan would be cursed, a servant of servants, the lowest servant
 - And he would serve the people who come from his brothers, meaning the families of Shem and Japheth
 - The Israelites came from Shem and the Romans came from Japheth
 - God's wisdom is evident in this plan, as it ensures that the people disposed by the arrival of Israel in the land are a people properly destined for this outcome
 - Some have speculated that this curse is the source for the slavery of Africans over the centuries
 - Ham's descendants populate Africa, so this thinking is an attempt to justify the enslavement of Africans by Europeans
 - But even a casual reading of Genesis shows us the flaw in that thinking
 - Ham wasn't cursed, Canaan was cursed
 - And Canaan didn't settle in Africa
- Next, Noah turns to the other brothers who protected his dignity, and Noah pronounces blessing

- For Shem, Noah blesses not Shem directly but the “God of Shem”
 - For Shem, the meaning of this blessing is clear
 - He will be the line of the Seed
 - The promise for a Messiah will come through Shem
 - And Shem’s blessing will be found in the line of Messiah
- From Shem we get two notable lines of people present in the world today
 - First, we get the people of the promised seed; the Jewish people
 - Secondly, we get the Arab peoples; the appointed foils for Israel
 - We learn more about the origins of these two groups in future chapters
 - Both these groups are considered Semites, because both came from Shem
 - But only the Israelites are the promised seed line
 - And then Noah repeats that Canaan’s family would serve the families of Shem
- Finally, Noah turns to Japeth
 - Noah declares that Japeth and his families will be enlarged
 - Enlarged refers to both the number of them and their territory and wealth
 - The peoples who come from Japeth eventually settle Europe and Asia, and later North America
 - Obviously these territories represent the vast majority of the world’s population and the world’s wealth
 - And Japeth’s family would dwell in the tents of Shem
 - The phrase in Hebrew conveys a certain meaning
 - The word dwell in Hebrew (*sheken*) can mean to abide in
 - Similar to *shekan*, which is neighbor
 - The sense is of shared benefit
 - But the tents will be Shem’s
 - Japeth will have the wealth and the numbers
 - But they come to Shem’s home and gain benefit from association with Shem’s dwelling
 - The sharing will be mutual, but the greater blessing will come from Shem and go to Japeth
 - The fulfillment of this prophecy can only be understood spiritually
 - Shem will produce the line of the Messiah through Israel
 - And Japeth will produce the bulk of the Gentile people of the world
 - And the Gentiles will receive blessing by dwelling spiritually in Israel, Shem’s descendants
 - And Shem will benefit from the association because the Gentiles will bring numbers and wealth to serve Israel in the Kingdom

- Looking back at the three brothers, we can see each serving as a representative for the three major divisions of humanity, spiritually speaking
 - Ham, as represented by his son Canaan, pictures the fate of the sinner
 - The one who glories in sin, and celebrates the flesh
 - This person will go to destruction paying the penalty for that sin
 - We would say the unbeliever
 - Shem represents the Jew
 - The seed line
 - God's chosen people
 - The people who bring salvation to the world
 - Finally, Japheth represents the Gentile believer
 - Those who own the world but give it up for the hope of Israel
 - The person who later enters the family of God by faith and is grafted into the promises of Israel
 - Who will dwell in Israel's promised kingdom by association with God's promises
- To end this important chapter, Moses tells us of the end of Noah's story

Gen. 9:28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

Gen. 9:29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

- Noah's life span is 950 years, of which 350 occurred after the Flood
 - Noah lives long enough to see the world repopulated
 - The world has seen people settled from Europe to Africa to East Asia
 - And Noah's son Shem, another passenger on the Ark, lived until Jacob was over 100 years old
 - Clearly, between Noah and Shem, there was plenty of opportunity for ancient men to hear the story of the flood firsthand, and record the details accurately
 - As news of his death spread, it must have been an important day
 - Noah was born shortly after Adam died
 - And now Noah was gone
 - And it's been 2,000 years since the Fall in the Garden
 - Until this moment, we could connect human history back to the beginning of time through the lives of just three people (Adam, Methuselah, Shem)
 - After Noah's death, length of lives drops dramatically
 - And in future generations, men will have lost that direct testimonial connection to the beginning of all things
 - And along the way languages are increased and distances grow, and men

begin to create stories to fill in their gaps of understanding history

- Myths and legends develop, idols increase
- And so the mercy of God is revealed in His willingness to record these truths through the prophet Moses
- So that even today, six thousands years or so later, we're still able to understand the details of our origins
- And more than that, we understand the hows and whys for the way things are
 - The source of sin, the consequences of men living apart from God
 - And God's mercy to provide a promised solution, found in the Lord Christ

- Last week we officially ended our study of Noah
 - And this week we begin the next *toldat* or genealogy in the story of redemption
 - Chapter 10 and 11 work together as a single unity
 - Chapter 10 is a “zoom out” view of the beginning of all nations on earth
 - Chapter 11 is a “zoom in” on a part of Chapter 10
 - In fact, the events of Chapter 11 actually explain the events of Chapter 10
 - Together they finish the story of ancient man and ancient civilization
 - What will follow is a narrowing of the focus of Genesis to examine the beginning of a new nation, called by God
 - So we leave the generations of Noah and move to the generations of Noah’s three sons

Gen. 10:1 Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.

- Noah had only three sons, according to Scripture
 - So all people on earth today trace their origins to one of these three men
 - The next time you sit in a sports stadium or watch a crowd at the mall, consider that everyone is related
 - Every 1 in 3 people came from the same grandfather
 - And now we’re reminded that all the children from these boys were born after the Flood
 - Since only 8 were on the Ark
- The names of the boys in this list are in order of age, from oldest to youngest
 - But in the genealogy to follow, Moses reverses the list
 - This makes sense when we understand that Genesis focuses on the seed line of the promise
 - Since we know that Shem is the seed line, then he is saved for last
 - Moses gets the other two sons out of the way first
- Before we look at the genealogy, let’s take notes of two important qualities of this chapter
 - First, we can’t help but notice that God is making deliberate and purposeful decisions concerning where His promise will rest
 - For example, Noah had three sons but only one was able to give fulfillment to the promise of God
 - Japheth and Ham are excluded from the honor to carry the promise forward
 - Only Shem is permitted this honor and blessing

- Similarly, only one of Shem's children will carry the promise forward
- On and on this pattern will continue until we reach Jesus Himself
 - Both Matthew and Luke give us genealogies, precisely so that we could trace the birth of Jesus back to Abraham and to Adam
 - These genealogies proved that Jesus was qualified to lay claim to being the promised seed
- Secondly, Chapter 10 is unparalleled among ancient texts in explaining the origins of all mankind
 - There is simply no other document from antiquity that comes close to explaining the origins of modern nations and cultures
 - In fact, many later documents refer to Genesis 10 as an authoritative record of how the Earth was settled
 - This is why Chapter 10 is often called the table of nations
 - The genealogy is horizontal rather than vertical like Chapter 5
 - The list isn't a descending list of people through time
 - Instead it's a description of how the family immediately after Noah moved out over the Earth
 - We get the next vertical list in Chapter 11, when we focus again on the seed line of Seth
 - I have found a map to help you visualize the dispersion of the people groups
- Many of the names of Noah's grandsons can be directly traced to nations of people still existing today
 - In other cases, the names are supposed to relate to present-day people
- Finally, other names have lost their meaning and their people groups are a mystery today
 - So as we read through the list of names and places, reflect on how the world we see today was settled by a few families moving outward
 - And all this took place about 4,500 years ago

Gen. 10:2 The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras.

Gen. 10:3 The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah.

Gen. 10:4 The sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.

Gen. 10:5 From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

- Moses starts with Japheth, the son who would eventually give rise to most of the people and wealth of the world

- Japeth had seven sons in total, who move NE and NW from Mesopotamia
 - As a general rule, the farther a people group move from Israel, the less important they are in the Bible
- Gomer settled south of the Black Sea and became the Cimmerians of the ancient world
- Magog settled in southern Russia and became the Scythians
 - The people who descend from Magog combine with the descendants of Meshech and Tubal to fight Israel in a future war described in Ezek. 38
- The third son is Madai, who becomes the Medes and later settle India
 - In fact, a tribe of India still refer to an ancient ancestral father as Iyapeti, which comes from Yapeth, the Hebrew name for Japeth
- The fourth son was Javan, who was the father of Greece
 - Interestingly, Greek legend names the father of Greeks as Iapetos, which is the Greek form of Yapeth, or Japeth again
- The fifth son was Tubal, who settled parts of Russia
 - They get the Russian word Tobolsk in Siberia from the name Tubal
- The sixth son was Meshech, who was also in southern Russia
 - Meshech, Tubal and Magog lived near each other in modern Russia and Iran
 - Which is why the coming war from Ezek. 38 – in which Magog and Tubal and Meshech attack Israel – is thought to be a war lead by Russia and Iran
- Finally, Japeth's seventh son was Tiras who went to modern day Italy
- Moses then list the grandsons for two of the sons of Japeth
 - And he ends with the statement that from these the coastlands were separated
 - Japeth's family move toward the coasts and later move into Europe and Asia, moving by the sea in many cases
 - Since Japeth's family move away from Israel, they are given minimal treatment in this chapter
 - Notice in v.5 we're told that this outward movement led to a separation in lands
 - For the first time, we see land ownership
 - Previously, men used land, but there is no indication that people thought of themselves as separate tribes or groups
 - Now, people separate and think of themselves as different
 - Then we're told that the separation is according to each person's language
 - This reference raises the point of different languages
 - This reference is the clue to tell us that Chapter 11 is a zoom in on the events of Chapter 10
 - Finally, v.5 confirms that this separation produces nations of people; distinct

groups with different cultures and identities

Gen. 10:6 The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.

Gen. 10:7 The sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Gen. 10:8 Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth.

Gen. 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.”

Gen. 10:10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Gen. 10:11 From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-ir and Calah,

Gen. 10:12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

Gen. 10:13 Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim

Gen. 10:14 and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.

Gen. 10:15 Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth

Gen. 10:16 and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite

Gen. 10:17 and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite

Gen. 10:18 and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.

Gen. 10:19 The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

Gen. 10:20 These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

- Ham has four children and numerous grandchildren
 - Ham settled northern Africa and later the rest of the continent
 - His first son is Cush, which has become synonymous with Ethiopia
 - The second is Mizraim, which is the Hebrew name for Egypt
 - Third is Put, which is Libya
 - Finally, Canaan, who we know settles in the Land to be occupied by Israel

- His descendants become the various “ites” of the land Israel later occupies
- Interestingly, Moses gives the borders of the people of Canaan according to location names we can still identify today
 - Based on this description, Canaan’s territory roughly equals the land that God promised to Abraham
 - Israel was given the land first occupied by Canaan, in keeping with Noah’s prophetic curse on Canaan
- Of all the grandsons of Ham, one gets an extended treatment here, and again in Chapter 11
 - Nimrod was born to Cush
 - His name means “to rebel” and this gives us the key to appreciating his spotlight in this list
 - We’ll learn more about him in Chapter 11 but there’s some detail here
 - He is a “mighty one” on the earth
 - This title suggests he was a leader among men, perhaps the first conqueror or leader post-flood
 - In v.9 we hear he was also a mighty hunter
 - Men had been given the right to eat meat a few decades or centuries earlier, but now Nimrod raises hunting to an art
 - But the important phrase is “before the Lord”
 - In fact, a proverbial saying developed from Nimrod’s example
 - What is the full meaning of this phrase?
 - In ancient thinking, to be “before” someone meant to be in opposition to them
 - Being before them meant to be antagonistic or to be standing in defiance before them
- And then knowing Nimrod was a mighty man on earth and a hunter, we can put all this together to arrive at a clearer picture of Nimrod
 - He was a man who commanded obedience and used the threat of force to compel followers
 - He was skilled in implements of battle and in taking life
 - He stood opposed to God and brought others with him against God
 - So the phrase came to mean an evil person who tries to provoke God by his rebellion
- Look at the parallels to Chapter 4 of Genesis
 - Each of the 8 on the Ark were believers
 - And here we have a grandson of one of the eight leading the rebellion against the same God Who saved his grandfather
 - It never takes long for the evil heart of man to take over and bring him back

into rebellion

- Only God's saving grace can rescue us from this never-ending cycle
- Nimrod becomes a type or picture for the antichrist, the ultimate empire builder who stood opposed to God
 - In fact, look at Nimrod's empire in v.10
 - It stretches from Babel to Calneh
 - It's called the land of Shinar
 - These are all terms for Mesopotamia or Babylon
 - This is the same region as the original Garden of Eden
 - This is also the land that will later become the headquarters for the Antichrist
 - Here we find the familiar East-West theme of Scripture
 - Scripture is filled with pictures or themes to reinforce basic truths
 - These themes help us learn and remember the message of Scripture
 - One such theme or picture is the difference between East and West
 - East is the direction associated with Satan and evil and sin
 - Conversely, West is associated with God's promises and faith
 - Furthermore, in keeping with the East-West motif, Babylon is always associated with Satan
 - It's his "home field"
 - And the land of Israel, the Promised Land, is associated with faith and salvation
 - This is the home field for God and His people
 - We saw this pattern in the story of the Garden
 - Adam and Eve are sent out of the Garden to the East
 - Abel and Cain repeat the motif
 - Cain is sent East to wander after he is banished for killing Abel
 - Now we see the rise of an evil world leader who claims his home in Mesopotamia
 - We should remember what Paul taught concerning the real forces at work around us

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- The story of Genesis reinforces this truth at every turn

- The work of men is set on a backdrop of Satan's work to undermine God
- And each unbeliever is merely a pawn of the enemy
- As we study this pattern, it's important that we take this learning outside the pages of the Bible and apply it in our everyday lives
 - We need to learn to see the people around us as either brothers and sisters, or potential brothers and sisters
 - But in the meantime, we should also be wise to understand that they are people who are tools of the enemy
 - Even as they fight and oppose us from time to time, we don't war with them
 - We war with the enemy who manipulates them behind the scenes
- Finally, we reach the most important line; the line of Shem who carries forward the seed promise

Gen. 10:21 Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth, children were born.

Gen. 10:22 The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram.

Gen. 10:23 The sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.

Gen. 10:24 Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.

Gen. 10:25 Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.

Gen. 10:26 Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah

Gen. 10:27 and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah

Gen. 10:28 and Obal and Abimael and Sheba

Gen. 10:29 and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.

Gen. 10:30 Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.

Gen. 10:31 These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

- Shem's line begins with the distinction that he is the father of all the children of Eber
 - Eber, as we saw, was a grandchild of Shem
 - Why make that point here at the top of the list?
 - The answer is to remember why genealogies are even included in Scripture
 - Moses wants us to know where the promise of God given in the garden lands in each generation
 - In this case, Eber will carry the promise forward

- In fact, Eber is the name from which we get the word Hebrew
 - So Shem was the father of the Hebrews to come later
- Shem had five sons
 - The first son was Elam, who settled in Persia, modern-day Iran
 - The second son was Asshur, who founded Assyria
 - The third son was Arpachshad
 - He became the father of the Chaldeans, the people of Abraham
 - He carries the seed promise forward
 - The fourth son was Lud, who lived in the region of Lydia of Asia Minor
 - The fifth son was Aram, who settled Syria
- Eber has only two sons
 - The first is called Peleg, which means to divide
 - He was born when the earth was divided
 - Since we know that Chapter 10 is a zoom out that includes the events of Chapter 11, we can safely assume the division here refers to the division of languages
 - Peleg was born when the languages of the earth were divided up
 - He is the seed son of Eber
 - Peleg's brother was Joktan, who founded the Arabian tribes by his thirteen sons
- At the end of this list, we have seventy families coming from Noah
 - Do we think that it's a coincidence that the number of families in this list equals seventy?
 - The number 70 is commonly associated with God ruling through a representation of men
 - There were 70 elders in Israel and 70 men on the committee who translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek
 - This is a clear sign that God is at work in dividing up the families of the earth to ensure His purpose is done

Acts 17:24 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

Acts 17:25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

Acts 17:26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

Acts 17:27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

- God is at work dispensing grace by ruling over men's sinful hearts
 - As we'll study next week in Chapter 11, God will disperse men to mitigate against their sin gaining traction too fast, and leading them in the ever great acts of sin
 - Just as the chapter ends...

Gen. 10:32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

- Because I know how much you enjoyed studying genealogy last week in Chapter 10, I thought we should study some more
 - Actually, it was the Lord Who thought we needed more genealogy, since He included more genealogy in Chapter 11
 - But since we don't want to risk too much of a good thing, we'll save the genealogy for next week
 - And this week, we'll spend our time examining the story that leads into the genealogy
 - This story answers the question, "Why did men move outward across the earth as described in Chapter 10?"
- So today we learn about an incident, one instigated by a character introduced in Chapter 10 – Nimrod
 - And we are also going to take note of an important literary device often used by Biblical writers to draw our attention to important points in the text
 - It's called a chiasm, and I'll show you the chiasm in the text today

Gen. 11:1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

Gen. 11:2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

Gen. 11:3 They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.

Gen. 11:4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

- I hope you remember from last week what we discussed concerning the relationship between Chapters 10 & 11
 - Chapter 10 was a zoom out on the dispersion of men after the flood
 - While Chapter 11 was a zoom in on the events that led to that dispersion
 - And to be more accurate, Chapter 11 also has a zoom out of its own in the second half
 - In Chapter 10, we learned about Nimrod, a man who commanded a mighty city near Babel, in Shinar
 - Later he leaves and founds another city in Assyria
 - Why did he leave Babel?
 - Then we heard of Peleg, who was born in the year the earth was divided
 - Why were mankind divided in Peleg's day?
 - These questions are answered in Chapter 11
- The story of the dividing or dispersion of men begins with the issue of language

- Moses tells us that all the earth, all men, spoke the same language in the beginning
 - Specifically, everyone had the same language and words
 - Language means the same tongue
 - And words means the same vocabulary
 - Understanding between men was perfect
- As we've noted in weeks past, the names of ancient men going back to Adam had meanings
 - But they only had meaning in one language: Hebrew
 - Since these names were intended to convey meaning, and that meaning only made sense in Hebrew, we concluded that the first language of men was Hebrew
- In v.2 we hear of some group of people heading east into the plain of Shinar, or Mesopotamia
 - Who are the "they" here?
 - It must trace back to v.1, meaning the "earth" or all people
 - Noah's family and all their descendants are still living together
 - And they travel eastward back to Mesopotamia, to what would later be known as Babylon
 - This is the location of where the Garden once stood
 - Perhaps at some point after the Flood, men thought back to life before the Flood
 - And to the place where they once knew God lived
 - So they set off to return home
 - But then they arrive and find the Garden had long since been wiped out by the Flood
 - But they settle there none the less
 - Then, they began to build and learn new techniques for building structures
 - Instead of building from stones and mortar, they made their own bricks from clay and straw, burning them or firing them to harden them
 - And using tar or bitumen, they then bound the bricks together
 - Having obtained the materials and the desire to build, they now set their sites on an ambitious goal
 - Speaking as a united people, they declare they will build a city for themselves
 - And in the city will be a tower whose top will reach into heaven
 - And by this great work, they will make a name for themselves
 - And in the end, they pursue this great work of human hands because otherwise they will be scattered abroad and separated throughout the earth

- As I'm sure you can tell there's more going on than meets the eye
 - First, you probably noticed the direction they traveled: East
 - And more than just going East, the families traveled to Shinar, to Mesopotamia
 - The beginning of sin and the stronghold of the enemy
 - Secondly, take a second look at the details of the story from a spiritual perspective
 - The families of the Earth move back to their beginning place in defiance to God's commands
 - God commanded that the people of Noah multiply and fill the Earth
 - Instead, they stay together and move backward against God's decree
 - Next, they begin to create building materials for themselves from the work of their own hands
 - Where before they relied on natural stone, now they set aside stone and create an artificial type of stone, a counterfeit
 - Furthermore, they build a city and tower
 - The city was to be a way of obtaining a name for themselves
 - A name means a reputation, a testimony before others
 - And the tower was to reach into heaven
 - Notice, they didn't want to reach God or the Lord
 - They wanted to reach heaven, to the place of glory
 - Can you see the bigger picture?
 - The sin of pride is still alive and well
 - Men are still being born in the likeness of Adam, in the likeness of sin
 - And man's sin nature inevitably produces desires and instincts that move us 180 degrees away from God's desires
 - Instead of heading westward according to God's direction, men retreat eastward to the Enemy's home territory
 - Instead of relying on God, men immediately seek to rely on the work of their own hands
 - Instead of seeking the name of the Lord and the city of God, men made their own city to obtain their own testimony
 - And instead of seeking to reach God through a faith in His word, they seek to reach heaven by the work of their hands
 - Look at the world today and ask yourself if it is any different?
 - There is a constant race from barons of industry for the tallest skyscraper
 - Today it's in Dubai, maybe tomorrow in Malaysia
 - They are trying to make a name for themselves – trying to reach a level of glory in their own work

Rev. 3:12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

- Keeping in the mind that this story is historical truth, not merely a contrived story to teach a moral lesson
 - But the lesson is still the point
 - Our sin nature is just as strong as it was in the day of Nimrod
 - We instinctively seek ways to make our own way: in our physical life and in our spiritual life
 - Even as Christians, we may acknowledge the sovereignty and the authority of God in our lives, but yet we often still struggle to yield to His will
 - We would rather make a name for ourselves in the world than with the Lord
 - We would rather build something with our hands than rely on God
 - And the unbelieving world continues to live these lies every bit as much today as they did then
- It’s notable that when John is given a vision of the end times in the book of Revelation, one of the visions is of the destruction of false religious practices
 - And in that vision, John sees this:

Rev. 17:3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

Rev. 17:4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,

Rev. 17:5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Rev. 17:6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

- This mysterious woman is called Babylon and she is the mother of all harlots
 - She is called Babylon, the name of this great city built in Nimrod’s day
 - The name of the Enemy’s home territory
 - She is called a harlot
 - A harlot is a prostitute
 - A person who counterfeits true love

- Anyone who follows her is misled into a false relationship
 - Rather than becoming the Bride of Christ
 - She is the mother of harlots and the mother of all abominations on the earth
 - Every false, lying religion begins with her, and she is called Babylon
- This city, and the endeavor to build it, is the beginning of false religion, born in rebellion against the word of God
 - And from this start came all future abominations, for the enemy has been working in the sons of disobedience from the beginning
 - The enemy would prefer the world believe there are many roads to Heaven
 - And he works hard to create that impression
 - Whether it's Buddhism, Taoism, Confucism, Islam, Humanism, Paganism
 - And they all follow the same pattern
 - False religion teaches self-seeking, like the families that went East seeking their own way
 - True faith says set aside our own desires and instead follow the Lord
 - False religion teaches that the work of our hands is the solution to our problems
 - True faith recognizes that our own work gains us nothing spiritually
 - We must depend on the work of God in Christ to save us
 - False religion teaches us to seek for heaven, and that with enough heaven we'll get there eventually
 - True faith says to seek for Jesus Christ, and He will find us and come to live in us, and change us and save us
- As we've learned throughout the story of Genesis, when men rebel, God answers with judgment tempered by grace

Gen. 11:5 The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

Gen. 11:6 The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.

Gen. 11:7 "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

Gen. 11:8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

Gen. 11:9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

- The Lord comes down to see the city, we're told
 - Do we honestly think God needed to travel down from heaven to see the city?
 - Couldn't God see it just as easily from heaven? Or from anywhere?
 - Of course, and this reference is an anthropomorphism; assigning human behavior to God
 - But it makes an important point
 - While men were busy trying to reach heaven, they didn't even get close
 - God is still required to "come down" to see man's pitiful effort
 - It's been said that trying to reach God by your own effort could be compared to two people standing in the middle of Kansas trying to throw rocks at the North Pole
 - One might throw his rock farther than the other
 - But no matter who throws farther, both rocks fall way short of reaching the goal
 - This is the reality of human work
 - It cannot hope to reach the goal of perfection in God's presence
 - Our efforts will always fall so far short, that even individual differences between one another are meaningless
 - I might be closer to reaching Heaven than you are, but neither of us are even in Heaven's area code, much less in the neighborhood
- Secondly, notice that God refers to these builders as the "sons of men"
 - What Hebrew word do you think is being translated "men" here?
 - It's *adam*
 - These are sons of Adam, men in the likeness and pattern of Adam
 - Men born into sin and living accordingly
 - Even in that reference, God makes clear these people are acting in their sinful nature
- So then God says that language is the key to this rebellion
 - A single language left sin unrestrained
 - There was no barrier to the sinful heart
 - God says nothing will be impossible for men
 - The meaning isn't that men could accomplish literally anything
 - God means that anything man's sinful heart could purpose to accomplish, together men would do it
 - So in grace, God determines not to allow such a situation to go unchecked
 - Speaking in the plural as the Trinity, the Godhead declares He will confuse their language, so that men lose the ability to understand one another
- Let's imagine for a moment what that must have been like

- One moment, men speak and are understood; they hear another, and they understand
 - Men have never known another language, so they couldn't even appreciate the concept
- Then suddenly words aren't words any longer
 - From the perspective of each person, nothing has changed in their own speech
 - They still speak and understand their own words
 - They probably don't even realize that their own speech is different from before
 - They still form words and they still understand their own voice
 - But as they speak, others show puzzled faces, then quickly the looks turn to concern and then fear
 - Almost immediately, you realize that others are speaking in gibberish, as if they were playing a game
 - But then you see the concern and fear in their eyes and you realize it's no game
- As you desperately seek out someone you can understand, you stumble across an immediate family member and with great relief you realize you can understand one another
 - Slowly, small groups of people with like language begin to collect and band together
 - Still without an explanation, these bands of like language stick together so that some semblance of community is maintained
 - Some groups try in vain to bridge the communication divide, making hand signals and shouting while speaking slowly
 - But soon they abandon the effort, frustrated at the lack of progress and frightened about what the future holds
 - Work stops on the city, both because of the language barrier and because of shock and fear over their circumstances
 - Soon, mistrust and fear begins to set in, as each group wonders what the other groups are planning and worries about attacks
 - This leads men to migrate away from one another for safety
- This place earns its present-day name of Babel, which means confused language, as it does still today
 - Finally, God's will is done
 - The people scatter and begin to fill the earth
 - And the scattering of the language serves to mitigate against man's sinful nature
 - I don't think it's a coincidence that the world is moving back again toward a single language

- Today, business and the internet is making English the one language of the world again
 - And as the world begins to unite again in a common language, it's no coincidence that sin is being magnified
- This is another element of the last days and a precursor to the coming Tribulation on Earth
 - And it's also no coincidence that these days are marked by men building ever bigger cities and towers to their own name
- Remember I mentioned that Moses employs a wonderful literary device to reinforce the point of the story?
 - This story contains a chiasm, a stepping of thoughts in to a point and then back out again. See the overview [here](#).
 - The structure begins in verse 1 with the statement “all the earth had one language”
 - This statement is mirrored in v.9 but in an opposite form
 - The language of the whole is confused
 - From v.1 down to v. 5 we find separate statements that each find their compliment in verses 5-9
 - And in the middle is a single statement which has no compliment
 - That single statement is the turning point of the chiasm, where the pattern reverses
 - This laddering produces a visual effect of a “v” laid on its side, with the (turning) point facing to the right
- The purpose of a chiasm is to draw our attention to that turning point
 - In this case, our attention is drawn to the first half of verse 5
 - The Lord came down to see
 - While men were busy working their own plan by their own hands, the Lord came down
 - While men were united in sin and opposed to God, the Lord came down
 - As men worked in futility to reach heaven, the Lord came down
 - This is the story of the Bible
 - While we were yet still sinners, the Lord came down
 - And died for us on the cross

- Many scholars have observed that the book of Genesis can be divided neatly into two parts
 - The first part of the book runs from Chapter 1-11
 - It covers the origins of the universe, the earth, mankind and all the nations
 - It explains the origins of sin, the origins of nations, languages and government
 - It establishes the problem: man's rebellion against God
 - The second part of the book runs from Chapters 12-50
 - It covers the origins of the nation of Israel, beginning with Abraham
 - It explains the outworking of God to fulfill His promise to bring a Messiah
 - And it shows how Israel as a people become the mechanism for God to deliver His Redeemer
 - In the first part of Genesis, men are seen to be losing ground
 - They receive curses, are displaced from their land, lose privileges, are expelled from God's presence
 - In the second part of Genesis, men are receiving blessing
 - Visitations from God, promises to receive land, promises to be in God's kingdom
- Today we stand at the juncture of these two parts
 - We are finishing the first half
 - Having just seen the development of nations and the languages
 - And now to conclude, we examine the *toldat* or genealogy of the line of the seed promise: Shem
 - Shem's line will connect us from Noah's family to the next major character in the story of God's plan of redemption: Abram
 - Even as God confused language and scattered mankind, His promise was still intact and working through the families of Noah
 - Specifically, the family of Shem carries the promise forward and into the next installment of the story

Gen. 11:10 These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;

Gen. 11:11 and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:12 Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah;

Gen. 11:13 and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:14 Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber;

Gen. 11:15 and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the

father of Eber, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:16 Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg;

Gen. 11:17 and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:18 Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu;

Gen. 11:19 and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:20 Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug;

Gen. 11:21 and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:22 Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor;

Gen. 11:23 and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:24 Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah;

Gen. 11:25 and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had other sons and daughters.

Gen. 11:26 Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

- In looking at this list of names, we have three observations to consider
- First, we find ten generations between Shem and Abram
 - Like all genealogy lists in Genesis, the point of the list is to trace the seed line
 - In this case the line between Shem and Abram, since Abram becomes the next character in the line of the promise
 - But curiously, the previous genealogy in Chapter 5 also included ten generations between Adam and Noah
 - This similarity isn't coincidence
 - God has purposed to place ten names between these men to emphasize His hand and authority over all these outcomes
 - The number 10 in Scripture is the number of testimony, as in a testimony to God's faithfulness to His promises
 - So how appropriate that God waits ten generations before beginning the next step in His plan of redemption
 - The next time you wonder if God is still at work in your life, remember that He waited hundreds of years before acting anew just to ensure He could communicate through a "10"
 - God's patience exceeds our own, and yet we can find patience by understanding and recognizing God's patterns from His word
 - He moves in deliberate and purposeful ways, all the while remaining in control and bringing all things to good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose

- Secondly, the overlapping lives of these men assures us that the history recorded in Genesis was easily passed along to later generations and preserved for Moses to record
 - The lives of only four men link the beginning of time to Jacob's life
 - Adam, Lamech, Shem and Jacob
 - Each man in the list was still alive when the next man was an adult
 - In fact, Noah lived until Abram's father, Terah, was alive
 - Shem and Eber outlived Terah
 - Eber outlived Abraham
- Finally, the list emphasizes the separating effect of God's seed promise
 - As we discussed last week, God is in the business of selecting who will receive His grace
 - And God's seed promise is a grace He elects to bring to certain lines of men, but not to others
 - And that choice is evident in the outworking of the events of their lives
 - And it's reflected in the genealogies of Genesis
 - For example, we taught back in Chapter 10 that the genealogy in that chapter accounts for the names that were not to receive the promise
 - These are the families that disappear from the pages of Scripture, since they don't matter to the ultimate story of the fulfillment of God's promise
 - But in particular take note of the families of Eber, the man who gave his name to the Hebrews
 - He had two sons: Peleg and Joktan
 - And in Chapter 10 we're told that Peleg was born in the days when the earth was divided, referring to the dividing of men at the tower of Babel
 - The narrative of Genesis gives a higher meaning to that reference of division
 - The descendants of Noah are traced twice: in Chapters 10 & 11
 - In Chapter 10 we see Eber's family dividing into two people, Peleg and Joktan
 - For the remainder of Chapter 10, the line of Joktan is told
 - Culminating in the rebellion at the Tower of Babel
 - In Chapter 11 the line is traced a second time, but this time we focus on the line of Peleg
 - And his line ends in Abram
 - The message of the genealogies of 10 & 11 seems clear
 - God divided the earth in more ways than one
 - While He divided the nations by confusing the languages, He was also dividing Eber's family
 - Joktan's line leads to the story of the Tower and away from the promises of

God

- Peleg's line in Chapter 11 moves away from the story of the Tower and toward the promised seed, realized in the line of Hebrews through Abraham
- Let's be clear on the purposes of God in Genesis
 - God created, man polluted and God cleansed
 - And since God is the One fixing man's mistake, God may take any route He chooses
 - The story of Genesis is the tracing of that route through certain men, and apart from others
- Today, God continues to work in exactly the same way
 - The outworking of God's promise to redeem men from sin has reached its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - And as Jesus Himself said, He didn't come to unify mankind:

Luke 12:51 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;

Luke 12:52 for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

Luke 12:53 "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

- The only question worth asking is, which side are we on?
 - Are we with the line of the seed promise: Seth, Noah, Shem, Eber, Peleg and Abram all the way to Jesus?
 - Or are we with the rebels? Are we like Cain, Lamech, Canaan, Nimrod, Joktan?
- We only get two options, because there is no third category
 - And our family tree divides on the question of who we say Jesus is
 - As Jesus said Himself:

Luke 8:20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You."

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

- Now we turn the corner of part 1 in Genesis and start part 2

Gen. 11:27 Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became

the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.

Gen. 11:28 Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Gen. 11:29 Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

Gen. 11:30 Sarai was barren; she had no child.

- This is the central *toldat* of the book of Genesis
 - There are five *toldats* before it, and five after it
 - It serves as the turning point, the moment when God begins to move the course of human history back toward Himself
 - This *toldat* introduces the first of the patriarchs of Israel
 - Each of these men – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – will receive greater and greater revelation concerning the promise to bring a redeemer
 - And each man will receive a small portion of the promise in their earthly life
 - Yet as we will study, each man died looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises in a future life
- The first of these patriarchs is Abram, the son of Terah
 - He has two brothers, Nahor and Haran
 - His brother Nahor seems to have been named after his grandfather
 - While Haran is named after his father's home town
 - By the time Abram is born, his father had moved from Haran to Ur, a city in Mesopotamia
 - Ur was a significant city historically
 - Moses calls it Ur of the Chaldeans, but the Chaldeans didn't occupy this area until over 1,000 years later
 - Moses probably included the reference to the Chaldeans to help identify the location of Ur for his readers
 - Ur had a population of roughly 34,000 and occupied about 4 square miles at the time of Terah
 - The city had walls 35 feet thick, which tells us that the fear and confusion created at the Tower has now led to violence and wars
 - There is archeological evidence that the city had harbors on the Euphrates and traded with other people in the north, and in Africa
 - But in BC 2180, everything changes for the prosperous town
 - War-like barbarians called Guti descended from the Eastern mountains and conquer Ur
 - They make life miserable for the inhabitants of Ur for nearly a century

- In BC 2166, 14 years after the invasion, Terah begins to have children, including Abram
 - Abram and his brothers grow up in an occupied city
- Terah and his son Abram were appointed to the line of the seed promise, but this doesn't mean they were always faithful followers of God
 - In fact, there is no evidence that Terah ever knew the true God
 - Joshua tells us:

Josh. 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

Josh. 24:3 ‘Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

- In Genesis 11 we also learn that Haran has a son, Lot
 - But the very next verse tells us that Haran died young leaving his son an orphan
 - And this detail becomes important in the next chapter, as we learn that Lot became a member of Abram's family as a result of Haran's death
 - Haran dies while the family is still living in Ur, away from the ancestral home in Haran
 - Both the remaining boys take wives
 - But curiously, we learn that Abram's wife is barren and cannot have children
- Sarai's inability is the first of 12 obstacles that Abram will confront in his life story in Genesis
 - Moses expects his readers to understand from the beginning that Abram is the man through whom God will work the next stage of His redemption plan
 - But then immediately Moses presents us with something that stops the story in its tracks
 - How can Abram continue the line of the seed if his wife is barren and can't give birth?
 - We're intrigued to see how Abram overcomes this obstacle
 - Looking ahead, we'll also wonder how Abram will receive land in a place occupied by other people?
 - How will Abram rescue his son from God's instructions to sacrifice him?
 - What we come to find for each of these obstacles is that Abram's success is provided by God Himself
 - God gives Abram the means to overcome each of these challenges

- And that, in the end, even the obstacles themselves find their source in God, as tests of Abram's character and faith
 - Abram doesn't always pass these tests
 - But he always stands in the end because God remains true to His promises
- Such is the God we serve, that even when we are faithless, He remains faithful
- Finally, let's end the chapter

Gen. 11:31 Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

Gen. 11:32 The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

- We're told that Terah takes his son Abram, Lot and Sarai out of Ur and heads to the land of Canaan
 - But they get only about half way when they reach Haran and then Terah settles there
 - While in Haran, Terah dies
 - Moses doesn't address in Chapter 11 why the family leaves or what happened to the other brother Nahor
 - But he deals with both loose ends in the coming chapters
 - In particular Moses quickly comes to answer the question of why the family departs their home in Ur
 - And even before we venture into Chapter 12, we can look at the New Testament for the answer
 - Stephen gives us the answer in his discourse in Acts:

Acts 7:2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, **Acts 7:3** and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

Acts 7:4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

- The order of events begins with a revelation from God while in Ur, which directed Abram's family in their movement westward
 - After Terah's passing, God appears again and directs them into the land of Canaan

- Moving from east to west, Abram sets out for the promised land, bringing his wife, nephew and father with him
 - The family of the seed promise moves as God directs
 - The details of this call and the movement of the family will begin to emerge next week and in the coming chapters
 - But how exciting is it to know that we serve a God Who has made it His practice to call men out of obscurity to serve Him?
 - He brings men and women from east and sends them west
 - He rescues us from idol worship and spiritual ignorance and He grants us the privilege of knowing the Creator personally
 - He loves us while we are yet still a part of the world, His enemy and He adopts us into His family
 - He redeems us from our own sin and sets us on a journey to learn and serve and proclaim His Name and glory to the world
 - And He started with one man, Abram

- Last week we turned the corner into part two of Genesis
 - Part one of Genesis was a trilogy of sorts
 - A three-part story of the never-ending, all-consuming destructive power of sin
 - It began with the sin of the garden
 - And God responded by denying man fellowship with Himself
 - It continued with the depravity of ancient men with the cohabitation of demons
 - God responded by denying man their land, drowning mankind, separating continents, moving mountains
 - And leaving a small family to restart humanity
 - Finally, it progressed to a united rebellious people worshipping false gods, seeking a name for themselves
 - And so God responded by scattering them, denying man fellowship with the other families of the earth
 - Causing men to separate and live in isolation from one another
 - Fellowship with God, peace in the land, and a family of descendants
 - Three things taken from mankind because of the destructive effects of sin
 - At this rate, sinful man will bring himself to nothing if something isn't done to correct the problem of sin
- Enter God's promise to Abram

Gen. 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram,

“Go forth from your country,

And from your relatives

And from your father's house,

To the land which I will show you;

Gen. 12:2 And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,

And make your name great;

And so you shall be a blessing;

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,

And the one who curses you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

- At the end of Chapter 11, we were told that Abram's father took Abram and Abram's family and traveled back to Haran, Terah's home town
 - Moses told us in Chapter 11 that the purpose of the travel was for Abram to enter into Canaan
 - Now Moses explains why the family made such an unusual move
 - They were obeying God's command to move according to His direction

- Chapter 11 also told us that Terah died while they were in Haran
 - But now Abram begins to move again, and makes his way directly into Canaan
- And Moses gives us the detail in Chapter 12 for what prompted Abram to make this journey
 - He receives this astonishing revelation from God
 - Remember, Abram and his father knew nothing of the one true God before this moment
 - One day Abram is just minding his own business, worshipping pagan gods like everyone else
 - Then God appeared in some manner and reveals Himself to Abram
 - He tells Abram to leave his own country and relatives and his father's house and enter a strange land that God will reveal
 - And God declares that He will bring Abram to glory, with a great name, a great nation of people, a man of strength
 - And a man who will bless all the families or nations of the earth
- That's quite a promise, the first of seven times God will appear to Abram (later Abraham)
 - But notice it begins with a command
 - God tells Abram that he must begin this chain by an obedient step of leaving his home
 - More specifically, Abram must leave his country, Ur
 - He must leave his relatives, his extended family
 - Finally, he must leave his father's house, that is his father's ancestral home in Haran
 - God's plan to use Abram depends on Abram leaving everything in the world in which Abram finds his identity and security
 - Instead, he must obey God's voice, depend on God's promises and rely on His provision
 - We might stop and wonder at this point what might have happened had Abram never obeyed, but such speculation is pointless
 - Abram did obey, and scripture tells us why Abram felt compelled to take that step

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

- Abram had no idea where he was going, but he had faith in God's word
 - And that faith compelled him forward, overcame his doubts and objections and brought him into God's blessing

- In the first three verses, God begins to reveal His covenant with Abram
 - This isn't the moment the covenant is officially inaugurated...that comes in a later chapter
 - But it's no less sure at this point
 - God is merely revealing His promises to Abram in stages
 - And at this early point, God has told Abram everything he needs to know
 - Hebrews 11:8 makes clear that Abram is acting in faith of God's promises
 - However God made it happen, He revealed Himself to Abram in such a manner that Abram came to know God truly
 - And in hearing God's word in these promises, Abram believed
 - And at this moment, Abram has begun his walk of faith
 - In a later chapter of Genesis, we see God declaring Abram righteous in recognition of His faith
 - But Hebrews 11 tells us that Abram's faith began as he departed Ur
 - In fact, it was because of Abram's faith that he left the East and journeyed to the West
- It's easy to see why Abram has become the classic Biblical picture of walking in faith
 - God reveals Himself today through His Son Jesus Christ
 - Hebrews tells us that by all the past revelation, God was building toward the full measure of Christ

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- And by that revelation, we have the same opportunity to obey like Abram did
 - And we are asked to do the same things Abram did
 - In spiritual terms, we are asked to leave behind the world we knew, our pursuit of self and pride and seek God's kingdom

John 12:25 "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

- Like Abram, we are asked to forsake family connections if necessary to obey God completely

Matt. 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and

he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

- Following Jesus means we turn our back on the world
 - And in place of what the world offers, we trust that what Jesus holds in store for us is so much better
- And like Abram didn't know what God was prepared to offer Abram as an inheritance, we too are in the dark
 - We understand we've been rescued from the penalty of our sin on the basis of our faith
 - But that's just our starting point, like Abram hearing God in Ur and coming to know God in the face of Jesus
 - But then our walk begins, and we walk faithfully because we trust God's promise of an inheritance
 - And we look forward to something greater that can't be found in this world
 - Just like Abram did

Heb. 11:9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
Heb. 11:10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

- So it's easy to see why so many generations of God's children have looked back at Abram's call and recognized God's fingerprints in their own lives
 - And as we begin a detailed examination of the man and his life of faith, we'll have plenty of opportunity to draw comparisons to our own walk of faith
- For example, let's look at the promises Abram heard while in Ur
 - It came in three parts
 - God will elaborate on these three parts during His six additional appearances
 - But we see the framework established here
 - First, Abram is told that he is being sent to a new land, a land God will reveal
 - Abram will begin a long walk to a strange land without a clear idea of what he will find there
 - You might compare Abram's walk of faith to a husband who has been blindfolded and is taken by the hand by his wife, who has a surprise waiting in the next room
 - The husband follows the wife trusting that something good is coming, but he doesn't know where's he's going or what he will find
 - Once he arrives, the wife removes the blindfold and reveals a new HDTV
 - So first, Abram is given a promise of land, an inheritance God appoints

- Secondly, God says in v.2 that Abram will be granted a nation (or family) and he will obtain a name that will be great
 - This promise is especially interesting since we know Abram's wife is barren
 - Yet somehow Abram is told to expect that a new nation will come from him
 - In Chapter 10 we heard that God created 70 nations from Noah
 - Now we hear that God is prepared to create a 71st nation from Abram
 - And to be sure the world knows it was a nation birthed by God, the wife of Abram starts the story barren
 - So Abram will receive a new family and this posterity will result in Abram's name becoming great
- Finally, Abram will be a blessing to the world
 - He will see those who bless him be blessed
 - And those who curse him will be cursed by God
- Each of these promises have a specific fulfillment in the life of Abram and family of people that come from him
 - For example, Abram's promise of a nation and a name is fulfilled in the rise of Israel and the reverence they have for their father Abraham
 - He receives a new name when he becomes Abraham
 - And he will obtain fame that extends even today and to Jews, Arabs and Christians
 - The promise of land is eventually fulfilled by the twelve tribes of Israel receiving the land of Canaan
 - And Abram will eventually receive this land in the future kingdom when Christ returns to Earth
 - Finally, the promise of blessing and cursing can be seen in Abram's life and in Israel generally
 - Both find God protecting them from adversaries and blessing their allies
- But these promises also have greater fulfillment in a spiritual sense
 - Looking at the promise in reverse order, for example...
 - Abram was told that through him the families of the Earth will be blessed
 - The ultimate fulfillment of this promise is understood to be Jesus Himself
 - We'll see this more clearly in future chapters as God reveals it to Abram
 - We'll see that the blessing God intends to deliver to the world through Abram will be fully realized in the Messiah
 - Furthermore, God says that those who bless and curse Abram will receive the same in return
 - Remember, we've said before that "curse" in the Bible means eternal damnation

- A sentence of hell that can't be reversed
- So blessing and curses are juxtaposed here to suggest a contrast between heaven and hell
 - Those who align themselves with Abram's example of faith in God's word will see the same spiritual outcome that Abram sees: salvation and eternal blessing
 - But those who oppose Abram's example, those who remain aligned with the world, will receive the wages of their sin and eternal judgment
- And in this way, God's promise to Abram will become the means for bringing blessing to the families (or tribes) of the earth
- Next, Abram is told he will receive a name for himself, and so will those who follow in his footsteps
 - Jesus says to believers that as we arrive in His presence we receive new names that only Jesus knows
 - Names that reflect our honor and service to Him

Rev. 2:17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

- Finally, Abram was promised an inheritance in the land
 - And we who have followed Abram's example of trusting in God's word also have an eternal inheritance awaiting
 - Like Abram and his descendants, we will have a place in the kingdom to call our own
 - And we will receive rewards that follow us into that world as a reflection of our service and faithfulness to Christ in these days of waiting
 - Just as Abram's blessing was contingent on his willingness to walk and follow God, so does our inheritance turn on our obedience
 - Our faith and therefore our salvation is by God's grace and isn't in question
 - But to receive the full measure of our inheritance, we must be willing to let God lead us by the hand and show us a better place and a new life
- These three promises are the gateway into all that follows in the entire Bible
 - They represent not only God's kindness and mercy to a man named Abram
 - But they are God's grace and love to a fallen world
 - In fact, I want you to remember the trilogy of Chapters 1-11 again
 - We saw sinful men lose fellowship in God's presence and in God's kingdom in the Garden

- We watched sinful men wiped off their land and lose their lives in the flood
- We witnessed idol worshipping men seeking a name for themselves only to be separated from their families and scattered
- Now in Chapter 12, God sets the terms for correcting all three sad episodes
 - By these promises to Abram, God provides the means by which He will restore our fellowship with Him
 - And He sets us firmly in our inheritance in the future land of the Kingdom without fear of ever suffering loss again
 - And He gives us new names that glorifies God, and He grants us adoption into the family of God, calling us sons and daughters,
 - And gives us one voice by which we may speak with Him, that is the voice of the Spirit
- The Apostle John was privileged to see this fulfillment in advance in his revelation, where he recorded the scene this way:

Rev. 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

Rev. 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

- In considering God's plan in all its intricate detail, it brings to mind Paul's exclamation at the end of Romans 11, and I can think of no more fitting way to close our lesson:

Rom. 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Rom. 11:34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

Rom. 11:35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

Rom. 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Abraham wanted to upgrade his abacas to Windows 7. Isaac takes his father aside and gently questions him. "Father Abraham," he says, "you can't run Windows 7 on your abacas. It's old, it's too slow. It doesn't have the power to handle Windows. If you want to run abacas for Windows 7, you'll have to buy an Abacas Pro model with at least 8 megabytes of memory. We can probably find an Abacas Pro at our local Bethel Buy, but I don't know where we will find that much RAM."

But Abraham, the man of faith, gazed calmly at his son and replied, "God will provide the RAM, my son."

- At the start of Chapter 12, Abram, the man of faith, was called by God and given a covenant
 - We studied the basic framework of that covenant last week in vs. 1-3
 - We saw God give Abram a promise for land, a posterity, and a blessing that would reach the whole world
 - There is still a lot more to learn about God's promises to Abram
 - God restates the terms of the covenant again in future conversations
 - So we'll wait for those future moments to continue our own discovery of all that the Abrahamic Covenant offers
 - Meanwhile, let's study today what Abram does in response to God's call and to the promises of the covenant

Gen. 12:4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Gen. 12:5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

Gen. 12:6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

- In response to God's instructions to depart, Abram leaves Ur and then Haran
 - The evangelist Stephen told us in Acts 7 that Abram waited until his father died before leaving Haran and continuing to Canaan
- We might hesitate at this moment and ask whether Abram was fully obedient to God's call to leave his relatives and his father's house
 - First, we know he took his father with him from Ur to Haran
 - And he took his nephew Lot all the way to Canaan

- Was Abram wrong to bring these men along?
- The short answer is no
 - In the case of Terah, Abram could not have stopped Terah if he tried
 - Terah was the patriarch, and Abram would have had no authority over Terah
 - More importantly, Abram was following God's call in escorting Terah back to his ancestral home
 - Remember what Stephen said:

Acts 7:3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

Acts 7:4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

- God directed to Abram to move on to Canaan only after his father died
 - God was permitting Abram to fulfill his duties as a son to his father, caring for Terah until he died
- In the case of Lot, the answer is less clear
 - Abram had likely become Lot's provider when Lot's father, Haran, died
 - If so, Abram could no more leave Lot behind than he could leave Sarai
 - So we would expect Abram to bring Lot to Haran
- On the other hand, Lot would have been an adult by the time Terah died and Abram resumed his travel to Canaan
- So we might assume that Lot decided to tag along and Abram allowed him to do so in disobedience to God's instructions
 - We're going to see in a few chapters that Abram's decision to allow Lot to accompany him to Canaan has long lasting consequences
- In v.4, we're told that Abram is 75 years old when he leaves Haran after his father died
 - But we also know from Chapter 11 that Terah was 205 years old when he died
 - If we subtract 75 (Abram's age when Terah died) from Terah's age, we get 130 years
 - But in 11:26 we're told that Terah was 70 when he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran
 - This has led many to ponder whether this is a contradiction in Scripture
 - It's not a contradiction, but rather a matter of making a bad assumption
 - In 11:26, we're told that Terah becomes the father of three sons when he's 70
 - But we know that Terah didn't have triplets...these boys were born over a

period of time

- Abram is listed first leading many to assume he was first born, thus the contradiction in ages
- But in reality, Moses lists the names in order of importance, not birth order
 - Abram is first, Nahor is second and Haran is last, because Haran dies young
 - Since Haran is the first to have a child, it's likely that he was oldest and Abram was second or even third
- Therefore, we know that Abram was born when Terah was 130 years old
- So in v.5, Abram and his entourage enter Canaan
 - Abram has obeyed in leaving behind his father's house
 - This was his father's ancestral home in Haran, but God's command carried a deeper significance for Abram
 - God was asking Abram to leave behind his father's inheritance
 - Inherited wealth was essentially land, animals and servants
 - God had told Abram to leave that inheritance behind and trust in God for a better inheritance
 - And here we see Abram taking an affirmative step of faith
 - God continues to ask men and women of faith to serve Him by walking away from things we value in this world
 - For the hope of something better in eternity
 - He calls missionaries to leave the comforts of their culture
 - He calls pastors, teachers, elders and others to sacrifice free time or sleep to serve the body of Christ
 - He calls His children to sacrifice dignity and personal safety to preach the gospel and live as witnesses
 - He calls all of us to sacrifice financially at times to support the work of ministry
 - But notice how Abram entered Canaan
 - He had a family, he had possessions, he had servants
 - Abram walked away from his father's estate but still God ensured they had accumulated a provision in Haran
 - God isn't unconcerned with our needs or unwilling to bless us materially

Matt. 6:31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'"

Matt. 6:32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

Matt. 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things

will be added to you.

- But our prosperity in this world is not the Lord's first priority
 - And He wants to make sure it's not our first priority either
- His priority is our dedicated service to Him, as Abram did
- As Abram entered into Canaan, he walked through the land taking stock of it
 - How strange this assessment must have felt and looked to an outsider
 - Here's Abram, the head of a single family, walking into Canaan, a land occupied for generations by powerful tribes descended from Ham's grandson
 - And he's surveying the land as its new owner, yet without any visible means of forcing its occupants out
 - To the world Abram appeared as the stranger, the one with no claim to the land
 - And yet in truth, Abram was the rightful heir of the land and the current occupants were the strangers...strangers to the promises of God
 - What's more, Abram pitches his tent by the oak of Moreh near Shechem
 - This is an important place in the history of Israel
 - The Hebrew phrase translated "oak of Moreh" can be translated the terebinth of the teacher, which is a reference to a center of pagan teaching
 - The same place appears frequently in Scripture and is always associated with Israel invading Canaanite idolatry
 - It's here that Abram chooses to first pitch his tents
 - Abram invades Canaan and by his arrival announces that this land will one day become Israel's and the Messiah's
 - Symbolically shining God's light, penetrating the lostness and darkness of that pagan world
- Here's the power of faith and obedience at work
 - Our faith has the power to save us, as only faith can do
 - But as James taught us, if that faith isn't put to work, it is useless
 - But when our faith is put into action through obedience to God's call, it becomes a mighty thing
 - It holds the power to penetrate lostness and deliver the light of hope in Christ
 - Abram was just one family with no hope to take control of that land
 - He knew his day to own the land would come long after he died
 - But in the meantime, he served God's purpose by entering the land and confronting the Canaan culture head on
 - In a sense, we have the same mission given to Abram
 - We have faith and a call to serve God

- God has told us to leave our dependence on this world
- To walk away from what holds us, binds us to the world
- And then we've been made to share in the promises of Abram
 - We have the hope of a future inheritance, one we receive after our death
 - And while we wait, we are being led in our walk of faith to a place God will show us
- And the Lord has told us that He is sending us into lostness and darkness to bring the light and the truth
 - And we're not to shrink back from that call
 - We walk confidently and pitch our tents in the heart of paganism and idolatry because that's what ambassadors do

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2Cor. 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

2Cor. 5:19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

2Cor. 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- You and I are new creatures, made new by faith in Christ's death and resurrection
 - And the old things of our nature and lifestyle have passed away
 - Like Abram's idol-worshipping traditions and life in Ur
 - It's history for us
 - And God has given us a ministry, the ministry of reconciliation, the gospel that reconciles men to God
- So Paul tells us we are to be ambassadors for Christ, as if God were speaking to the world through us
 - Recently our team went to Juarez, Mexico, and experienced first-hand what it means to step into the heart of lostness and darkness
 - But they also saw the power of God working through His people in the midst of that situation
 - God is a God of new beginnings, and He seems to do His best work in the worst places
 - But you don't have to travel to Juarez to be an ambassador for Christ
 - Austin is filled with terebinths of paganism and darkness
 - And we are appointed to break into those places as well

- And when we obey, God will go with us
 - He doesn't ask us to preach necessarily
 - Abram just walked and lived in the land, but it was enough to get people's attention and make God's presence known

Gen. 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

Gen. 12:8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

Gen. 12:9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

- As Abram obeys and pitches his tent in the land, God appears for the second time
 - He reaffirms to Abram that he is in the right place
 - But now God reveals a new detail concerning the inheritance
 - God will give this land to Abram's descendants
 - Now Abram begins to understand that the land won't be fully possessed until Abram's descendants receive it
 - This is likely the point when Abram came to understand that the land was not to be his in his own lifetime
 - Many have assumed that Abram and his family were always nomadic by tradition
 - So they don't think anything of Abram living in tents throughout his time in Canaan
 - But that thinking ignores Abram's history
 - He grew up living in a prosperous city, Ur
 - Even after he and his father moved back to Haran, they lived in the city we're told
 - But since he arrived in Canaan, Abram is seen living in tents
 - In fact, he will live in tents his entire life in the land, which the writer of Hebrews explains as an act of faith

Heb. 11:9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

Heb. 11:10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

- Abram wasn't a nomad by tradition...he lived in tents as a matter of faith
 - He lived his faith in God's promise to deliver the land at a later point, to Abram's descendants

- And ultimately, a faith that the real inheritance he looked forward to receiving was the eternal one
- As Abram sees the Lord appear to him in the Land, he responds with an altar
 - Altar building will become an increasingly important tradition among the patriarchs
 - As we discussed when Noah built his altar, altars are places of worship
 - But more specifically, they are places of sacrifice
 - An altar is the table upon which an animal is placed so that its blood may be poured out
 - It's also the place where an offering is made to God
 - Patriarchs will build altars when they wish to express worship to God for His faithfulness and his blessing
 - And it's here on the occasion of God's reiteration of His promise to Abram that Abram worships with an altar
 - Which means he also made sacrifices
 - Standing in the heart of the Canaanite culture and pagan teaching, Abram invades the darkness and sets up a testimony to God's forgiveness
 - And he worships
 - And notice that Abram repeated this practice as he moved southward through the land
 - He stops again between Bethel and Ai
 - Notice Abram purposely camps outside two cities, remaining between them rather than moving into the cities
 - Clearly, he is going out of his way not to become a part of the Canaanite culture
 - And again he builds an altar to the Lord, calling upon the name of the Lord
- Today, we don't build altars
 - In fact, there's a reason you don't see an altar in this church
 - Nor should you see an altar in a Christian church, because an altar is a place of sacrifice
 - But Christ's sacrifice of Himself is the one sufficient death for atonement of sin
 - No other sacrifice is required nor should we even imply that one is needed
 - Instead, the word of God tells us how to set up altars in our world as Abram did

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that

which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- We repeat Abram's example not by presenting animal sacrifices on stone tables
 - But by presenting ourselves as holy sacrifice, living unto God
 - This is our spiritual worship
- And while Abram proved God's will for his life and the Canaanite lands by hearing from the Lord while living among the Canaanite people
 - We prove God's will to a lost and dying world by listening to God's word, allowing it to transform our mind and life
 - Making us Christ-like, so that we may represent Christ to the pagan culture around us
- Abram's testimony begins long before the story on the mountain in Chapter 2
- Look at how he starts his walk with God, through faith

- Abram is a man of complexity
 - The Father of faith, Paul says in Rom 4:16
 - A man called a friend of God, according to James 2:23
 - The patriarch of the patriarchs
 - But he is also a man who, as Scripture records, makes serious errors and shows weaknesses in faith at times
 - As I mentioned before, this man came to be called Abraham, a friend of God
 - But he began his walk with God as Abram...a man new to faith and unfamiliar to depending upon God
 - And like anyone new to faith, Abram must progress through trials and challenges if he is to grow spiritually
 - So he can learn how to depend on God rather than upon his own fleshly nature
 - Last week Moses taught us how this new man of faith heard God's call, responded and received God's promises of blessing
 - Abram's receiving of God's promises began the fourth period of God's rule over His creation
 - We refer to this period as the dispensation of promise or patriarchs, which is distinguished from the dispensation of government by God's selection of one family
 - While government still operates, God's purposes will be uniquely fulfilled through the line of one family – Abram's family
 - And in the second half of Chapter 12, Moses relates one of Abram's early missteps after arriving in the land
 - Beginning today in v.10

Gen. 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

- Abram has been wandering through the land to take in all that God had given him and his descendants
 - His wanderings brought him into the southern most part of Canaan, into the Negev desert
 - The Negev is the final wilderness before you reach the border of Egypt
 - So as we enter v.10, Abram is living near Egypt's border making his new life in Canaan
 - Now Moses says there was a famine in the land
 - This statement holds great intrigue for us because we know that famines are not events of chance or luck

- We know God has brought this famine about
 - Therefore we must conclude it is a test, not only on Canaan as a whole but upon Abram in particular
 - So this begs a big question: why would God bring such a test upon Abram so soon after leading him into the promised land?
- History tells us that the city of Ur was a very prosperous city
 - Ur was located in fertile Mesopotamia where crops and herds were plentiful
 - And archeologists have found evidence that the city traded for exotic goods from around Asia and Africa
 - So Abram's family was probably accustomed to having plenty
- So then the living God revealed Himself to Abram and called him to a better place, a place God had prepared for Abram's inheritance
 - What do you suppose Abram expected to find in Canaan?
 - If pagan Ur was a prosperous place to live, surely God's promised land would be far better, offering a far easier life
- With the onset of this famine, Abram must have been scratching his head and wondering about what went wrong?
 - Did he do something wrong? Did God forget His promises?
 - Whatever the cause, Abram knew he needed to take matters into his own hands
 - If following God and depending on God for his needs and his inheritance was Plan A, then perhaps it was time for Plan B
 - Because Plan A didn't seem to provide for Abram in the manner to which he was accustomed
 - And as we heard, Abram's Plan B was to follow the world's lead and head to Egypt
 - Ancient historical records confirm what we see Abram doing here
 - When famine would hit Palestine hard, many would migrate into Egypt seeking greener pastures
 - Even when Egypt experienced drought, the Nile river would bring enough flood waters to ensure a good grain harvest
 - So while the rest of the known world was suffering, Egypt would often become the world's destination for survival
 - Egypt plays a prominent role in Scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the New
 - At times it becomes a place of protection for Israel
 - And at other times it serves as Israel's oppressor
 - After Jesus was born, Egypt becomes a place for the Messiah to hide as a child
 - And in the coming Kingdom, Isaiah tells us that Egypt will remain an empty wasteland as a testimony against Israel's enemies

- By all these examples, Egypt becomes a picture in Scripture of the Gentile unbelieving world
 - Egypt pictures the unbelieving Gentile world both giving Israel sanctuary at times while persecuting them at other times
 - Egypt pictures the way the world becomes a place for the Messiah to dwell before he comes into His Kingdom in the form of His Church
 - And Egypt will one day picture the judgment that comes upon the world that rejects the Messiah
- So Egypt pictures the sinful, unbelieving world
- Abram responds to his time of trial by retreating to the world
 - He goes to Egypt looking for the provision he expected to find in God's land
- Personally, I take a small measure of encouragement in watching Abram making this mistake
 - And yes, this was a mistake
 - Abram receives no instruction to leave the land of Canaan
 - And his time in Egypt just leads to more stumbles and compromises
 - Abram may be a man of faith, but at this early point, he's a man unaccustomed to living by that faith
 - Here he faces his first test as a man following God, and he concludes that reliance on God isn't sufficient under the circumstances
 - When we're new in our walk of faith – or when we are untested – we have little personal experience in depending upon the Lord
 - On the other hand, we do have experience in depending upon ourselves
 - Trials are a God-provided opportunity for us to learn what depending on God looks like
 - Early in our walk, we're likely to revert under pressure to what we know best – depending upon ourselves
 - Which is actually a lie anyway
 - Even when we were living apart from the promises of God, dead in our sins, we were still dependent upon God for every breath
 - We just didn't recognize and acknowledge His role
 - So I'm encouraged when I read that Abram, the Father of Faith, had days when his faith didn't drive his decision-making
 - Instead, his doubts and fears and sinful nature drove his decision-making
 - And his mistakes certainly don't justify our mistakes
 - But they remind us that walking in faith is a progression in maturity, not an instantaneous achievement
 - And the engine driving our maturity is the Spirit of God bringing the truth of God's word to our hearts

- And the fuel for that engine of maturity are trials and tests brought by the Lord
- James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote this to the church:

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- We are to face our trials joyfully, in the sense that we recognize their potential to achieve a good purpose
 - Because by these trials we learn to endure in our faith, to rely on the Lord
 - So that we might attain to the perfect or complete work in Christ
- Isn't this Abram's shortcoming here?
 - He didn't understand that he could be complete in the Lord
 - He has found the Lord's provision lacking
 - It wasn't as satisfying as what Egypt held for him
- This is the early experience I believe the Lord gives every new believer, to understand that walking in faith isn't a recipe for more of what the world offers
 - Sadly, many believers were taught that their entrance into the faith meant they had arrived on Easy Street
 - They will be rich, popular and thin
 - They will find life's problems disappearing and all their dreams coming true
 - None of this is true, none of it
 - God's word teaches that just as the prophets were persecuted and as our Lord was crucified, so will God's children be mistreated
 - The Lord said that we should expect to be hated by the world for Christ's name's sake
 - The reality is that the world appeals to our flesh, but a walk of faith appeals to our spirit
 - And as Paul taught in Galatians 5, we are either led by our flesh or we are being led by God's Spirit – but we cannot follow both
- I don't think it's any coincidence that Abram had ventured close to the Egyptian border by the time of the famine
 - Knowing that Egypt is a picture of worldliness, then we might see Abram's choice to live in the Negev as a picture of trying to hold onto the world while walking with God
 - And then when the trial came, it was that much easier for Abram to step across the border and enter Egypt

- Christians repeat this error when we entertain thoughts of remaining married to the world
 - We're talking about the Christian who lives with one foot still in the world, still clinging to the life the Lord calls them to leave behind
 - When Jesus prayed to the Father before His death on the cross, listen to what He says concerning God's children – those who have faith

John 17:14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

John 17:16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

John 17:18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

John 17:19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

John 17:20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

- Jesus says that God's children are like Christ in that we are spiritually different than the world
 - And that difference will cause the world to disapprove and distance themselves from us in various ways
 - And yet Jesus says He would not ask the Father to remove us from the world, not until the time God has appointed
 - Instead, Jesus asked the Father to keep us from the enemy and sanctify us in the truth of God's word
 - Just as the Father sent the Son into the world, we are sent in Christ's place until His return to rule
 - And that we might act and think as one with God, living a sanctified, godly life
 - But if we live with one foot in the world, longing for what the world offers us, we retreat from sanctification and holiness
 - We cross the border into Egypt, seeking association with the world again, seeking the world's approval
 - Instead of relying on the blessings that come exclusively by faith
- Our faith does bring great blessings, but like Abram's inheritance, those blessings await the appearance of the kingdom upon the return of the Messiah
 - So in the meantime, we live in the enemy's world, but we are told by our Lord that we are no longer to live as if we are still part of it

- We aren't to think like the world, seek for what the world seeks, love like the world loves, live like the world lives
- Abram failed this second test of his faith, and he stumbled because he was still clinging to the false security of the world
 - Rather than remaining where God had delivered him, trusting in God to provide despite the famine
 - Abraham walked according to his own counsel
- In v.10 Moses says Abram sojourned in Egypt
 - The Hebrew word for sojourned (*gur*) means a temporary dwelling
 - Abram knew the trip was temporary
 - He would venture into Egypt for a little while, just long enough to get past the rough patch
 - Like we might say to ourselves during a trial
 - We might know the Lord is asking us to wait on Him, to rely on Him, but we tell ourselves we know how to solve the problem
 - We'll just step outside the Lord's will for a short time, seek the worldly options for a little while
 - But when we begin to play by the world's rules it's hard to know where to draw the line
 - And Abram experiences this slippery slope firsthand while in Egypt

Gen. 12:11 It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman;

Gen. 12:12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

Gen. 12:13 "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

- Abram makes this bold request of Sarai
 - Abram begins the way every smart husband begins when he wants something
 - He says, "Have I told you recently how nice you're looking these days?"
 - Or as the King James version says, "I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon"
 - In truth Abram's concern wasn't driven by Sarai's beauty, though I'm sure she was a beautiful woman
 - Abram's fear was driven by a well known cultural practice common among the Egyptian noblemen
 - Egyptians during this period of history were famous for wife abduction
 - Ancient records discovered written in the Nuzi tablets record this practice

- When Egyptians came upon a husband with a desirable wife, the husband might be killed and the woman stolen and sold as a wife to someone else
 - And the prettier the woman, the more likely the theft became
- On the other hand, if the woman was unmarried, it was more likely that those wishing to take her would barter for her instead of stealing
 - So Abram asks that Sarai lie and say he was her brother rather than husband
 - Even though Sarai was Abram's half sister, this was only a half truth
 - And half a truth is a whole lie
 - Abram was likely thinking that he might survive long enough to escape during negotiations and avoid death
- Where was Sarai in all this?
 - Why did she agree to play this game?
 - The only answer is that she trusted God more than she trusted Abram
 - While Abram might – and does – fail her
 - God won't fail her, so Sarai remains true to her role to respect and obey her husband
 - And in this case, she acts according to his direction even though he is sinning
 - Will God come to her rescue when Abram lets her down?
- Abram's fear of death and dependency on the world caused him to live a lie
 - And to bring his wife down with him
 - This is the inevitable course when we try to live with one foot in the world
 - First living near Egypt, then crossing into Egypt, and now living a lie to save himself
 - Paul tells us that when we seek unity with the world, we won't find common ground nor should we expect to

Gen. 12:14 It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

Gen. 12:15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

Gen. 12:16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

- In short, Abram's plan didn't work exactly as he intended
 - Though his lie did save his life, it produced a new outcome Abram didn't anticipate

- The Egyptians had taken notice of Sarai and her beauty was such that it made its way to Pharaoh
- And before Abram knew it, Sarai was sitting in Pharaoh's house
- And because they thought Abram was just Sarai's brother, they ensured he was treated well because of her
 - Did you notice the irony?
 - Abram tells Sarai to lie so that he would be treated well because of her
 - He meant that he would be able to live and escape with her
 - Yet in the end, Scripture records the same phrase in describing how Abram collects this wealth from the sale of his sister
 - There are seven categories of material that Abram receives, suggesting that the Lord was at work in blessing Abram despite his sin
 - And yet we'll learn later that one of the female servants Abram receives from Pharaoh was a woman called Hagar
 - Abram's sin in Egypt sows the seed of his own future turmoil

Gen. 12:17 But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

Gen. 12:18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"

Gen. 12:19 "Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go."

Gen. 12:20 Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

- Pharaoh's struck in defense of Sarai
 - The Pharaoh seems to be a victim here in light of the fact that he knew nothing of the deception
 - He paid for his bride
 - But God has made promises to Abram that depend on Sarai remaining Abram's wife
 - And as Paul says, the gifts and call of God are irrevocable
 - And so God acts to preserve His promise
 - Since God has said that those who are against Abram would be cursed, here we see that statement proving true
 - God working to defend Abram from his enemies
 - And we also notice God acts to protect Sarai as she obediently obeys and respects her husband even as he makes serious mistakes
 - The Jewish Rabbi Rashi declared that the plague was a skin disease that made

sexual contact impossible, thus protecting Sarai

- And yet the disease didn't affect Sarai, thus leading Pharaoh to discern that Sarai was the key
- This led to the conversation with Abram
 - The Pharaoh chastises Abram for lying and causing this trouble
 - Of course the Pharaoh doesn't say that had Abram told the truth, they would have abducted his wife and killed him
 - Still, that doesn't justify Abram's lie
 - He stepped into the ungodly world and had to play by their rules
 - Bringing one compromise after another
 - And yet even though Abram was unfaithful, God remains faithful to His promises
 - Clearly the covenant is working and is in force
 - Clearly the covenant is unconditional, without dependence on Abram's behavior

One day a father brought home a new stuffed animal for his infant son. He has received the gift from a coworker, but since he had three other young children at home, he was concerned about giving the baby a present while having nothing for the other children. Finally, he had a bright idea. He would teach his children a lesson about obedience by bringing them to understand that their baby brother baby deserved the gift.

So as the father held his infant son in his arms, he called his other children to his side. As they gathered around him, he showed them the stuffed toy while their eyes lit up and six little hands rose skyward begging for the toy. Then the father proceeded to ask:

"Who is the most obedient?"

Since the other three children were frequently guilty of giving their mother grief, the father assumed his older children would have no trouble identifying their baby brother as the most obedient in the group.

Instead, the three children stared back at their father in silence, none wishing to lose a chance at the toy. The father decided he needed to be more specific in his question.

He then asked, "Who never talks back to mother?" Certainly the children could acknowledge that the baby had never said a word to his mother, he reckoned.

To his dismay, the kids stood stone faced again, unwilling to give the father what he wanted and each holding out hope for the toy.

Finally, the exasperated father asked, "Who here does everything mother says, never talks back, and can't do anything for himself?"

Finally, the three small voices answered in unison, "Okay, dad, you get the toy."

- Obedience is the call placed upon every person of faith
 - We've been watching this man Abram begin his walk of obedience with the Lord Who called Abram into faith
 - And Abram is such a fascinating and profitable study for believers because we can so identify with this man's walk
 - Of how he was called out of obscurity into faith, sent in a new direction, challenged along the way, and ultimately made to grow in obedience and holiness

- The story of how Abram became Abraham, so to speak
- And the key to understanding this story is to recognize how God marries together His own faithfulness to His promises with Abram's obedience to God's call
 - God will show His children His kindness by blessing us in many ways as a result of His love for us and His promises to us
 - And God is faithful to remain with us and even to bless us though we are faithless at times (2 Tim 2:13)
 - But God will also withhold His blessing to some degree when we do not demonstrate obedience to His word
- God calls Himself the perfect Father (Matt 5:48)
 - So as a perfect Father, He must at times withhold the full measure of His blessing for us as a matter of discipline
 - So that by that discipline, He might reprove us and cause us to grow in our walk of holiness, so that we might please Him more

Heb. 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Heb. 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- Last week we finished Chapter 12 watching Abram leaving Egypt with a measure of God's blessing despite Abram's disobedience in leaving the land
 - Abram was not the obedient man God called him to be
 - Yet God was faithful to His promises to Abram and He blessed Abram despite Abram's mistakes
 - I wonder how much God will be prepared to bless Abram once he returns to the Land and is fully obedient
 - Let's find out

Gen. 13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.

- Chapter 13 picks up where Chapter 12 left off...Abram and family leaving Egypt to return

to Canaan

- Moses describes Abram's route back into the Negev
- And he describes Abram's traveling party
 - And for the first time in a while, we are reminded that Lot is still traveling with Abram
 - Apparently, Lot has never left Abram's side throughout his time in Canaan and into Egypt
 - Moses mentions Lot again to remind us that even as Abram obeys the Lord and returns to Canaan, there is still one more step of obedience Abram must take
- Back in Chapter 12, God spoke to Abram and instructed him concerning his travels to the Promised Land
 - Abram was to leave his country and his relatives
 - Abram was called by God to separate from his past world, his past associations, his past dependencies, even his past identity
 - Everything Abram had, everything he knew, and everything he was must come to an end
 - And in their place, God would give Abram something new and better
 - A new country, a new family, a new inheritance, a new name, a new Father's House
 - That call to separate didn't mean leaving behind his wife, since she has literally become one flesh with Abram
 - He could no more leave Sarai than he could leave behind his own arm
 - But everyone else was supposed to stay in Ur
- Yet here in Chapter 13 we still find Abram bringing along a member of his family – Lot
 - We asked the question in Chapter 12 whether Abram was right to include Lot in his trip, and here we seem to find our answer
 - Moses calls our attention to the presence of Lot and tells us how they finally came to separate

Gen. 13:2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.

Gen. 13:3 He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,

Gen. 13:4 to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

- Abram departs Egypt a rich man
 - We don't know how much wealth Abram had when he left Haran
 - But we know he leaves Egypt a very wealthy man

- This is the first mention of wealth in the Bible
- And interestingly, his wealth has moved from merely cattle and servants to include precious commodities
 - Abram is now receiving wealth from the people around him
 - God promised Abram that he would be blessed and the material aspect of that blessing is clearly taken hold
- Still, wealth brings its own kind of challenges and burdens
 - And those burdens become evident soon enough
- Next we're told Abram ventures away from the Negev, away from the border of Egypt, back to the heart of the land
 - Why does Abram go back into the land?
 - Moses hasn't told us that the famine is over
 - And we know Abram left when the Pharaoh kicked him out of Egypt, not because the famine ended
 - So Abram left due to famine, but he's going back despite the continuing famine
 - His step of obedience to return under pressure from the Pharaoh means that he is prepared to live by faith
 - He isn't less worried about finding food
 - But he must have reasoned that if God was able to make him rich in another country, surely God could sustain him in his own country
 - His behavior supports this view
 - Moses says Abram goes "as far as" Bethel, which is roughly geographical center in the land of Canaan
 - The place where Abram had been "at the beginning"
 - This is the place Abram arrived when he entered the land, when he was still depending on God
- Abram returned physically to the land, but he also returned spiritually to God, walking in obedience again
 - Look at v.4...Abram seeks out the altar set up previously
 - We can sense his repentance, his recognition that he had walked away from the Lord and needed to return
 - And so he walks to Bethel and calls upon the Lord
 - Here's what obedience looks like
 - It means following the Lord
 - But it also means having the humility to return to Him and to call upon His name when we know we've strayed
 - Obedience is not perfection; it's persistence
- God has shown His faithfulness even in the midst of Abram's disobedience

- And now Abram has returned to the altar at Bethel to renew his walk of faith
 - And yet Abram isn't done with his test and trials
 - God had set forth the expectation that Abram leave behind his family if he is to receive what God has promised
 - And as long as Lot is with Abram, he stands in the way of God blessing Abram to the fullest extent

Gen. 13:5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.

Gen. 13:6 And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.

Gen. 13:7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

- We begin this next section with confirmation that Lot was an adult with his own household
 - He has flocks and herds and tents
 - We don't hear about his family but we could easily assume that Lot brought family with him, probably from Haran
 - And now his wealth is competing with Abram
 - Since the famine is still likely ongoing, it makes sense that the two herds would be in competition for limited resources
 - By taking the two facts together, we begin to see why God may have brought the famine in the first place
 - God brought a famine to put pressure on Lot and Abram to separate
 - After all, since Abram wouldn't separate voluntarily, God would bring it about another way
 - But since Abram fled to Egypt he simply delayed the inevitable, and brought misery upon himself
 - So they decide that they must separate
 - In fact, their herdsman were fighting over available land
 - And Moses adds that the competition wasn't merely between Abram and Lot, since Canaan was a large place
 - It was also the Canaanite herds competing for land
 - So it made sense for Abram and Lot to separate and live in different places
 - Isn't it interesting that Abram's decision to include his nephew Lot, against God's instructions, has now led to this conflict
 - And this is just the beginning of the conflict
 - Lot will continue to be a thorn in Abram's side even after they separate

- A good reminder of how our failures to follow God have lasting consequences

Gen. 13:8 So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.

Gen. 13:9 “Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.”

Gen. 13:10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere — this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah — like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.

Gen. 13:11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.

Gen. 13:12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

Gen. 13:13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.

- Abram is generous in allowing Lot to choose first
 - As the patriarch, he could have chosen first
 - But Abram willingly turns it over to Lot, allowing Lot to choose whatever he wanted
 - Can we see our wealth in that way? Something temporary...something we can let go of when necessary?
 - It's been said that it's sheer madness to live in want, in order to be wealthy when we die
 - Jesus taught that we must see what we have as something temporary we use to further God's purposes and our own position in the Kingdom
 - That would have been Abram's attitude here
 - Clearly, Abram didn't believe he needed to cling to the land God promised
 - He invited his nephew to take any of it
 - What allowed Abram to respond that way? Wouldn't we expect him to hold on tightly to that land?
 - Abram knew that his inheritance wasn't this land, but a future land yet to be revealed
 - So he could freely allow Lot to take whatever he wanted, caring little for whatever he might lose because it was no real loss
 - Because Abram knew he would lose it all when he died anyway
 - And then receive it all in his resurrected life
 - What freedom comes when we understand the eternal nature of our life in Christ!

- No more worry about money or wealth
 - God will provide, we don't need to keep up with the Joneses, and we win when we die
- So Abram and Lot separate when Lot chooses the land he will occupy
 - In v.10 Lot lifts up his eyes and sees the valley of Jordan
 - He notices that it is well-watered, like the garden of God, like Egypt
 - Did Moses include enough warning signs for you??
 - First, which direction is Lot headed?
 - East...a clear warning sign since east is associated with sin
 - Secondly, notice the similarity between the language in this verse with Genesis 3:6
 - In Gen. 3, the woman saw that the tree was good for food and a delight to the eyes
 - Here Lot lifted his eyes and saw the delight of the valley
 - As we learned in Gen. 3, the eye is often the chief offender of our flesh in drawing us away from obedience
 - The eye draws us to lust rather than to trust and here we see Lot following Woman's pattern
 - Thirdly, Lot likes this valley because Moses writes that it reminds him of Egypt
 - And we remember from last week that Egypt is a picture in Scripture of the sinful, unbelieving world
 - And so the reference to Egypt draws our attention to Lot's state of heart, a man longing for the world he left in Egypt
 - Not a man intent on following God
 - Finally, Moses adds a parenthetical reference to Sodom and Gomorrah
 - The story of these evil cities has yet to be told in Genesis, of course, but they were infamous in Moses' day
 - Just as they are today, yet Lot is attracted to them
 - So Lot is clearly a polar opposite of Abram
 - While Abram has returned to the land and rededicated himself to following God, Lot is running headlong into sin
 - Is it any wonder that God called Abram to separate himself from his family?
 - And why God has brought the famine to pressure the men to separate?
 - Only now can we understand the good and wise decision God was making in producing a famine
 - Remember that when you face a trial and wonder how God could love us and bring calamity
- So Lot moves eastward and settles in his tent outside the city of Sodom

- And Abram is now finally separated from his family
 - For the first time since God called him, Abram stands wholly in obedience to the calling God gave
 - And so what does God do in response?

Gen. 13:14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;

Gen. 13:15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

Gen. 13:16 “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.

Gen. 13:17 “Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”

Gen. 13:18 Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

- For the third time, the Lord speaks to Abram concerning His promises
 - But the timing of this moment is important
 - Moses records that God’s appearing happened after Lot departed
 - God draws a clear connection to the events of the parting
 - In fact, Lot had lifted his eyes to see a sinful Sodom and found it pleasing
 - But now Abram’s obedience step of separating from Lot pleases God and causes God to instruct Abram to raise his eyes as well
 - And to look not just eastward, but in all directions
 - All this land as far as he could see and beyond would be his and his descendants
 - Consider the contrast:
 - Lot used his eyes to find something that pleased himself, and it led him into sin
 - Abram allowed God to direct his eyes, and it led to obedience and a far greater inheritance
 - This is a consistent testimony of Scripture
 - We have a choice of following God or following our own desires
 - Our own desires may lead us into very satisfying and comfortable living
 - But it will bring sin and consequences
 - Or we can allow the Lord to set our eyes on the better things and receive an eternal inheritance

- I mentioned that each time God appears to Abram, He reveals a little more concerning His promises
 - And in this revelation, God explains that all this land would be both Abram's and his descendants
 - In v.15 my English translation says they will own the land "forever"
 - That word in Hebrew is *ad olam*, which literally means "for an age"
 - This reflects that the Messianic Kingdom is only 1,000 years, which is the time Israel will have this land
 - And then the age will give way to a new age in which the world is replaced and something entirely new arrives (Revelation 21-22)
 - Finally, God elaborates that Abram's descendants would be too numerous to count
 - Abram has heard he will have "descendants" already, but now God tells him that these descendants would be too numerous to count
 - Having heard this promise multiple times, we imagine Abram is getting anxious to see kids come along
- Then once more, God instructs Abram to walk the entire land he has received, to come to know the magnificence of God's generosity
 - Yet all the while, Abram understands that this inheritance won't be his until after he returns with the Lord

- As we've moved through the story of Abram, we've been counting two lists
 - We've been watching for the seven times Abram hears from God
 - So with each time we can see Abram's growth in light of the Lord's grace
 - And we've been counting the twelve times Abram's faith is challenged
 - Twelve crises that test Abram and grow him as a man of faith
 - Today in Chapter 14 we see Abram face two more challenges
 - His nephew Lot is still causing trouble for Abram
 - Further consequence for having been brought along against God's instructions
 - Yet God will use this as an opportunity to show grace to Abram
 - This is the only chapter in Abram's story where God is not shown speaking to Abram
 - Yet God is represented in the story, in a man who is both king and priest
- And the story begins with the first military campaign described in the Bible

Gen. 14:1 And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim,

Gen. 14:2 that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).

Gen. 14:3 All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).

Gen. 14:4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.

- We're introduced to numerous people and locations
 - The names of these kings are the first names recorded in the Bible in a language other than Hebrew
 - Here we see the effect of the scattering at Babylon
 - And further proof that the first language was Hebrew
 - A total of nine kings are mentioned, four northern kings invading to conquer five in the south
 - The four in the north come from Shinar, Ellasar, Elam and Goiim
 - Shinar is Mesopotamia, northern and eastern Babylon
 - Ellasar was the leading tribe in southern Babylon
 - Elam is western Babylon
 - And Goiim is a word that simply means nations
 - So interestingly we have the nations, led by the kings of Babylon, invading the Promised land

- And they attack five kings
- All five are located in a small area at the southern end of the Dead Sea called the Valley of Siddim
 - Moses calls it the Salt Sea, but we now call it the Dead Sea
- Moses tells us that these five kings in the south had served the kings of the north as vassals
 - Though we have no other details, we can suppose that these southern kings had either been conquered at an early time or had received their kingdoms from the northern kings
 - And that relationship required the southern kings to pay tribute (taxes) to the northern kingdoms
 - But after 12 years, the southern kingdoms tired of that relationship
 - So in the thirteenth year they rebelled

Gen. 14:5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,

Gen. 14:6 and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness.

Gen. 14:7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

Gen. 14:8 And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim,

Gen. 14:9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar — four kings against five.

- So after the year of rebellion, the kings of the north decided to show their power
 - The leader of the group is the king Chedorlaomer, the Big Cheese
 - The invading force comes down the East side of the Jordan river, in present-day Jordan
 - As they proceed south, they attack any city that might come to aid the southern kings
 - This is a very smart strategy, eliminating the defenses and allies of the southern kings
 - Next they defeat the ancient Hamites, called Zuzim, just east of the Jordan
 - Leaving the land unoccupied for Lot's descendants, the Ammonites, to later possess
 - Further south they defeat Emim just east of Jericho

- The place where Lot's other family, the Moabites, settle
- Next, they defeat the Horites
 - This becomes the land where Esau later settles to form the Edomites
- Finally they reach as far south as El Paran, in the Sinai
 - This is the future home of Ishmael, Abram's other son
- These kings moved southward, protected behind the eastern side of the Trans-Jordan mountain range, to hide their approach while eliminating allies for the southern kings
 - But do you notice that as they go on their rampage, God is using their advance to clear land for future members of Abram's family to occupy the land?
 - Here is a perfect example of God turning all things to good for His purposes and for the good of those who love Him
- Next, they turn at the Gulf Of Aqaba and begin to fight northward toward the heart of Canaan and the rebellious kings south of the Dead Sea
 - First they swing out west into the wilderness of Zin in the southern Negev to defeat the Amalekites and Amorites
- Finally they come upon the kings of the south in the valley of Siddim, approaching from the southwest
 - This is the opposite from where they would have been expected to approach
 - The southern kings are caught off guard and come out into the valley to meet the attacking force
 - They have probably heard about the exploits of the invading force, but without allies, they are forced to face the army with only what forces they have between them

Gen. 14:10 Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country.

Gen. 14:11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.

Gen. 14:12 They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

- The location for the battle is the valley at the southern end of the Dead Sea
 - This valley was known then, and today, as a place of natural tar or bitumen (asphalt) pits
 - Similar to La Brea tar pits
 - This is the material used to bind the bricks of the Tower of Babel
 - The battle was a rout and the kings of Sodom and Gommorah fled, but fell into the

pits

- They would have been stuck and slowly sank into the tar
- The remaining three kings fled into the mountains
 - The conquering army did what all winning armies do in this situation
 - They rape, pillage and plunder
 - The goal is to eliminate these city states and make a statement to remaining vassals not to repeat this mistake
 - They remove all the animals, food stores and subjects of the city
 - With the intent to take them back to Babylon
- And one of those subjects was our man Lot
 - Interestingly, we're told in v.12 that Lot is now living in the city of Sodom
 - Last time we heard from Lot, he was still living in tents outside the city of Lot (13:12)
 - Now he's thrown the tent aside and made a home in this wicked city
- Lot and Abram form a powerful contrast in this story
 - Abram we know as the man of faith, a righteous man who lived by faith
 - He purposely remained outside cities, living in tents
 - Showing his faith in God's promises by forsaking any compromise with the world
 - Lot, his nephew, is a man scripture tells us who was also a man of faith, a man who knew the living God and was counted righteous by faith
 - Peter tells us that Lot was a righteous man living in a city of sin

2Pet. 2:7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2Pet. 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

- Lot made very different choices than did his uncle Abram
 - He decided to adopt a lifestyle that mirrored the world around him
 - He is led by his eyes
 - He is attracted by what the world values
- And yet Scripture tells us that Lot was oppressed by what he saw in Sodom
 - The word oppress in Greek is *kataponeo*, which literally means worn down
 - Lot was worn down by his exposure to the world of Sodom
 - And as he was worn down, he made compromise after compromise

- We'll study Lot more in Chapter 19
- When Abram disobeyed God's instructions to leave Lot behind, he sets several wheels in motion
 - Disobedience would create consequences for both Abram and Lot
 - But God's promises to Abram are assured because of God's faithfulness, not Abram's
 - So God is also working to use Abram's mistake to God's good purposes
 - And one way God uses Lot in this story is as a picture of future events in the life of Israel and the world
- Lot is a picture of a carnal, disobedient follower of the living God, particularly the Gentile follower of God
 - He is brought into the land because of a promise of God to Abram
 - And his entry is made possible because of the disobedience of God's chosen
 - In Lot's case, he entered the Promised Land because God's chosen Abram disobeyed the word
 - Yet God turned that disobedience into grace for Lot
 - As a picture, Lot represents Gentile believers who are able to share in the promises of Abram because of the disobedience of Israel in rejecting the Messiah

Rom. 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- But now that Lot has been given grace to enter the land, he is living in harmony with the world, rather than living apart from it
 - And he begins to picture the consequences when the people of God do not follow Him fully
- Suddenly, Lot finds himself in captivity headed to Babylon
 - It's no coincidence that the attacking army is made up of forces from Babylon
 - We see a wonderful picture of how the enemy is always attacking, seeking to destroy and carry away God's people
- And Lot is going down with the ship, because he chose to align himself with the people of Sodom rather than remain outside in his tent
 - Just as in a future day when God sends Babylon to remove a rebellious Israel from the land as punishment for their faithlessness
 - Lot serves as that picture for God's purposes in teaching us today
- Now there is a second half to this picture, the story of God's faithfulness to His children despite our faithlessness

Gen. 14:13 Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by

the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

- A man who escaped from the fighting makes his way to Abram, the Hebrew
 - This is the first time Abram is identified in Scripture as a Hebrew
 - In the OT, this term is used as an ethnic designation, meaning the surrounding people had come to see Abram as someone different from them
 - Abram's lifestyle and testimony caused him to stand apart so much that the people of Canaan had come to see Abram as his own ethnic group within the culture
 - They named him a Hebrew, taken from his ancestor's name Eber
 - Can you see the contrast between him and Lot strengthening in this story?
 - Lot isn't known as Lot the Hebrew; he's known as Lot the Sodomite
 - But he's also known as the family member of Abram
 - This explains why the refugee would even think to seek out Abram and tell him the story of the defeat of Sodom
 - Lot has probably told people in the city that he was a relative of Abram
 - And the refugee concludes that his only hope of seeing this invading army destroyed was to enlist Abram's involvement
 - And since Abram had no interest in Sodom, the refugee's only hope would be to appeal to his connection to Lot
 - This tells us something about Abram and Lot
 - First, it tells us that Abram has truly become rich and mighty in the land
 - God's promise to bless Abram in the land seems clear
 - Secondly, it tells us that Lot tried to maintain his status as a relative of Abram while still trying to be adopted by the world of Sodom
 - Clearly, this refugee had come to know of Lot's connection to Abram, which means that Lot allowed that information be known
 - Lot probably liked the status of being the nephew of the rich, aloof Hebrew
 - We also know Lot was a righteous man tormented by the sin of Sodom, so he probably reminded the Sodomites of Abram to some degree
 - And yet Lot was clearly working to be accepted by the world of Sodom
 - Again, we'll see that even more clearly in Chapter 19
 - But for now it's enough for us to remember that we can't have it both ways
 - If we are saved by faith, then we must live by that faith
 - And if we try to live with one foot in the world and one foot in following God, we will eventually do the "splits"
 - We will become a man unstable in all his ways, James says

Matt. 6:22 “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

Matt. 6:23 “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Matt. 6:24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

- Lot’s allowed his eye to pull him away from serving his Master
 - And yet he couldn’t walk so far that God left him
 - Leaving him split between two worlds
 - The city of Sodom never accepted Lot as one of their own, because Lot refused to sin in the way that Sodom sinned
 - And yet Lot wasn’t successful in walking with God and so he suffered the consequences that come upon the sinful world
 - In my experience, the most miserable person you’ll ever meet is a believer who is determined to live a worldly life – like Lot
 - When an unbeliever sins, he or she will experience consequences in one form or another
 - But because they lack a relationship with God and personal knowledge of God’s expectations, they can remain largely guilt-free in their pursuit of sin
 - They actually “enjoy” their sin
 - Though they may suffer consequences in one form or another (and certainly in eternity), in the meantime they enjoy it
 - But when a believer sins, they experience both the consequences of sin PLUS the guilt of a conscience convicted by the Spirit
 - They can sin but they can’t really enjoy it in the same way that the unbelieving world does
 - Even the most hardened believer is still going to experience the convicting work of the Spirit
 - This difference is by God’s design, of course
 - We are convicted by the Spirit as discipline
 - In fact, that is one of the ways we are marked as different than the world

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

- And God brings us conviction so that we might see the error of our ways and conform to the will of God, becoming sanctified over time

- Speaking of conviction, I suspect we may all feel a little conviction as we reflect on the difference between Abram's lifestyle and Lot's lifestyle
 - Abram lived a life of faith that led the peoples of Canaan to call him a Hebrew, a man set apart from the world around him
 - And the world knew Lot was related to Abram
 - But they also knew Lot was a stranger trying to live as one of them
 - How would the world describe us?
 - Do they see us as someone living a life according to a different course, a different path
 - Not putting our faith and trust in what the world values
 - Not walking according to the drumbeat of worldly values, like Abram
 - Would they describe us with titles like Americans, Texans, UT fans, marathon runners, software engineers, teachers, etc.
 - Or would they describes us like Abram
 - People so different from the world they need a different name...Christians
 - Or maybe the world sees us as the world saw Lot
 - They have come to know we are related to the God of Abram
 - We have some relationship with religion, with Christianity
 - And in times of trouble, they might think to benefit from that association
 - But in our day-to-day life, they see us as simply another person trying to make our way in the world, according to the world's rules
 - We seem to want what the world wants, we value what the world values
 - We seek for the same things and get caught up in the same troubles and disappointments
- Who are we? Abram or Lot?

An honest man is being tailgated by a stressed-out woman on a busy boulevard. Suddenly, the light turns yellow, just in front of him. He does the honest thing, and stops at the crosswalk, even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection.

The tailgating woman hits the roof, and the horn, screaming in frustration as she misses her chance to get through the intersection with him.

As she is still in mid-rant, she hears a tap on her window and looks up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer orders her to exit her car with her hands up. He takes her to the police station where she is searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approaches the cell and opens the door. She is escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer is waiting with her personal effects. He says, "I'm very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, making obscene gestures to the car in front, and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the 'Choose Life' license plate holder, the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Follow Me to Sunday School' bumper sticker, and the chrome plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk. So naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car."

- We broadcast our identity to the world, whether for better or worse
 - And the world expects us to act accordingly
 - Abram had gained a reputation, one that led the city of Sodom to look to him for rescue
 - Though they themselves followed a different course and held different values
 - Nevertheless, they know our values, sometimes better than we do
 - And in times of distress, we can become their refuge
 - Often God will use us in that way to reach the lost
 - So what a terrible shame it is when we fail to live up to that distinction
 - In times when we choose to blend in rather than stand out, as Lot chose in Sodom, we forfeit our credibility in claiming to have better answers and a better hope than the world
 - This explains why the attack of the four northern kings has left Lot a captive with the rest of Sodom while Abram is called to provide rescue
 - And this story is also the second challenge Abram will face for having brought Lot with him against God's wishes
 - There will be a total of three such crises for Abram in dealing with Lot

- But along the way God uses these three moments to grow Abram and prepare him for greater things to come
- Last week we watched as the refugee found Abram and told him of the city's capture
 - The sense of v.13 was that the refugee wanted Abram to intervene to assist the city, based on the assumption that Abram would help Lot
 - And this is precisely what Abram will do

Gen. 14:14 When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Gen. 14:15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

Gen. 14:16 He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

- Even though Lot has caused his fair share of trouble, he's still family
 - So Abram doesn't hesitate to step in and bring Lot back
- In fact, we should be eternally thankful that Abram responds in this way, because his behavior forms a picture of our Father's response to His children
 - Lot is a righteous man by faith, according to New Testament commentary
 - And Abram can be understood to be a man who pictures our father in Heaven
- Therefore, in this account, we see a beautiful picture of the Father in hot pursuit of His relatives, His children
 - Even when we are faithless, Paul teaches, God remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself
 - Denying Himself refers to the indwelling of God's Spirit in each of His children
 - God can't forsake us because His Spirit lives in us
 - So when we are carried away by the world's temptations or the enemy's schemes, the love of the Father for His children compels Him to pursue us
 - And we can take great comfort knowing that He is far stronger than the world or the enemy
- In this case, Abram pursues Lot as far as Dan, Moses says
 - This is a long pursuit, about 125 miles
 - Moses says it takes him as far as Dan
 - Dan refers to the northern-most city of Israel, formerly called Laish
 - The city didn't gain the name Dan until long after Moses' death
 - So we wonder how did Moses know to identify the place as the land of Dan?
 - Likely this reference changed by a later scribe

- Moses may have written Laish
- And after it became Dan, the name was changed in Scripture
- Abram's pursuit is also a wonderful picture of how far the Lord will go to pursue us
 - And how long the pursuit can last
 - Can you imagine how Lot was feeling during this time?
 - Did he wonder if Abram was coming? Did he assume they had gone so far away that he had given up hope of rescue?
 - This is a good story to remember in moments when praying for someone we care about who has been carried away by the world
 - While we wonder if that person has gone so far that they are beyond rescue, remember how things must have appeared to Lot
 - And all the while, Abram was coming and getting closer
 - And in the middle of the night, when things were darkest, the Father appears and defeats the enemy
- Abram wins the victory, and it's remarkable for two reasons
 - First, Abram takes a force of 318 men, all born in his household and goes in pursuit
 - We don't have a number in Scripture for the size of the invading army
 - But it's a safe assumption that the four invading kings would have brought many times more men to defeat five kingdoms
 - And based on how easily they seemed to have conquered the land, we can safely assume they had thousands of men
 - So it's surprising, even unbelievable, that Abram could take a mere 318 men, trained in his house, not part of a professional fighting force, and defeat this army
 - Secondly, Abram takes this hugely disadvantaged force and divides it, according to v.15
 - Conventional military thinking says you never divide a smaller force, since it only weakens you further
 - But Abram decides to divide his forces anyway and attack at night
 - Leading to a rout, driving them another 40 miles past Damascus
 - Some have wondered why Abram pursues them so far
 - The only logical reason is that he hadn't yet rescued Lot
 - He may have put the armies on the run, but until he had what he wanted, he kept fighting and pursuing
 - Here's another encouraging parallel to the way our Father fights for His children
 - He fights and pursues until He has reclaimed what belongs to Himself
 - Like the story of the prodigal son, God will only be content when His children are at home in His company, at His table

- The fact that Abram fights with only 318 men and then divides them yet still manages to rout this powerful army is amazing...in fact, it's a miracle
 - God has clearly delivered this victory into Abram's hands
 - And we can be sure that Abram knows that God won this victory
 - Because the next thing we find in the passage is Abram displaying thanks to God

Gen. 14:17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

Gen. 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

- This point in the story becomes a comparison between two kings
 - More specifically, Moses records how Abram responds differently to two kings in the land of Canaan
 - First as Abram is returning to his home, he is met by the new king of Sodom
 - The old king had fallen into the tar pits and died
 - So there is a new man claiming authority over the city of Sodom
 - Only there's a problem...the city of Sodom has no people
 - So claiming to be king over an empty city doesn't hold much appeal does it?
 - So the king travels about 80 miles north to meet up with Abram and ask for the people
 - The valley he finds Abram in is the valley between the old city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives
 - The king's request was a bold request, since Abram had every right to keep everything he had gained in the battle
 - He may have been rich already, but this booty would have undoubtedly made him the most powerful man in Canaan
 - This explains why the king traveled so far
 - He didn't expect Abram to bring them back to Sodom
 - Secondly, Abram is met by the king of Salem
 - Salem is an ancient word for peace and the original name of Jerusalem

Psa. 76:1 God is known in Judah;
His name is great in Israel.

Psa. 76:2 His tabernacle is in Salem;
His dwelling place also is in Zion.

- So this man is the King of the city of Salem, ancient Jerusalem
- His name is Melchizedek, which is an ancient Jebusite name meaning king of righteousness
- He's also described as a priest of the Most High God, the first mention of priest in the Bible
 - And he brings Abram bread and wine
- Before we examine the contrast between the two kings, I want to consider who this king is
 - The letter to the Hebrews provides the definitive commentary on Melchizedek in Hebrews 7

Heb. 7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

Heb. 7:2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

Heb. 7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

- The writer notes that he's the first priest mentioned in Scripture
 - And in fact, he's so important that Abram chooses to tithe to him
 - Which tells us that Abram saw this man as a greater authority in matters of God
 - He was Abram's priest, his intercessor
 - Abram wasn't the only one in the land who knew and followed the Living God
 - Abram wasn't even the most important
 - God had selected a man, a king, to serve as His priest for the sake of Abram
- Most interestingly, the writer of Hebrews notes that Moses never gives Melchizedek a genealogy
 - Think about how strange that is for Moses and for Genesis
 - Up til now, every important character in the line of the seed has been shown in the genealogies somewhere
 - It's been so important for Moses to show us how everything proceeds from the events of the Garden
 - Yet here's a significant event, the first priest of God, and he has no genealogy in Genesis
 - He appears here and then just as quickly he disappears
 - He never appears in any of those 30,000 ft chapters of begats and deaths

- It's as if he has no beginning and no end
- The writer of Hebrews tells us that Melchizedek was provided in Genesis as a type or picture of Christ
 - He was a real man, a Jebusite king of the city of Salem whom God used as a priest in his day
 - But in the way Moses tells the story of Melchizedek, we receive a beautiful picture of Christ
- Christ, like Melchizedek has no beginning, no end
 - He is also both Priest and King
 - He is the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace
 - And as Hebrews taught, he proves that a greater priesthood predated even the one of the Mosaic Law
 - The Jewish priesthood of the Law came after Melchizedek
 - And the writer of Hebrews uses this fact to argue that the Melchizedek priesthood is a greater priesthood than the one created in the Law of Moses
 - Psalm 110 tells us that this is the priesthood of Jesus

**Psa. 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,
“You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”**

- Jesus is not a priest under the Law of Moses
 - In fact, under the Law a priest cannot also be a king
- So Jesus received His right to intercede on our behalf on a greater priesthood
 - He was made a priest by the oath of God the Father
 - And He will not change His mind
 - And so the priesthood of Jesus supercedes and replaces any earthly form of priesthood
 - This is why we can now approach God boldly by way of our High Priest, Jesus Christ
 - We don't go through a man or anyone calling themselves a priest
 - In fact, the Bible says that we are all priests, in the sense that we are ministers to God in our spiritual service
- Back to our two kings, we have Abram greeted by two kings

**Gen. 14:19 He blessed him and said,
“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;**

Gen. 14:20 And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”
He gave him a tenth of all.

Gen. 14:21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.”

Gen. 14:22 Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,

Gen. 14:23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’

Gen. 14:24 “I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”

- Which one will Abram choose to honor?
 - On one hand Abram has the king of Sodom, a poster child for the kind of kingdom the world offers
 - But ironically, he’s a king without subjects
 - And he offers Abram the chance for great wealth in exchange for the people
 - But Abram is more worried about his testimony, his witness
 - He had just been blessed by God’s High Priest and acknowledged that God was the One blessing Abram
 - And now this pretender to the throne of Sodom wanted to assume responsibility for making Abram rich
- Abram responds in rebuke
 - He says I have sworn to now take anything from Sodom
 - So Abram says you take it all, except for what was already consumed by his men, a fair wage for the work of the rescue
 - And Abram’s allies are allowed to take what they want
 - But Abram takes nothing
 - So Abram selects Melchizedek
- Finally let’s put ourselves in Lot’s shoes
 - Thinking of all the trouble he put his Uncle in
 - But now he sees his Uncle saying no to the King of the city is aspired to be a part of
 - Abram would rather the world know Whom was blessing him
 - Whereas Lot’s testimony is he would rather have the city than have the world know who was his God
- Oh that we could each make Abram’s choice rather than Lot’s

- As we reach Chapter 15 of Genesis, we find Abram wandering, worrying and wondering
 - He's still wandering in the land he has been given as a future inheritance
 - He moves from here to there and continues to grow under God's direction
 - His most recent wandering was actually a pursuit, as he chased the kings of the north out of the land
 - And rescued his nephew Lot
 - Through that experience, Abram showed strength in trusting in God
 - He gave God credit for the victory, thanking God in tithes
 - And he showed growing spiritual maturity
 - He had in his possession the wealth of a lifetime
 - He could have become king of Sodom, settling down in one location and living off the wealth he captured
 - Instead he turned it all back to the king of Sodom, preferring to rely on the inheritance that God has promised
 - But Abram's bold move to subdue the northern kings has also left him worried
 - He should naturally expect these defeated kings to make a return visit to the land to attack Abram
 - They may have been beaten once, but they greatly outnumber Abram
 - And it was only natural for Abram to let his fears get the better of him as he imagined the kings would return and defeat him
 - So as he sits and worries, God appears

**Gen. 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,
 "Do not fear, Abram,
 I am a shield to you;
 Your reward shall be very great."**

- God tells Abram that he shouldn't fear, for the Lord will be Abram's shield
 - The kings will not return, they will not defeat Abram
 - In fact, Abram has nothing to fear for the Lord will not only protect Abram, He will also bless Abram as He has promised
 - So Abram's worrying is ended in another promise from God
 - But as Abram hears God's reassuring words, it draws his mind back to an earlier promise of God
 - Abram begins to wonder when God will fulfill that promise
 - The promises God made to Abram when he left Ur were to provide Abram both an inheritance and an heir

- In fact, Abram was told he would have nations come from him
- But Abram isn't getting any younger
- And Sarai is long past child bearing years
- So while Abram is confident in God's promise of an inheritance, he's starting to wonder whether the guarantee of an heir was still on the table
 - From the introduction of Abram in Chapter 12 until this moment, the focus of Moses' narrative has been on God's promise of the inheritance
 - But beginning with this chapter and continuing until the end of Abram's life, the story focuses on the other half of God's promises...the seed

Gen. 15:2 Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

Gen. 15:3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

- This is such a classic response to God's timing
 - You've probably heard it said that God often takes longer to answer our prayers than we prefer, but His timing is always perfect
 - This sums up the problem with our perspective in trying to judge God's faithfulness
 - We know He is faithful to His word and yet, when too much time passes, we begin to doubt
 - Because we know that men often make promises that are not always kept
 - Because men change their minds, disappoint, forget

Promises are like the full moon, if they are not kept at once they diminish day by day. ~German Proverb

- But God does none of these things
 - His promises are no less assured even when many years pass by, because He does not change His mind and He is unaffected by the passage of time
- So as we start Genesis 15, one of the most important chapters in Scripture, it's important to remember that Abram is a man of faith and a man of doubts
 - He has faith God can and will deliver an inheritance in the land
 - And he is living by that faith as we saw at the end of Chapter 14
 - But he has some doubts about the promise of an heir
 - And God in His mercy goes an extra step to reassure Abram of His promise to provide a seed

- Abram makes his case before God
 - He points out that as it stands now, this wonderful inheritance God is promising to Abram will only go to one of his servants
 - Specifically, the chief servant in Abram's home was Eliezer of Damascus
 - Abram says this servant was born in his house
 - According to custom of that day, the inheritance of the estate belonged to the oldest servant born in the house
 - But this is not the heir Abram desired
 - What good was a great inheritance if it could not be transferred to the family of Abram?
 - This is the first time we see Abram engaged in a dialog with God
 - In fact, this is the first time Abram receives a vision of God
 - And during the vision, Abram approaches God boldly seeking answers
 - Notice how Abram makes his appeal?
 - He appeals to God's character and promise
 - Abram places God's own promises before Him and expects God to respond according to His character
 - This is how we should pray
 - Appealing for God to act according to His character and word
 - And those prayers will be answered in accordance with God's faithfulness
- So how does God respond?

Gen. 15:4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."

Gen. 15:5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

- Back in Chapter 13, God spoke to Abram for the second time
 - There He told Abram that he would have descendants so numerous they would be like the dust of the earth
 - Literally innumerable
 - The word for descendants in Gen 13:16 is *zera*, which means seed
 - So God spoke specifically saying that Abram would have "seed"
 - But somewhere along the way Abram began to doubt whether God meant Abram would have physical descendants

- So God repeats to Abram that Abram would have an heir from his own body
 - As God gave Abram this assurance, Abram must have been in his tent
 - It's evening, so God tells Abram to leave his tent and go outside
 - As Abram leaves the tent, God tells him to look up at the night sky
 - Though today most of us live in cities filled with lights
 - As a result, the sky is lit even at night, making it impossible to see stars most nights
 - But if you go camping or to a rural place and look up at the night sky, you see a carpet of stars
 - And galaxies and planets
 - I hope you've had that experience, because it makes it easier now to imagine Abram's perspective as he gazed into the vastness of the universe and heard God's words
 - God says to Abram count the stars, if you can count them
 - So shall your descendants be
 - Try to imagine your reaction to hearing such a promise
 - Imagine the glory of the universe on display before your eyes
 - Everywhere you look, you see stars
 - Even in the darkest places, as you stare, even more stars appear
 - There seems to be no end to them
 - And as you appreciate the impossibility of counting so many stars, you hear God say you will have no fewer descendants
 - Abram, the man who is already old
 - The man whose wife is past childbearing years
 - The man who has yet to see a single child come from him
 - Nevertheless, God says this is your future
- How would you respond to hearing such a thing?
 - Do you ask a question?
 - There are certainly many questions that come to mind
 - How can such a thing happen?
 - Why hasn't it happened yet?
 - Will it be by Sarai or someone else?
 - How long before the first child comes?
 - Do you doubt the promise?
 - Do you consider the awesome expanse of the universe and reflect on your body's weakness and conclude it can't happen

- That would have been the natural thing to do
 - Rational people make decisions on what to believe based on data, probabilities, likely outcomes, etc.
 - And the prospect of millions or even billions of descendants seems out of reason with the facts
- What does Abram do?

Gen. 15:6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

- Arguably, the most important verse in the OT and maybe in the Bible
 - Abram believed the Lord's promise to make Abram's descendants too numerous to count
 - And because Abram believed God's promise concerning this future event, God credited Abram's faith as righteousness
 - There is actually a play on words in Hebrew that we miss in most English versions
 - Abram was told to count the stars, but yet he couldn't because there were too many
 - So God counted faith as righteousness
 - Because Abram couldn't do what God told him to do (count), yet still He trusted God to keep His word, therefore God did the work for Abram by counting faith as righteousness
- For the first time in Scripture we see belief, justification, and righteousness in a single statement
 - And this statement is foundational to all that we understand about how God is at work to save men from sin
 - Abram was following God, but we have already seen that Abram's walk with God was imperfect
 - He's made mistakes, and sin separates him from God
 - And Abram couldn't perform enough work to change the past or erase his debt before God
 - One day he might obey more than another, but the problem is the word "righteousness"
 - It means what is right, without error, perfect
 - Abram was far from perfect – as so if he was to be righteous, he must be perfect
 - But here we see God declaring that Abram was counted, or reckoned as righteous
 - Actually, we need to be very specific here because Abram was declared to BE righteous

- Instead, God gave Abram righteousness on another basis
 - Abram was determined to be righteous on his own
 - He was considered righteous
- On what basis was God willing to count Abram as righteous?
 - Because Abram believed God's word concerning His promise to Abram
 - God made a promise to Abram concerning His descendants
 - But it was an impossible promise
 - Abram and Sarai hadn't produced a single child in decades of marriage
 - But now Abram was supposed to believe that God would produce millions of descendants?
 - Nevertheless, Abram took God's promise concerning the future and accepted it
 - He began to look forward to that future, to anticipate it, to see it as if it was already a present reality
 - This is the definition of faith, a belief in the future so sure and unwavering that we accept it as if it were history

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Heb. 11:2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

- According to Hebrews, the definition of saving faith involves both an object of faith and the content of faith
 - The object of faith is always the same: God's promises
 - The promises of God hold hope for the future
 - They ask us to accept something that seems impossible on their face
 - For Abram, the foolish promise he received was to have a multitude of descendants when he had yet to bear even one child naturally
 - The only way to accept such a promise is if you have a faith beyond even human reasoning
 - It must come from a supernatural source

1Cor. 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- The content of the promise varies in keeping with God's revelation of His purposes
 - As history has moved forward from the day of Adam, God has progressively revealed more and more of His plan

- Every generation of faith is based on the content of a promise they have received
 - Adam received the promise that Woman would become the mother of a Seed to defeat the enemy
 - Noah believed a promise that a coming flood would destroy the earth
 - Abram received a promise of an inheritance and descendants
- The content changes, but the object doesn't
- Saving faith today follows the same pattern
 - We are saved today by grace, through faith
 - The faith we have today is based on a promise in God's word
 - Like Abram, our faith has an object and a content
 - The object of our faith is the same as those saints of old: we have faith in God's promises concerning a future
 - The content of our faith is a promise concerning the man Jesus of Nazareth

1John 5:9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.

1John 5:10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

1John 5:11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

1John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

- The Father has testified concerning Jesus that He is the Son of God and is the One Who died for our sins
 - The Bible teaches the same salvation from the beginning of Genesis until the end of Revelation
 - We cannot earn our righteousness but we can be credited as righteous by God Who is rich in mercy
 - And He credits us with Christ's righteousness when we accept His promises
- Why did God extend His mercy on this basis and not some other?
 - Because demanding faith in God's promise is a specific remedy for the error Adam made in the garden
 - Adam sinned when he heard a promise from God but did not act in accordance with faith in that word
 - God promised that eating of the tree of Knowledge would bring death
 - But Adam didn't believe God's word and fell into sin

- So today God has determined that righteousness will be restored on the basis of faith in a promise
 - Lack of faith in God's first promise brought spiritual death
 - So God decreed that a demonstration of faith in God's final promise in Christ is the requirement to bring eternal life
- Having seen Abram declared to be righteous by faith in v.6, we might ask if this is the moment that Abram actually became a believer
 - Two pieces of evidence tell us that this isn't true
 - First, the Hebrew construction of v.6 does not indicate consecutive action, but rather indicates a disjunctive action
 - In other words, v.6 doesn't come after v.5 in time
 - It was already in effect
 - We could write v.6 as, "Now, Abram had believed..."
 - Secondly, Hebrews tells us clearly that Abram was showing faith even as he departed Ur

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

- So Abram is not being declared righteous in Chapter 15, but reaffirmed as a man following God in faith
 - A man who believed God's promise and kept on believing it
- So why does Moses insert this statement here and not earlier?
 - I believe the answer is to clarify to the reader that Abram's questions concerning his descendants were not questions born out of a lack of faith
 - Rather, Abram was simply eager for a child, longing for the posterity God promised
 - We should take note of Abram's persistence as a man of faith
 - Specifically his willingness to press God for the fulfillment of His promises
 - As His children, we are told to approach the Father boldly
- And sometimes we will approach with questions or emotions that seem to suggest a lack of faith
 - But faith can coexist alongside many other natural emotions and responses to our circumstances
 - Faith and impatience, eager for God's promises to come to fruition
 - Faith and ignorance, not understanding God's purposes and desires in our circumstances
 - Faith and sorrow, when the world wears us down and brings us trials

- Faith and doubt, when we can't see how God will fulfill His word
- And God delights to reveal Himself in greater ways to His children who desire to see Him demonstrate His faithfulness

- We don't have to study the Bible for long before we're confronted with teaching on covenants
 - The Bible makes frequent mention of covenants
 - A covenant is a Bible word for a solemn agreement between two parties
 - Covenants came in different forms, but they all bound the parties to each other for some purpose
 - Every work of God in His creation is done on the basis of a covenant
 - God uses covenantal agreements to reveal Himself and His plans to men
 - Since God's word is unbreakable, every covenant God makes is permanent and completely trustworthy
 - And these moments are important mile markers in God's plan for history, for they set the terms for how men and God will relate to one another
 - A covenant is established in very specific ways, using specific rituals to mark entry into the agreement by each party
 - Sometimes Scripture records these moments clearly enough that we can see the covenant coming into place
 - Other times, the effects of the covenant can be seen, but the ritual that led to its establishment isn't described in the text
 - We could use the example of a marriage covenant
 - A marriage begins through a series of rituals that note the beginning of the relationship
 - Sometimes we are present when a marriage begins and we witness the marriage covenant ritual
 - Other times we meet a married couple long after the wedding ceremony took place
 - We know they are married and therefore we know there was a marriage ritual performed even though we didn't witness it ourselves
- In Chapter 15 today, we find Abram about to receive a covenant from God
 - And the covenant comes in response to Abram's questions from last week
 - In v.2 Abram asked God what he might give Abram since he had no heirs
 - As we learned last week, Abram was asking God what good would it be for him to have the land if he had no one to inherit it?
 - Abram knew that it was meaningless to acquire something only to lose it at the end of his life
 - God responded by assuring Abram that he would have many heirs, as many as the stars
 - And Abram accepted God's promise because He believed God's word
 - And by his faith in God's word, God counted Abram's faith as righteousness
 - Proving that men are given righteousness by God on the basis of faith, not

works, and we may follow in Abram's footsteps

- Abram's conversation with God continues in v.7

Gen. 15:7 And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."

Gen. 15:8 He said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?"

- This encounter began with God assuring Abram he would be protected and blessed
 - Abram responded with his question about an heir
 - God answered with His promise for many descendants
 - Now God reminds Abram that He was the One Who called Abram from Ur and gave him this land to possess it
 - And then Abram responds with another question
 - Before we examine the question, we need to get inside Abram's head for a moment
 - What did Abram think when he heard God say I brought you here to possess this land?
 - For example, we already know that Abram is living as a nomad in the land
 - The writer of Hebrews tells us clearly that Abram, and Isaac and Jacob after him lived in tents because they understood God's timeline
 - They understood that they wouldn't possess the land until after their deaths
 - They weren't expecting to receive their inheritance until after they were resurrected and returned to live in the Kingdom of the Messiah

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Heb. 11:9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

Heb. 11:10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Heb. 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Heb. 11:14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

Heb. 11:15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

Heb. 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

- So Abram knew that the promise of the land was not to be fulfilled in his lifetime
 - And that brings us back now to the conversation between Abram and God
 - God says once again that Abram will have this land to possess it
 - What does Abram think as he hears these words?
 - He knows that the promise of the land won't be fulfilled until after his death
 - And he has God's assurance that a multitude of descendants will come after him, and they will inherit the land as well
 - So Abram asks a reasonable and even obvious question
 - How can I know that I will possess it?
 - There are two reasons to ask a question like that
 - One reason is to seek proof because you doubt the promise
 - You ask for proof because you don't trust the person and the proof will be your assurance
 - A second reason is to seek confirmation, something tangible you can cling to while you wait for the fulfillment
 - And when we remember that Abram wasn't expecting to see the promise fulfilled in his lifetime nor in the lifetime of his descendants, it's reasonable to see him asking for assurance
 - What he wants is something he and his descendants can point back to and remember the covenant, even during the generations before it is fulfilled
- At this point, God honors Abram's request by presenting him with a covenant ritual
 - First, God gives Abram instructions on the preparations for the ritual

Gen. 15:9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

Gen. 15:10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.

Gen. 15:11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

- God affirm His promises to Abram by means of a covenant ritual
- To prepare, God instructs Abram to bring Him a collection of five animals
 - And then Abram was to prepare them by butchering the larger animals into halves and laying them in a row facing one another

- The two birds were not cut but were killed and likely set facing one another
- The halves were probably only a foot or so apart based on the tradition for covenants
- We must also imagine that as Abram butchered the animals, it was a bloody affair
 - Some blood was spilled as the animals were initially killed
 - But even afterward as their carcasses lay on the ground, the blood in the meat would have drained further creating pools of blood on the ground
- This was the point of the exercise...to create a graphic depiction of death
 - This explains (in part) why there was a delay between when Abram cut the animals and when the rest of the ritual took place
 - God gave time for the blood to collect
 - There is a second symbolic reason for the delay which we will address in a minute
 - This also explains why the birds weren't to be cut, since it wouldn't produce a meaningful amount of blood
- These steps were standard practice in establishing a blood covenant
 - The animal blood was a substitute for the blood of those entering into the covenant
 - It was a graphic way of demonstrating that should either party break the promises of the covenant, this is what would happen to them
 - The other party would have the right to spill their blood
 - In fact, the Hebrew phrase for entering into a covenant is literally "cutting" covenant
 - Which refers to the cutting of animals as part of the ritual
 - The animals didn't go to waste
 - After the ritual, they were roasted and the meat was shared in a covenant meal
 - The sharing of the meat was significant because as both parties took the meat into their bodies, they were united
 - The sacrificed meat was symbolic of their own bodies, and now that flesh was a part of each man's body
 - They became united in the way they both ate the flesh that had represented their death vow
- The carcasses lie on the ground so long that they eventually attract vultures
 - Abram knows that these carcasses are important to God's purposes, so he scares the vultures off
 - This is a curious scene, and it's our first hint that this ritual communicates more than simply the terms of the covenant
 - It is also a picture of how God will work through Abram and his descendants in this covenant

- Abram is made to wait for God to perform the ritual because the wait itself is a picture of how this covenant will be fulfilled
 - And the arrival of the vultures to pick apart at the sacrifice is another picture
 - But at this point the pictures aren't clear, because the answers are given in the last section of the chapter

Gen. 15:12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

Gen. 15:13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.

Gen. 15:14 "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

Gen. 15:15 "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.

Gen. 15:16 "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

- Most of the day has passed, and darkness come
 - And in that moment God places Abram into a deep sleep
 - The description of sleep here in Hebrew is the same as we saw in Genesis 2 when God placed Adam into a deep sleep to remove his rib
 - This is a supernatural sleep, once that renders the person incapacitated but not unconscious
 - We notice here that Abram still felt the terror and great darkness from the Lord's presence
 - Even Abram, a man who had been counted righteous by faith was still sinful
 - So as the holiness of God approached, Abram had the natural reaction...terror
 - And God uses this special form of sleep because it renders the person unable to act or respond, yet leaves them able to understand what was happening
 - Adam's sleep allowed him to understand what God was doing so that he might understand where woman came from
 - Here it permits Abram to understand
- While Abram is in this deep sleep, God begins to disclose more of His plans to Abram concerning His promises
 - God opens with a surprise announcement
 - Abram's descendants would live outside the promised land
 - Take note of the way God begins His statement

- “Know for certain...”
 - God assures Abram that his descendants will only settle in the land after having left centuries earlier
- We come to understand Abram’s real concern based on what God says here
 - Abram seems concerned for whether his descendants will remain in a faithful relationship with God or whether they will forfeit the promises
 - The Jewish commentary on this chapter thought that Abram asked for this assurance because he feared that his descendants would sin and anger God
 - If so, then God might take away the land and Abram wouldn’t see it in his resurrection
- We don’t know if this is true, but it makes some sense
 - God’s statements here suggest that this entire moment was the result of Abram’s insecurity over God’s promises of land for his descendants
 - So God begins by saying, “Yes, Abram, they will live outside the land. You can be certain of that...”
 - It sounds as if God is addressing the real question in Abram’s heart
- And to make matters worse, God goes on to say they will be enslaved and oppressed
 - God wisely doesn’t name the place we know will be Egypt
 - For Israel must take this detour and naming the nation might have stopped the plan from happening
- As an aside, the date of 400 years does not describe the time they were in bondage...they were only in Egypt 215 years
 - It represents a count of years from the time Isaac is weaned until Israel leaves Egypt
 - The years between the arrival of the promised son until Israel’s receiving of her next covenant
- Just as Abram’s fears are running wild, God continues with the good news
 - God will keep His promises to Abram and bring his descendants out with many blessings
 - Though Abram will not live to see these things, God reminds him
 - When it says you go to the grave in peace, it means without experiencing the slavery that is to come
 - And after four generations, the people will return
 - The four generations refer to the generations that leave and return
 - Exodus 6 tell us that Levi left the land and four generations later, his descendant Moses brought them back
 - Now we can appreciate the earlier delay when Abram ran off the vultures while waiting for God
 - We can see some of the symbolism of this chapter coming together

- God tells Abram that the nation would be set outside the land for hundreds of years
 - And that would result in a delay for the people occupying the land
- Earlier we saw the carcasses lying exposed for a period of time while Abram waited for God to return
 - And during that time, unclean animals tried to pick at the sacrificed animals
 - But Abram stopped them
- Do you see a beautiful picture emerging here?
 - The covenant God is extending to Abram also applies to Abram's descendants, his children to be called Israel
 - And there will be a delay in the Lord bringing the covenant into reality for Israel
 - Just as there was a delay in God beginning this ritual
 - And in the time while the delay occurs, Israel will be picked apart by vultures – so to speak
 - The vultures are a picture of Egypt
 - But Abram was able to keep the vultures from destroying the covenant symbols thus allowing the covenant ritual to go forward
 - Likewise, Abram is the key to Israel returning to the land
 - Specifically, God's promises to Abram are the means to Israel being rescued from Egypt
 - We could say that Abram kept the vultures of Egypt from destroying Israel
 - Abram's covenant saved Israel
- Curiously, God says the delay is made necessary because the sin of the Amorites isn't complete
 - Literally, God is telling Abram that the Canaanite people in the land will be given a certain time for their sin to be complete or full
 - Once that time is reached, then God will use Israel to conquer and judge these people under Joshua
 - Therefore, Abram's descendants can't enter the land until that fullness is reached
 - Plus, the delay gives time for Abram's descendants to grow numerous
 - God will grow Israel while they are in Egypt, so that when they come out of slavery they are mighty enough to subdue the land
 - This second reason yields yet another picture for us
 - God tells Abram that his descendants can't occupy their land until a Gentile people are first given their full time under God's plan
 - And once that time is complete, then Abram's descendants will enter the

land as promised

- Today we can see this suggesting Israel's scattering during the time of the Church, when God is giving opportunity for Gentiles to repent
 - And when that time is complete or full, then God will permit Abram's descendants to enter the land
- Finally, after that explanation, God initiated the covenant ritual for Abram and his descendants

Gen. 15:17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.

Gen. 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

Gen. 15:19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite

Gen. 15:20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim

Gen. 15:21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

- God leaves Abram in the deep sleep and then proceeds to manifest Himself through these symbols
 - God shows Himself as smoke and fire
 - The text literally means "smoking pot" and "rising flame"
 - I believe these looked the same as those that led Israel in the desert
 - A column of smoke, round in shape like a pot
 - And a rising flame, like the kind that comes from a torch
 - As smoke and flame, God gives Himself a non-incarnate form
 - And then He proceeds to move through the pieces of meat by Himself
 - Normally, both parties would move through the meat signifying that both parties were obligated to keep the covenant
 - As men walked through the pieces of meat, they wore long robes that would become blood stained at the hem
 - This signified their acceptance of the covenant under penalty of death
 - But here, only God takes an obligation upon Himself
 - He alone is obligating Himself...an act of grace
 - We see the connection with the number 5 and "grace" represented by the 5 animals
- The specific covenant promise in the ritual is spoken in vs.18-21

- Abram's descendants would receive the land between the Brook of Egypt and the Euphrates River
 - This is a span of land Israel has yet to own
 - And yet God has obligated Himself to this very promise
 - Clearly, the promise has yet to be fulfilled
 - For we are still in the period of delay, which God pictured through the time of waiting in the afternoon
 - But night fall will come upon the Earth
 - And in that period of darkness, Abram will protect his descendants, just as he protected the carcasses from the vultures
 - God will remember His promise to Abram, and the Lord will appear out of darkness to rescue Israel and bring Her into the promised land
- Remember I said earlier that covenants are established with rituals
 - But even before this ritual was conducted, God has already been acting for Abram
 - God acted first to bring Abraham out of Ur
 - That led to Abram's faith in God and it was credited as righteousness
 - And finally, with faith came relationship in a covenant along with rituals to affirm that covenant...like our communion meal today

A pastor was conducting street evangelism among the down-and-out of the inner city, when he walked into a pub one afternoon and said to the first man he met, "I'm a pastor and I want to know do you want to go to heaven?"

The man replied, "I certainly do, Pastor"

The pastor said, "Then wait over there by the door."

Then the pastor asked a second man, "Do you want to go to heaven?"

"Of course," was the man's reply.

The priest said, "Then join the first man by the door."

Then the pastor walked up to a ragged, tired-looking man and said, "You look like someone who needs hope...do you want to go to heaven?"

The man's eyes opened wide and he said, "Oh no, not me."

The pastor said, "I don't believe this. You mean to tell me that when you die you don't want to go to heaven?"

The man said, "Oh, when I die, yes. I thought you were getting a group together to go right now."

- As the saying goes, timing is everything
- Timing can also be key to understanding God's will
 - God operates on a timeline that is often completely different than our expectations
 - Sometimes His call or direction comes too early, sooner than we expected
 - Other times we feel He's late
 - When we feel God's timing isn't to our liking, it's usually a sign that we're not walking at His side
 - We're out of step with the Lord in where He's going and what He's at work accomplishing
 - There are times when He expects us to move quickly and times when He asks us to wait
 - And our willingness to move and to wait according to His direction are tests of obedience
- In the story of Abram we've seen him demonstrate faithful obedience
- He has shown obedience both through action and by waiting
 - He acted in faith when he left Ur under God's direction and entered Canaan
 - He showed obedience in his willingness to wait for the arrival of the heavenly city of God, the promised land
 - Foregoing any claim to the land under his feet in the meantime
- On the other hand, Abram isn't perfect, and at times he has demonstrated disobedience
 - He's demonstrated disobedience by acting when he should have been waiting
 - As when he went to Egypt during the famine rather than waiting on God to provide

- And in lying about his wife Sarai, calling her his sister, rather than waiting for God to protect him
- And in Chapter 16 today we find Abram sinning again in acting too soon
 - And he sins by waiting when he should have taken action...action to guide and counsel his wife
- Often the greatest test of our obedience isn't in our willingness to act, but in our willingness to wait on the Lord

Gen. 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.

Gen. 16:2 So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Gen. 16:3 After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

- It's been ten years since Abram and Sarai left Ur and entered Canaan in response to God's call
 - When they left Ur, Abram was 75 and Sarai was 65 years old and they were childless
 - They were already past childbearing age, even in a day when people were living into a second century
 - And now after ten years, they remain childless and things look bleak
 - After ten years of waiting for an heir, Sarai decides that something must be done to correct the problem
 - In v.2 she tells Abram that God is preventing her from having children
 - In Hebrew, Sarai says the Lord is restraining her bearing children
 - And what she says is true
 - God has made Sarai barren for the time being
 - We'll see Scripture tell us later that God opens Sarai's womb at an appointed time
 - But for now, God has blocked childbearing for reasons of His own
 - We'll understand those reasons in a future chapter, but for now, it's enough to simply acknowledge that God is in control
 - But what Sarai failed to do at that point was ask God why, and trust God to bring an answer
 - Instead, Sarai decides to take matters into her own hands
 - Sarai has heard all the same promises that Abram has heard
 - She knows that God has declared Abram will have a countless number of

descendants

- She knows that the children must come from Abram, since God said it would be an heir from Abram's own body
 - But God has said nothing about who the mother will be
- Since Abram is married to Sarai, the natural assumption should have been that Sarai would be the mother
 - But after ten years of waiting for this promise to be realized, Sarai is beginning to wonder if she has made a bad assumption
 - Perhaps the child is supposed to come from another woman?
- Here again, Sarai could have sought the Lord for an answer
 - Or she could have sought her husband's counsel for confirmation
 - Sadly, she does neither
- Childlessness was considered the worst fate possible in the ancient world
 - In ancient culture, childlessness was understood to be a curse from God; a judgment against the marriage
 - Usually, the woman bore the blame and received the scorn for the lack of children
 - It's still a source of despair for many couples today, since one of the greatest joys for a marriage is to witness the birth of new life
 - In Abram's day, the laws of the culture permitted men to obtain additional wives especially when the couple was childless
 - If the first wife didn't produce after a while, the man could elect to take a second free woman as a wife
 - In fact, in some cultures the barren wife was obligated to provide her husband a surrogate wife to bear children
 - The second wife would be equal in standing to the first wife
 - Obviously, this new arrival in the family became a competitor with the first wife for the affections of the husband
 - And the two wives shared equally in the inheritance
 - Since a barren wife had no desire to share her husband with a fertile wife, there arose a second method for obtaining a child in ancient times
 - A barren woman could offer her husband one of her own slave girls as a concubine
 - If the husband agreed, he would consummate the marriage with the concubine, making her his legal wife for life
 - But because the concubine was also a slave owned by the first wife, the concubine did not have the same status as a true wife
 - She was a second-class wife
 - She was still a slave and did not receive an inheritance

- More importantly, her children would be considered the children of the free wife
 - So the barren wife would no longer be considered barren
 - The concubine would never have any children of her own, since every child would be considered the offspring of the first wife
 - And the first wife remained the master of the concubine
- So concubines were essentially child producing slaves
 - Since the slave wife was still the property (handmaiden) of the free wife, she must obey the orders of the free wife
 - According to law, she could never be sold because she was a wife
- This is the solution Sarai chose for Abram and herself
 - Rather than sharing Abram with a second wife, Sarai preferred to supply her handmaiden as Abram's concubine
 - This preserved her status as Abram's only free wife and ensured that any child born would be considered Sarai's child
- Sarai offers Abram her handmaid Hagar
 - Sarai received Hagar while Abram was in Egypt
 - We remember Egypt is a picture of the sinful world in Scripture, so Hagar herself becomes a picture of sinfulness
 - Hagar means to flee, as in a fugitive fleeing, reminiscent of their departure from Egypt
 - It will also carry prophetic meaning for Hagar personally
- As we said, Sarai and Abram were following customs of the day
 - There was nothing immoral about this plan, at least according to the society
 - But while it might not have been immoral according to human law, that doesn't mean it was in keeping with God's purposes or expectations
 - The question of God's view of polygamy has been debated throughout the ages
 - The debate usually centers on the major Biblical characters who are seen to have concubine wives
 - Besides Abraham, we see Jacob, Caleb, Gideon, Saul, David, and Solomon all taking concubines
 - Solomon raised it to an art form
 - So some have concluded over the centuries that multiple wives is something God permits
 - This conclusion is faulty for four reasons
 - First, Scripture records numerous men having multiple wives, but recording an event isn't equivalent to endorsing the behavior
 - The Scripture records Jacob lying to his father

- David committing adultery
- Saul practicing divination
- And Solomon permitting idolatry
 - We wouldn't draw a conclusion that these behaviors are permitted simply because other men sinned in these way
 - Likewise, we can't draw the conclusion that multiple wives was God's plan simply because some men made this mistake
- Secondly, in every case where Scripture records multiple marriages, it portrays the experience in a negative light
 - This chapter shows the consequences of Abram's sin
 - Later Scripture will show us the sin of Jacob's multiple marriages
 - And likewise, the downfalls of Saul, David and Solomon are clearly connected to their taking multiple wives
 - One commentator said:

"A thousand volumes written against polygamy would not lead to a clearer fuller conviction of the evils of that practice than the story under review."

- So the only fair conclusion we draw from the examples we do have in Scripture is that polygamy leads to bad things
- Thirdly, the practice of multiple wives didn't begin with an instruction from God but from the decision of a particularly sinful man, Lamech
 - Remember, it was Lamech who was seventh from Adam in the ungodly line of Cain who first decided to take multiple wives
 - If the practice of polygamy was the invention of ungodly immoral people, then we can hardly conclude it was according to God's desires
- Finally, Scripture's specific teaching concerning the nature of marriage is abundantly clear
 - A man shall leave his mother and father and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh
 - There is simply no room in the theology of the Bible for a husband to share himself with multiple wives
- So Sarai (and Abram) are making a mistake, one permitted under the culture but not in keeping with God's desires
- How did they rationalize this decision, since God had not directed this step?
 - It was probably quite easy
 - They had been childless their entire marriage
 - And now they've been promised a child by God but it's been ten years since the promise

- The only conclusion Sarai could draw was God has prevented her from having children (v.2)
 - So, she concludes, it must mean Abram was to receive the child some other way
- We can easily imagine what she told herself:
 - “God provided us with Hagar when He blessed us in Egypt, so Hagar must be God’s provision to us so we can have an heir...”
 - After all, ten years is a long time to wait
- Have you entertained similar thoughts?
 - “Surely God wants me to have _____?”
 - “The fact that He hasn’t given it to me so far is just proof that He wants me to get it some other way...”
 - Who are we kidding? Only ourselves
 - The fact that we don’t have something is proof that God doesn’t want us to have it, at least not yet if ever
 - Trying to obtain it some other way is sin
- Abram and Sarai are acting out of impatience and a failure to trust in God having made no attempt to seek God’s will over the matter
 - More than anything else, it’s Abram’s failure to reach out to God that is most striking
 - Look in v.2 at Abram’s response
 - Here’s a man who has heard from God personally in three separate occasions
 - He knows what it’s like to receive instruction from God
 - Yet on a matter this important, Abram simply listens to the voice of his wife
 - Why not lift up a prayer asking for confirmation?
 - There are many ways in which our faith is supposed to drive us to live differently, but none are more important than in the way we make decisions
 - When the world makes decisions, it weighs options and evaluates outcomes relying entirely on human wisdom
 - We can employ similar methods
 - But in the end, we’re supposed to be Spirit-led and God fearing
 - And if we make our decisions listening to the Lord’s instructions, that will undoubtedly lead us to live a life different from the world
 - So we shouldn’t be surprised when we’re not following the world’s patterns
 - Unfortunately Abram, we’re told, listened to the voice of his wife, and took Hagar as a second wife
 - Often God will frustrate us when we try to go around Him and obtain something outside His will
 - He will deny us what we are trying to gain, despite our best efforts to obtain it

- But the truly frightening thought is that sometimes He lets us have what we want even though it is not His desire, just to teach us a lesson
 - And in Abram and Sarai's case, God does that very thing
- Hopefully you can see some parallels to our earlier study in Genesis 3
 - In that chapter we heard a similar statement by God when he disciplined Adam
 - God said because you listened to the voice of your wife...
 - Like Adam and Woman in the Garden, Abram and Sarai heard a promise from God
 - But rather than listening to the voice of God, the wife took matters into her own hands
 - And as before, the husband took the wife's instruction over the Lord's
 - And the result was a great sin
 - Now let's be completely clear about what Scripture is teaching here
 - The lesson is NOT that husbands shouldn't take their wife's counsel
 - The lesson is that BOTH husband and wife should heed the Lord's counsel
 - But ultimately the responsibility lies with the husband to ensure the family is walking in the will of the Lord
 - Here is where Abram should have acted rather than remained passive
 - He should have counseled his wife against this end
 - But Abram failed this test
- Each time Abram makes a sinful choice, his actions bring consequences
 - But because Abram is so central to God's plan, each sinful choice Abram makes brings history-changing consequences
 - For example, his decision to go to Egypt resulted in his wife acquiring Hagar
 - And now Abram's decision to marry Hagar, an Egyptian and not a woman of God's choosing, produces long lasting consequences
 - The first consequence shows itself almost immediately

Gen. 16:4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.

Gen. 16:5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me."

Gen. 16:6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

- Hagar finds herself with child, and immediately the problems begin

- It's not hard to imagine how Sarai must have felt as she contemplated her maidservant pregnant with Abram's child
- For decades, Sarai had wanted nothing more than to have a child, to do away with the scorn of barrenness
 - And though the culture blamed her, perhaps in the back of her mind Sarai wondered whether Abram was to blame
 - Perhaps it was Abram who was unable to father a child
- But now the answer was obvious to everyone: she was barren, not Abram
 - But at least the child would be considered hers and Abram would finally have an heir
 - But then Sarai sees the joy in Hagar's face, and Sarai's jealousy begins to grow
- Then one day Hagar gave Sarai that "look"
 - Maybe Sarai sensed pity in Hagar's eyes, or maybe it was a wry, knowing smile from Hagar
 - A look that communicated more than words could
 - Sarai realized Hagar, the slave, despised her own master
 - In Hebrew, the word is also translated contempt
- This was more than Sarai could take, so she goes to Abram and protests
 - Sarai places the blame for Hagar's haughtiness directly at her husband's feet
 - Does Abram truly bear the blame here?
 - In one sense, no
 - Abram didn't originate the idea
 - He merely agreed to Sarai's proposal
 - On the other hand, Sarai is correct
 - Abram had the leadership role in the family and should have anticipated this outcome
 - His first wife now had a slave woman that couldn't be sold and now felt free to show her mistress contempt
 - Hagar knew that she had special status as Abram's wife, though she remained a slave
 - Sarai feels hurt and powerless
 - And she tells Abram that God will judge between them
 - God will determine who has made the bigger mistake
 - I suspect God will blame Abram, not Sarai
 - This is the full meaning of headship
 - The point is not who has the earthly power in a marriage
 - It is who must endure the heavenly accounting for family sin

- Finally, Abram compounds one sin with another
 - When confronted by his wife, Abram is dismissive and reminds his wife she may do what she wants with Hagar, since Hagar is still her slave
 - So Sarai treats the Egyptian harshly, which means to mistreat her
 - This is a cruel and thoughtless response by Abram for Hagar's sake
 - Hagar is a victim here
 - She is Abram's wife and still due respect
 - And since she carries Abram's child, God will protect her as he promised to do for Abram's heirs
 - And Abram and Sarai will see consequences for their sin on this day

- Remember in Chapter 15 we witnessed the Lord take upon Himself a covenant with Abram
 - In that covenant ceremony, the Lord appeared in the form of fire and smoke while Abram was in a deep sleep
 - When the moment for the agreement to the covenant came, only God acted
 - He proceeded through the bloody animals, thus binding Himself to His vows to Abram
 - And the vows God made included not only the words spoken in that moment
 - They also included the words God spoke to Abram in all three of the appearances God makes to Abram
 - God promised to make Abram a great nation, to grant him descendants, an inheritance, and to bless those who bless him while cursing his enemies
 - These promises were affirmed in Chapter 15, and they were a one-way, suzerainty grant without condition
 - Abram need do no more to keep these promises than he did to obtain them in the first place
 - They depended on God's faithfulness, not Abram's
 - Because they reflected glory upon God and not Abram
- Now in Chapter 16, we've witnessed a great sin in Abram's life, a sin of faithlessness
 - Sarai was unwilling to wait on God for a son, while Abram was unwilling to act to correct his wife
 - The results of their sin are profound, both in the immediate moment and over the course of centuries and millennia
 - The second half of the chapter examines those consequences
 - But above it all, it highlights God's faithfulness
- When we ended last week, Sarai's handmaiden Hagar had become pregnant with Abram's first son
 - The confirmation of Hagar's pregnancy had created a new and dangerous dynamic in the family
 - The slave now had the upper hand on her owner
 - Scripture said that Hagar showed contempt for Sarai
 - And Sarai, knowing that Hagar couldn't be sold now that she was Abram's wife, is at a loss for what to do next
 - So she protested to Abram and demanded he come to her protection
 - Abram for his part as husband is lying down on the job, so to speak
 - He fails in correcting his wife and now he fails in supporting his wife
 - His only response for Sarai was to state the obvious: Hagar was Sarai's slave, do what you want with her

- How can we imagine the pain Sarai felt in her situation?
 - She thought she was doing the right thing by her husband in sacrificing her position as wife when she gave Hagar
 - She wanted to give her husband a child, and she made a mistake in how she tried to solve the problem
 - Now Sarai could appreciate her mistake, and she comes to Abram looking for support and concern and she gets it thrown back in her face
- Left with no other options, Sarai treats Hagar harshly hoping to drive her away - and it works
 - In v.16 we're told that Hagar flees from Sarai
 - This entire episode has been a disaster for everyone
 - Abram lost a servant in his home
 - Sarai lost her handmaiden
 - And Hagar has lost a home and is now on the run in the middle of a pregnancy
 - Hagar's flight amounts to theft and kidnapping
 - Running away as a slave was stealing from Abram
 - And taking the unborn child was kidnapping, since the child belonged to Abram and Sarai
 - Then the Lord stepped in...

Gen. 16:7 Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

Gen. 16:8 He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

Gen. 16:9 Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

- For the first time in Scripture, we're introduced to the angel of the Lord
 - The term angel of the Lord is an important character in the Old Testament
 - It occurs 58 times in Scripture
 - Despite the use of the word angel, this is no ordinary angel
 - The word angel itself in Hebrew actually means messenger or ambassador
 - And when this word is combined with the name for God, Yahweh, it always refers to the Second Person of the Godhead
 - The Person Who is eventually revealed as the incarnate Jesus
 - But prior to His incarnation, the Second Person of God appears as a messenger

or ambassador of the Father

- We can know that this term is a reference to God Himself by looking at the context in which it appears
 - In every context where He appears, there is also a reference to God in the same text
 - For example, later in this text we will find Hagar addressing the “angel” as God in v.13
 - Certainly, Hagar came to recognize this Messenger as Someone more than an angel
- When the Lord appears before Hagar, He finds her by a spring of water in the desert, on a road leading to Shur
 - Shur is a wilderness bordering the Negev, which means Hagar is likely headed to Egypt
 - This makes perfect sense
 - Hagar is going home
 - Where else would she go at this point?
 - Since she is moving through a desert, water is a crucial resource, so she has stopped by a spring
 - As the Lord appears to her, He asks two questions:
 - Where have you come from and where are you going?
 - Here we find another example of God asking questions when we know He already has all the answers
 - Why does the Lord ask a question of any kind?
 - When He wants to trigger new thinking and understanding
 - He wants Hagar to think twice about what she’s doing
 - Hagar may have been heading south toward Egypt, but she probably didn’t know her final destination
 - It was simply fleeing, as her name means
 - If you notice, the Lord began by identifying Hagar as Sarai’s maid
 - The Hebrew word for maid literally means slave girl
 - The Lord plainly calls Hagar Sarai’s slave girl
 - He seems to be reminding Hagar right from the start where she belongs
 - Hagar answers plainly
 - She says she is fleeing from the presence of her master Sarai
 - Hagar makes no attempt to deny the truth: she was wrong
 - Hagar is the true victim in this entire episode
 - Hagar was pressed into slavery to support Abram’s family

- She was pressed again into marrying Abram and giving him a child
 - Then she was hated by her own mistress who made these decisions
 - More importantly, Hagar had no knowledge of the Living God
 - She had no promises from God, unlike Sarai and Abram
- She was just a Gentile suffering under the sin of her Hebrew masters
 - But as she was committing this sin, the Lord stepped in and turned her around
 - In v.9 the Lord says, return to your owner and submit to her authority
 - Does the Lord's command surprise you?
 - Let me ask you what else can a holy and perfect God say?
 - Hagar's flight was breaking the law and depriving Abram of his child
 - How could God approve of that behavior?
 - It mattered not the reason for her sin...sin is sin
 - And two wrongs don't make a right
- The Lord needs Hagar to stay with Abram because it suits His purposes for Abram and Sarai
 - As you may know, God will direct Abram and Sarai to send Hagar away in a future day
 - But for now, God wants Hagar to remain in the household
 - There are two reasons for this delayed departure
 - First, God wants Hagar's departure to teach a lesson for the future Israel
 - Hagar and her son will form an important picture for God in telling the story of Israel
 - There will be a seed to rule the world and save men from their sins
 - But that seed will find its source in God's promises, not in the works of men
 - In order to tell that story fully, God needed not only a son by His promise, but He also needed a son by human effort
 - Then God could contrast the outcomes of each, thereby teaching how only God's promises lead to glory
 - We'll study more about this contrast in the next chapter
 - Secondly, Abram's sin must bear consequences for himself and his nation
 - Remember I mentioned that Abram's unique position in God's plan for the world means that both his faithfulness and his sin carry great consequences
 - When Abram is strong, the world benefits
 - And when Abram is weak, the world suffers
 - All this is according to God's plan
 - The child that will come from Abram's sin must dwell near the sons of

promise, because God will use one to chastise the other

- The offspring of Hagar will eventually become enemies of Israel
 - And God will use these enemies to discipline His children in Israel
 - For God works all things to good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose
- So the Lord tells Hagar to return, submit to authority, do the right thing
 - And then God proceeds to show her how her obedience will lead to blessing

Gen. 16:10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, **“I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.”**

Gen. 16:11 The angel of the LORD said to her further,
**“Behold, you are with child,
 And you will bear a son;
 And you shall call his name Ishmael,
 Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.**

Gen. 16:12 **“He will be a wild donkey of a man,
 His hand will be against everyone,
 And everyone’s hand will be against him;
 And he will live to the east of all his brothers.”**

- The Lord assures Hagar that her child will yield an uncountable number of descendants
 - Notice the text says “I” will...
 - The angel is speaking as God Himself, as He truly is
 - This promise is exactly the same one that God made to Abram
 - Why would God give the same promise to Hagar’s child?
 - Because this child is also Abram’s child
 - And the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable
 - Because God promised that Abram’s seed would fill the world, so it must be with his child of Hagar
 - This child will eventually become the father of all Arab nations
 - What an amazing testimony to God’s faithfulness
 - God is so faithful, His promises so sure, that not even God Himself can ignore them or change them
 - God promised Abram that his seed would be uncountable, and so it must be
 - And though God’s promise was directed toward a certain son yet to come, nevertheless it was spoken to Abram
 - Therefore God’s word will reign true regardless of how many sons Abram conceives

- Now we are starting to understand the power of that earlier covenant moment in Chapter 15
 - It means something when God makes a promise
 - It will stand and nothing can change it
 - God made promises to you when He called you into faith
 - And those promises were spoken through His Word
 - He said He would never leave us nor forsake us
 - He will prepare a place for us
 - He will confess us before His Father
 - We will reign with Him in His kingdom
 - We will receive an inheritance in that kingdom
 - Those promises can't be changed, not by the world, not by you, not by God Himself
 - We will sin, though God desires we live holy and pleasing lives
 - But our sin will not change these promises
 - We will fail, but God will not
 - This is why Paul can say:

Rom. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, Rom. 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- This son, however, is not the one of God's design when He gave His promises to Abram
 - So, even though Hagar will have the benefit of many descendants, she is not the direct recipient of all the other promises
 - Remember, the promises were spoken to Abram not to Hagar
 - So she is benefiting from her association with Abram
 - She is not herself receiving those same promises
 - Therefore her family has a different fate than does Abram's
 - And God shares those details with her
- Hagar learns what is in store for her pregnancy
 - First, she will have a son
 - God gives the first sonogram
 - And God gives her the name, Ishmael
 - The name Ishmael means "God hears"

- Because God heard her affliction and visited her
- There is great irony here, because God rescues an Egyptian after he hears her affliction at the hands of Hebrews
- Later, God will rescue the Hebrews when he hears their affliction at the hands of the Egyptians
- Both times, God hears because He is bound by his own word to hear
- By announcing the name of the child, God is making a prophetic statement
 - As a slave mother, Hagar will have nothing to do with naming the child
 - Abram will name the child
 - So the only way the child's name will be Ishmael is if Abram selects this name on his own
 - And what do you think Hagar will think when she hears Abram announce the name of the child?
 - Do you think she will be encouraged to witness God's word coming to reality before her eyes?
 - God is good to show Himself faithful in these ways
- Next, God tells Hagar her son will be a wild donkey (or ass) of a man
 - His hand will be against everyone and everyone against him
 - These are proverbial statements that carry much meaning
 - Being a donkey reflects both his personality and his lifestyle
 - The people from Ishmael will be roamers in the same way that wild herds of donkeys roam the desert in Abram's day
 - Wild donkeys are particularly unruly, independent and nomadic
 - Such are the Arab peoples
 - Historically nomadic, hot blooded, and rarely given to submit to the authority of non-Arabs
 - Secondly, God says they will be a warring people
 - More importantly, they will be aggressors by nature, provoking conflict with their neighbors
 - This prophecy has proven true over the centuries
 - And his aggression will result in others retaliating
- Why does the Lord determine this kind of future for the descendants of Ishmael?
 - The answer comes in the last line of v.12
 - Ishmael will settle east of all his brothers
 - We all know the significance of east by now
 - He will represent the sin and rebellion of the world
 - And geographically, Ishmael will settle directly next to his brothers, the nation

of Israel

- This explains why God has chosen to make Ishmael the man he becomes
- He will be a thorn in Israel's side, by design
- He will be a cause for Israel's chastisement in the days when God determines to send Israel a message
- Here we see the full implications of Abram's sin
 - By choosing to act outside God's will Abram has set in motion a world of enmity between the seed of flesh and the seed of promise
 - But this is always the pattern
 - When Adam sinned, he set in motion a battle between the sons of the enemy and the sons of God
 - The struggle between spirit and flesh will continue until God puts an end to all flesh
 - And here we see it again, Abram's child of flesh set to war with the child of promise
- We might ask ourselves at this point why God intervened to stop Hagar's sin of running away, yet God didn't stop Abram and Sarai from sinning in the first place
 - The answer is that Abram and Sarai knew better
 - They had God's promises and knew Him through faith
 - They were already in a position to obey properly
 - And yet they didn't
 - When God's people sin despite having the word of truth, then we face consequences
 - But Hagar knew none of these things
 - So only now God appears and reveals Himself
 - And by that revelation, God brings understanding leading to obedience
 - Look at Hagar's response and what follows

Gen. 16:13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

Gen. 16:14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

- Hagar's first response is to declare that this angel is God Himself
 - This is a statement of faith similar to the one Paul makes on the road to Damascus
 - In both cases a traveler is arrested on a desert road by the Lord, who appears to correct the person's sinful direction
 - And in both cases the appearance results in a changed life, one that follows the

Lord's leading and receives the Lord's blessing

- Here we have evidence that Hagar has received salvation as a result of this experience
 - She may remain a slave and she may have a son destined to torment Israel
 - But she has been called to become a child of God
 - And what led God to bring Hagar into the family of God?
 - Nothing more than her association with Abram, a man who has received God's promises
 - A promise to bless all the nations of the Earth
 - And in response to that call she will return to Abram and submit to Sarai's authority, as her Lord has asked her to do
 - She may be a slave to Sarai, but her true Master is now the Lord – and Hagar is obeying Him now
- This is a beautiful picture of how we too share in the blessing to Abram
 - Like Hagar, we are Gentiles who have been arrested in our normal course of sinful life
 - We encountered the Lord, Jesus
 - And by that encounter, our life of obedience began
 - And we are receiving the blessings of promises made to Abram and Israel
 - We are grafted into the promises, and so we share in the blessings

- Today, for the fourth time, God will appear to Abram
 - And the occasion for the visitation is similar to the previous three visits: God's covenant with Abram
 - But today, God is ready to bring Abram the full revelation of His covenant
 - Including a sign, that Abram will carry in his body to show that God has made this promise to him and his family

Gen. 17:1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him,
“I am God Almighty;
Walk before Me, and be blameless.

- Abram is now 99 years old
 - By that count, it has been 24 years since God first appeared to Abram in Ur and called him to move to Canaan
 - And it's been 13 years since his son Ishmael has been born to Hagar
 - It turns out that Ishmael's age comes to explain God's timing for His fourth appearance, as we will see later in this chapter
 - This chapter is 27 verses long, and all but 8 verses are the Lord speaking
 - This is the longest speech by God in Genesis
 - It's the zenith of God's revelation to Abram
 - For now, let's look at what God says to Abram as He appears this fourth time
 - He begins by identifying Himself as El Shaddai
 - This is the first time this term is used in Scripture
 - Eventually, we'll see it used 48 times
 - In Hebrew, it comes from a root meaning strength or power
 - But the word shaddai originated in an Akkadian word, *shaddu*
 - The Akkadian meaning was literally “breast”
 - Taken together, El Shaddai means the God Who provides strength to His children
 - Since this appearance comes thirteen years after Abram and Sarai turned to Hagar, it seems that God has chosen this name to emphasize two things
 - First, God will provide strength to His children in keeping with His promises
 - But secondly, God seems to be chastising Abram for his misguided attempt to find strength in his own body (through Hagar)
- Next, God tells Abram to walk before me and be blameless
 - God tells Abram “walk before me”

- But in Hebrew the words are more personal
- They mean “come before My face”
- In God’s case, we know this isn’t meant in a literal sense since Abram could not see God’s face and live
 - Rather, it means present yourself before Me, as a servant presents himself before his master
- Then God says be blameless
 - This is the same word Moses uses to describe Noah in Genesis 6:9 – a man who found favor and was blameless
 - In Genesis 6 we said that “favor” meant grace in Hebrew, and so blamelessness was a reflection of Noah’s righteousness before God in faith
 - Here as well, God tells Abram “be blameless”
- We need to remember this is the first time God has spoken to Abram since he married Hagar, God’s words are powerful in their effect
 - In those intervening 13 years, what must Abram have wondered when his thoughts turned to his decision to marry Hagar?
 - Did he feel guilt? Did he wonder if God was upset? Did he worry that God’s silence over the past 13 years was a sign He was displeased?
 - And what must Abram have felt when he heard God declare that he continued to serve his Master
 - And that Master was still calling Abram blameless before Him
 - Not perfect, not sinless, *but blameless*
- We serve this same Master by the terms of the same covenant
 - We know God’s promises to provide for us and never leave us nor forsake us
 - Yet still we go off and make poor decisions and leave Him behind in our actions
 - And we may go weeks or months or even years without a sense that God is speaking to us
 - And in those dark seasons, we might be led to question whether God is still with us
 - Still pleased with us, still willing to accept us
 - We wonder what He will say when He appears
 - Then we read these lines, and we are reminded that God is faithful to His promises
 - He still calls us blameless because Someone else took our blame
 - We are not sinless but we do not carry the blame, the judgment
- From that perspective, God gives Abram a new promise

Gen. 17:2 “I will establish My covenant between Me and you,

And I will multiply you exceedingly.”

Gen. 17:3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

Gen. 17:4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,

And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.

- God tells Abram He will establish between God and Abram a covenant and multiply him exceedingly
 - At first glance we assume this is the same covenant God has made from the beginning
 - The one announced in Chapter 12 and confirmed in Chapter 15 with the covenant ritual
 - The one that promises to multiply Abram’s descendants
 - But this language speaks of a different covenant
 - First, the language is in the future tense
 - God says this is a covenant that will be established
 - Secondly, this covenant is “between Me and you”
 - This term implies both parties have a role in keeping the covenant
 - So God is promising a new covenant, one that has yet to be established a two-way covenant requiring commitments from both parties
 - This second covenant is related to the first covenant
 - One will be the basis for being counted a part of the other
- At God’s appearing, Abram responds as all men would: he falls on his face
 - And God continued to talk with Abram explaining this is a new covenant, yet not one that replaces the first
 - Notice God says “as for Me”
 - He means “for my part, here’s what I am promising”
 - Then God reminds Abram that the first covenant is already with Abram
 - To be sure Abram understands, God repeats the entire revelation of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - He will be a father of a multitude of nations
 - Of Israel and many Gentile nations
 - And to testify to this one promise, God says He is changing Abram’s name
 - Abram means “exalted father”
 - And Abraham means father of a multitude
 - Changing names was a common feature of covenants
 - Two people who entered into a covenant might take parts of each other’s name and add it to their own name

- We still follow this same practice today in the way a woman takes the man's last name
 - It was a way of saying I am in covenant with you and we are made one by that covenant
- In this case, Abram receives a part of God's name
- In the middle of Abram's name, God inserts the breath sound in the pronunciation of His name in Hebrew
 - Yahweh is pronounced with a distinctive breath sound at the end
 - The name Abram is cut open and that breath sound is inserted in the middle: Abraham
 - Abram is now a man who carries a part of God's name
- God continues to tell Abraham all that He is bound to do by His word

Gen. 17:6 "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.

Gen. 17:7 "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

Gen. 17:8 "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

- As God has said before, "I will make you fruitful and you will produce kings and nations"
 - And in v.8 God repeats that He will give Abraham and his descendants the land in which Abraham has been wandering
 - Specifically the land that God outlined in Chapter 15, from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt
 - We remember these promises as part of the Abrahamic covenant
 - But in v.7 we find another reference to a future covenant that will be between God, and Abraham and his descendants
 - A covenant that is not here yet but is coming
 - And one that isn't one-way like the Abrahamic covenant
 - But is "between" Abraham and God, thus requiring both parties keep its terms faithfully
 - But we also notice that God is weaving these two covenants together almost as if they were inseparable
 - This is exactly right, but we need to study this next section carefully if we are to understand this relationship properly

Gen. 17:9 God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

Gen. 17:10 “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

Gen. 17:11 “And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Gen. 17:12 “And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

Gen. 17:13 “A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Gen. 17:14 “But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

- We noticed earlier that God introduced His obligations with the phrase “As for Me...”
 - Now we see God telling Abraham what his obligations are
 - But wait...we said before Abraham had no obligations under the Abrahamic Covenant
 - And he doesn't, which tells us that this must be the new covenant God is making with Abraham
 - And since it has terms for both parties, it is a different kind of covenant
 - Abraham will have a choice as to whether he participates in this covenant
 - First, God says that both Abraham and his descendants must participate in this covenant by agreeing to be circumcised
 - Trusting that everyone understands what circumcision means, I won't give any details now
 - I can say that this is not the moment that circumcision was invented or established
 - The practice has been found in ancient cultures apart from Israel
 - God simply took this practice and gave it meaning for Abraham and his descendants
 - The practice would be required of Abraham and his descendants, and to those servants brought into the household
 - And the event must take place on the eighth day as an infant
 - We can see God's handiwork in Creation in this direction
 - The body needs a particular vitamin, vitamin K, to allow for proper blood clotting
 - At birth, a baby has vitamin K from the mother but it takes time for the

baby to produce its own K

- After a few days, vitamin K production kicks in
- By the eighth day, the levels of vitamin K peak at abnormally high levels in the bloodstream
- After the eighth day, the levels begin to decrease to a normal level
- So God had the body prepared to handle the surgery
- To understand what God is doing here, let's make some observations
 - First, we notice that this is a covenant that requires Abraham and his descendants to take action, to obey God's commands
 - This means we're looking at a different covenant than the Abrahamic Covenant
 - Secondly, the timing of this action is on the eighth day of life
 - Clearly, this is a cross-generational covenant
 - It is not a covenant with a person, but with a people
 - The people of the promise, the people soon to be Israel
 - No one enters into this covenant on their own since they do so at an age too young to participate willingly
 - The decision to obey or ignore this covenant is made by a prior generation on their behalf
 - When the older generation obeys, their children receive the benefits of the covenant
 - When they disobey, their children suffer
 - Thirdly, the consequence of failing to keep the covenant is to be cut off from his people
 - The term for "cut off" literally means to be destroyed or killed
 - So the penalty for failing to observe this covenant is to cease being part of Israel and to cease to exist
 - Finally we notice God says in v.10 that circumcision is the covenant but in the next verse, God says it will be a sign of the covenant
 - How can it be both a covenant and a sign of a covenant?
 - The answer is God is establishing a new covenant which acts as a sign of the earlier covenant
- What do all these details tell us?
 - Remember since the fall in the Garden, we've been following the seed promise; the promise to bring a Messiah to rectify the sin of Adam
 - The promise has progressed from one son to another to another
 - Finally, it landed on Abraham, son of Terah
 - And in Abraham, the promise takes form

- There would be a people, set in a land, which would bring forth the blessing of the promise on behalf of the entire world
- All nations would be blessed through this people that come from Abraham
- First it will be bestowed on one son, Isaac, and later another, Jacob
 - But after Jacob, the promise will be extended to 12 sons
 - And from those twelve to countless more
- While the promise of the Messiah is carried forward through only the line of Judah, the promises for blessing and the land are extended to many descendants
 - But what will determine who may participate in these blessings?
 - As Paul taught us:

Rom. 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Rom. 9:7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: **"THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."**

Rom. 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

- So who will be counted among those who receive the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant?
 - God says that the sign of that covenant will be the covenant of circumcision
 - And those who descend from Abraham and who obey this command of God will be counted a part of the covenant
 - They will receive the promises of blessing in the land and of many descendants
 - But if the people of Abraham cease in observing this covenant, then they are cut off from the people of Israel and from the promises to Abraham
 - Remember Moses' experience in Exodus?

Ex. 4:24 Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.

Ex. 4:25 Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me."

Ex. 4:26 So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood" — because of the circumcision.

- Moses was headed back to Egypt to represent God's people, yet his own son had never been circumcised
 - His own child was excluded from the promises of the covenant

- So God was prepared to kill the child until they circumcised him
- God wants His covenant with Abraham to be witnessed to the nations
 - And He demands that Israel keep the covenant of circumcision in order to be a party to the Abrahamic Covenant
 - To be clear, Chapter 17 isn't teaching that obedience was required to keep the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - Those promises are assured on God's faithfulness alone
 - But entry into that covenant depended on obedience to the covenant of circumcision
 - But then again the obedience was national, not personal
 - The fathers' obedience determined the son's participation in the covenant
 - Once a person was a party to the Abrahamic Covenant, then the blessings were assured based on God's faithfulness to His word alone
 - Finally, personal salvation is not the issue here
 - Abraham was counted righteous based on his faith in God's promise under the first covenant
 - Had he refused to take circumcision, his faith would still have made him blameless
 - But he would have been cut off from the earthly blessings God was holding out for him
 - So he is to observe this second covenant to ensure his family is included in the covenant's blessings
- More to come...

- We stopped last week in the middle, in the story of two covenants
 - Let's revisit the verses we read last week

Gen. 17:7 "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

Gen. 17:8 "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Gen. 17:9 God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

Gen. 17:10 "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

Gen. 17:11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Gen. 17:12 "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

Gen. 17:13 "A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Gen. 17:14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

- God presented Abraham with a new covenant, the covenant of circumcision
 - And God called this new covenant a sign of God's earlier covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant
 - This chapter is a tale of two covenants
 - And as Abraham himself was probably thinking at the time – it was the best of times, it was the worst of times
 - No doubt Abraham was pleased to know that his earlier missteps with Hagar and Ishmael hasn't weakened God's resolve to keep His promise to bless Abraham and his descendants
 - Nevertheless, he probably wasn't thrilled to learn that circumcision was to be the sign of God's resolve
 - Last week, we were seeking to understand the spiritual meaning of the covenant of circumcision and its relationship to the Abrahamic covenant and to saving faith
 - We said that the covenant of circumcision was a two-way, cross-generational covenant
 - Unlike the earlier Abrahamic Covenant, this new covenant depended on

- obedience on the part of Abraham's descendants
- Fathers must take action to participate in this covenant
- If they failed to circumcise their male children as required, then they broke this covenant and also separated their family line from participation in the promises to Abraham
- In effect, they ceased to be Israel
- So the covenant of circumcision was a sign that the earlier covenant was in effect for this family
 - If a family denied the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, then they repudiated affiliation with the blessings to Abraham
- Why did God want Abraham and his descendants to forever carry this sign in their bodies?
 - First, consider what happened in the earlier chapter – Chapter 16
 - Abraham and Sarah left God's promises behind and made their own descendant through Hagar
 - This line of descendants will receive their own blessings, as God promised to Hagar
 - But they will not be parties to the Abrahamic Covenant
 - What will distinguish those descendants of Abraham who are in the covenant from those who are not?
 - Well, Chapter 17 is God's response to Chapter 16
 - God now establishes a second covenant of circumcision to designate those who share in the promise from those who do not
 - This covenant doesn't take priority over the earlier covenant
 - A person like Ishmael couldn't force his way into the Abrahamic Covenant simply because he took the sign of circumcision
 - But if someone was a descendant of Abraham, they are told to also keep this covenant as a sign or reminder of the earlier covenant
 - To fail to keep the covenant of circumcision would not invalidate the earlier covenant in their life
 - But it would cut off his family from Israel and from access to the promises to Abraham
 - Furthermore, to the nature of the sign itself (cutting of the male body), the sign is itself a reminder of the blood covenant to Abraham and his descendants
 - The process of circumcision involves blood, a reminder of the blood covenant between God and Abraham
 - And it involves the reproductive organ, which is a reminder of the eternal nature of the promise for every generation after Abraham
 - In Israel, Jewishness is transferred through the male, and therefore this sign was given to male children only

- A woman was included in this covenant by her father and then by her husband
- But if someone in the line of Abraham should forgo the practice in their family, they bring their family's participation in the covenant to an end
- So by changing Abram's name to Abraham and making circumcision a sign, God meant Abraham's very life as a testimony to the nations
 - And this was the main point
 - In the first covenant, God delivered Abraham saving faith and the guarantee of eternal blessing
 - And it came strictly because God made a promise and He is faithful
 - Similarly, when God extended grace to each of us by faith, He grafted us into the promises made to Abraham
 - We share in a similar future and will be part of the Kingdom alongside Israel
 - And we glory in that future knowing that it depends solely on the faithfulness of God to His promises to Abraham
 - But then God instructed Abraham and his descendants to keep a second covenant to acknowledge the reality of the earlier promise
 - If they obey this command, then the next generation carries the promise forward as an everlasting testimony
 - If they disobey, they cease the testimony and they are cutoff
 - Likewise, we have a call to live our lives as testimony to the promises we received
 - Our faith has brought the expectation that we should live according to Jesus' commands
 - That's why we were told in the Great Commission to teach disciples to obey all that Jesus commanded
 - That is our mission of testimony having received the new covenant by faith
 - And if we fail in this regard, we don't forfeit the first covenant we received by faith
 - But we do put at risk the opportunity to see our testimony continue in future generations
 - This is the essence of God's command that we should train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov 22:6)
 - When we live according to God's commands, we don't make our salvation more sure, but we do influence future generations
 - Now Abraham has been told to receive circumcision
 - The command was given to produce a testimony not to produce salvation
 - This is clear enough in the fact that the covenant involved making a mark in an infant, someone who had yet to even understand the covenant

- Abraham's obedience was the issue, and the penalty for disobedience would come to the next generation
 - It couldn't invalidate his salvation by faith
- What about those in later generations of Israel?
 - Like Abraham, all who wished to be called Israel observed the covenant of circumcision
 - Furthermore, each person must show faith in God's promises to be saved personally
 - Some in Israel believed while others did not
 - And those Jewish men who failed to believe in the promises were not be saved simply because their parents circumcised the boys
 - And obviously, the women weren't saved because their fathers' were circumcised
- Obedience to the sign of the covenant does not equal faith in the covenant itself
- As Paul taught

Rom. 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

Rom. 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Rom. 3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?

Rom. 3:2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Rom. 3:3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

Rom. 3:4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written,
**"THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS,
 AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED."**

- Notice that Paul says the test of who is truly Jew is one of spirit, not flesh
 - A true Jew is the one saved by faith, resulting in the marking of the Spirit
 - A greater circumcision is accomplished when we believe in God's promises, one done in the heart, Paul says
 - This is the work of the Spirit at the moment of faith, when we are marked forever as a child of God
 - The Spirit's marking is a sign of our covenant of faith

- Whether we receive physical circumcision today or not makes no difference in terms of our salvation
- So then Paul asks the obvious question: what advantage was it to be included in the covenant of circumcision and counted as a descendant of Abraham?
 - Paul says there was great advantage
 - First, those who complied with the covenant of circumcision were granted the privilege as part of the nation of Israel to be entrusted with the word of God
 - Scripture is written by Jewish men, and it was initially delivered to Israel
 - If someone refused to comply with the covenant of circumcision, they excluded themselves from this awesome blessing
 - And if they excluded themselves from the people of God, who had the word of God, then they left behind the very thing God uses to bring faith
 - Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ
 - Then Paul asks, what if some who received circumcision didn't believe and weren't saved? Did that suggest the promises God gave Abraham weren't kept?
 - In other words, was God obligated to ensure every circumcised member of Israel should believe and receive the promises of the Abrahamic covenant?
 - Paul says no
 - The benefits of being circumcised were simply the earthly benefits of being included in the work God performed in and through the Jewish people
 - But those earthly benefits didn't replace nor guarantee the eternal blessings that come only through faith in the Abrahamic covenant
- Today, as Christians we find ourselves in a similar situation
 - We have received the promises of the one-way covenant given us through faith in Christ
 - Our belief in that promise brings us salvation
 - And those promises don't depend on our performance
 - But as a result of that covenant, there are commands Christ has given us to keep
 - For example, we are commanded to be baptized in water
 - Baptism is the step of obedience that welcomes us into the church body and allows us to enjoy the blessings of that association
 - If we believe in the gospel, we are saved based on God's faithfulness
 - Yet if we refuse baptism, we are excluding ourselves from the community of believers and the blessings that derive from it
 - Conversely, if someone requested water baptism without having true faith, they might gain an opportunity to share in the earthly benefits of the Body of Christ
 - But that affiliation can't provide the salvation that comes by faith alone
 - Ultimately, they must accept the gospel and be saved if they are to be counted a child of God and receive a circumcised heart

- In fact, water baptism is the outward picture of the inward circumcision accomplished by the Spirit
- After God announced His new covenant to Abraham, He turned His attention to Sarai

Gen. 17:15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

Gen. 17:16 “I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Gen. 17:17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

Gen. 17:18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!”

Gen. 17:19 But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Gen. 17:20 “As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

Gen. 17:21 “But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”

Gen. 17:22 When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

- As He did with Abraham, God changes Sarai’s name to Sarah – inserting a part of God’s name into her name
 - Sarai means “my princess”, while Sarah means “the princess”
 - The meaning of the names is less important than the fact that her name changed like Abraham’s
 - She is the only woman in Scripture who experiences a name change because of covenant
 - Her experience is the proof for Jewish women that the covenant of circumcision covers them as well, either by their father and/or their husband
 - Sarah was receiving this name change because her husband was party to this covenant
 - And God reveals for the first time that it would be Sarah – not Hagar – who would give Abraham his descendants under promise
 - Nations and kings would come from her
 - Specifically, she has both Israel and Edom originate from her
 - And many other Gentile nations originated from the branches of Israel who were lost along the way

- Obviously, this isn't what Sarah and Abraham expected to hear
- In fact, Abraham fell on his face and exclaimed in laughter, asking if he and Sarah would have a child at their ages?
 - At first glance, the comment seems to contradict the earlier statement that Abraham was righteous by faith in God's power to bring a child
 - In reality, this statement shows how much Abraham believed
 - Knowing that God could bring it about, Abraham falls laughing at the thought of them having a child at such an old age
 - The laughter was the result of knowing that God could very well do as He promised, and the thought seemed ridiculous to Abraham
 - Instead, Abraham suggests that God would be satisfied in Ishmael
 - Abraham is essentially saying don't go to so much trouble, just let Ishmael be the promised the child
- But God quickly rejected Abraham's suggestion, and He did so with both compassion and firmness
 - God was determined to bring about His promise by His own hand, and according to His own plan, through Abraham and Sarah
 - And the child they created in their own flesh would not stand in place of God's work
 - For our work counts for nothing in God's plan
 - He will only be glorified by His own work
 - So God assures Abraham that Sarah will have a child in one year, and his name will be Isaac
 - The name Isaac means "he laughs"
 - Obviously, the child's name will be a reminder to Abraham of his laughing at God's word
 - So we wonder, was the child's name always to be Isaac?
 - God's sovereignty ensures that Abraham's response would match the name God was preparing to give Isaac
 - He also tells Abraham that the covenant would transfer to Isaac, not to Ishmael
 - Abraham had offered Ishmael as the child to receive the promises of the inheritance, but God said no
 - Nevertheless, God understands Abraham's concern for the welfare of Ishmael
 - So God tells Abraham for the first time what He told Hagar earlier: Ishmael would have his own legacy
 - He would father 12 kings, the twelve tribes of the Arab nations
 - These people become the eternal enemies of Israel, and so the sin of Abraham leads to many generations of misery for Isaac's descendants
 - And with this moment God concluded His appearance

Gen. 17:23 Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him.

Gen. 17:24 Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen. 17:25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen. 17:26 In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

Gen. 17:27 All the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

- Abraham is one year away from having his son Isaac
 - And in this moment, he complies with the covenant of circumcision
 - It would have been painful for him and the others
 - He would have been unpopular in his home for sometime
 - But three months later, the covenant begins its work as he fathers the child of promise with a woman who had never received a child before
 - Sometimes God work in our lives comes in dramatic moments as it did for Abraham here
 - But usually, it's a long, slow struggle against flesh and the enemy
 - The way to saving faith was easy, in that God did all the work and we merely received it in faith
 - But the way to obedience is difficult and often painful
 - We have to risk being hurt, being unpopular, even having our blood spilled
 - We can't imagine how God will make use of our obedience
 - But He is at work in and through us, both to His own glory and to our blessing
 - Take a step of obedience, because our walk of faith is not one of perfection, but persistence

- Abraham and Sarah are now within a year of receiving their first child together
 - This son, Isaac, will become the first of an uncountable number of descendants because of God's promise to Abraham
 - From Isaac, an entire nation will form
 - And out of that nation, God will bring His word, His tabernacle on Earth, and His Son
 - So obviously, it's very important to God how this nation develops over time...
 - What it's taught, how it is trained up
 - And what it understands about the God Who formed it
 - So today in Chapter 18 the Lord makes His sixth and most curious appearance to Abraham to prepare him better for his role as patriarch
 - And this appearance is but a few days after the previous one

Gen. 18:1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

Gen. 18:2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth,

Gen. 18:3 and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by.

Gen. 18:4 "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;

Gen. 18:5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said."

Gen. 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it and make bread cakes."

Gen. 18:7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it.

Gen. 18:8 He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

- Abraham is staying near the oaks of Mamre, which is in the wilderness south of Jerusalem
 - The time is the heat of the day, which corresponds to early afternoon
 - This is also the traditional time for the main meal of the day
 - Abraham is resting in the tent doorway, out of the sun and probably waiting for the midday meal to be ready
 - In v.1 Moses tells us that the Lord visited Abraham

- Then immediately in the next verse we hear of three “men” visiting Abraham
 - The point of v.1 was to inform the reader of what was truly happening in this moment
 - The Lord was visiting Abraham
 - But in v.2 and later, Moses tells us the story from Abraham’s viewpoint
 - So we can understand the events from his perspective
- In v.2 three men approach Abraham
 - I like to imagine him looking up to see three standing figures walking toward him
 - Their appearances in shadow as they are silhouetted by the noon-day sun behind them
 - Abraham gets up and runs to greet them
 - This is a reflection of the importance of hospitality in that day
 - In this culture, it was a high honor to host a visitor – much less three visitors
 - And obviously, Abraham takes his responsibility seriously
 - So he makes haste to welcome them
- As Abraham runs to meet them, He immediately bows down to the ground
 - The word for bowed is the Hebrew word for worshipped
 - As Abraham approached the men and saw them closely, he recognized that these visitors were not men at all
 - Abraham’s greeting in v.3 is “My Lords” in Hebrew
 - It’s the plural form of Adonai
 - Abraham recognized these visitors as spiritual beings, and he addresses them by the plural Adonai because he suspects one is the Lord
 - But perhaps he doesn’t know which one
 - But in that same verse, Abraham switches to the singular form of “your” to address only the Lord Himself
 - It seems he quickly came to understand which personage was the leader
 - Abraham asks to find favor in the Lord’s sight and that they would not pass Abraham by
 - The word for favor is *chen*, the word for grace
 - This statement is similar to one in the opening of the story of Noah, where Noah was said to find favor with God
 - In fact, there are many parallels between this story and the story of the Flood, which we will examine along the way
 - And the reason for the parallels is that both stories are a picture or example of the coming destruction of the world and the return of our Lord

- Abraham offers to give the party water, to wash their feet, to rest under a tree out of the sun, and to provide bread
 - Abraham's invitation is in keeping with the customs of the day
 - But Abraham's actual efforts to care for the visitors goes well beyond even what he offered to do
 - The entire scene depicts Abraham moving quickly and with urgency, which is an indication of his desire to please his visitors
 - He tells Sarah to use three measures of flour to make the bread cakes, which is much more flour than would be needed to feed three men
 - He runs to the herd to select a calf to kill for the meat
 - Rather than assign the task to a servant, Abraham picks out the calf himself, making sure it was a choice animal
 - And then he instructs the servant to prepare it, but again with haste
 - Finally, after he gives them fresh dairy and the calf meat and the bread, he stands by like a servant to attend to his guests
 - This is still the style of hosting in the East
 - My recent trip to India allowed me to see the same kind of hospitality
- Abraham's extreme hospitality is the natural result of knowing who he was serving
 - Abraham gave the Lord his best, which is only to be expected
 - God was visiting Abraham that day, as He had done in the past
 - And Abraham understood how special and honoring it was for the Lord to grant Abraham this audience, now for the sixth time
 - But in all likelihood, this is the first time the Lord had appeared in the form of a person
 - That is not to say that the Lord was actually flesh
 - He had not been born into human form yet, so this is a theophany
 - An appearance of God that takes physical form to our eyes, yet is not actually made of human flesh
 - Nevertheless, Abraham recognizes how special this moment is and that nothing but the best he has to offer would be acceptable
- Abraham actually models two Biblical principles we would do well to remember
 - First, he models the Christian call to show hospitality and love to strangers
 - The writer of Hebrews makes a passing reference to this moment at the opening of his thirteenth chapter

Heb. 13:1 Let love of the brethren continue.

Heb. 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

- In v.1 the writer says the love of the church must continue (or in Greek: endure)
 - But in v.2 he adds that our hospitality cannot be limited to the church or just to people we know
 - The word for “entertain” in Greek is more nuanced than in English
 - It means to receive a surprise guest, to be caught off guard by an imposition and yet to respond with grace and gladness
- In such moment, the writer says we should remember how Abraham found himself in a similar situation
 - When Abraham arose and ran to greet these visitors, he didn’t know he was receiving angels
 - Yet he responded with grace and hospitality nonetheless, receiving them joyfully
 - Likewise, as God’s people, we are expected to reflect the love of Christ in the way we show grace to the person who calls upon us for hospitality
 - It’s not merely that we’re willing to serve someone a meal or engage in fellowship
 - It’s what we’re communicating by our willingness
- Look at all that Abraham communicated by his actions
 - He dropped everything, did everything he could to make them comfortable, made sacrifices and served his guests
 - He communicated love through sacrifice and service
 - In a sense, that’s the Gospel in action; the love of Christ working in us
- This a part of our calling as Christians
 - Today, the practice of entertaining guests and opening our homes for others is a dying custom
 - So as Christians, we have the opportunity to stand out in the world as salt and light by showing hospitality to our neighbors
 - Invite to dinner a neighbor you’ve only waved at a few times
 - Bake bread and bring it to a widow
 - I knew a family who allowed a single mom and her son to move into their basement for over a year to help her get on her feet
 - And through those interactions, you can witness to the gospel in both words and actions – a powerful combination
- The second Biblical principle Abraham demonstrates for us is how we are to serve the Lord
 - When the Lord came for this visit, Abraham had but a few things to offer, but he gave the Lord his best
 - All he could offer was refreshment, rest, shade, and his personal service
 - So he gave them generous portions: the ideal place to rest under the only tree,

- slaughtered the best of his herd and then he personally waited on them
 - Not even his servants were good enough
 - He insisted on becoming a slave of the Lord
 - In short, Abraham gave the Lord his best
- Paul taught that in all we do, we should approach it with an attitude that we are serving the Lord directly

Eph. 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

Eph. 6:6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Eph. 6:7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

Eph. 6:8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

- Abraham had the benefit of seeing the Lord sitting before him
 - So as he went about his preparations, he acted with urgency, with personal investment and with a desire to give his best
 - Nothing was held back, nothing was too valuable to sacrifice
 - He engaged his entire household, including his family
 - Everyone became focused on the work of serving the Lord
 - And he did it joyfully and gladly
- What did Abraham expect to receive?
 - Nothing but the Lord's pleasure
 - Notice that Paul says, don't serve as men-pleasers giving eye service
 - Doing something kind merely to gain a reputation before me
 - But when those men aren't watching, we stop our work
 - It's a form of hypocrisy
 - Instead, do all our work knowing the Lord is watching us
 - We may not see the Lord visit us in person, as Abraham did, but the Lord is no less watching us
 - Work your best for Him and Paul says you will receive your reward from the Lord
- After Abraham served the Lord and the two angels, a conversation ensues

Gen. 18:9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent."

Gen. 18:10 He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold,

Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.

Gen. 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.

Gen. 18:12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

Gen. 18:13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’

Gen. 18:14 “Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

Gen. 18:15 Sarah denied it however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

- After the meal, the group inquires about Sarah
 - The pronoun is plural as reflected in the English translation, indicating they all asked this question
 - And they knew Sarah’s name though there is no indication her name had yet been spoken by Abraham
 - So in knowing her name, the Lord makes clear to Abraham his supernatural identity
 - Jesus did a similar thing when he was collecting His disciples as recorded in John’s Gospel

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

John 1:46 Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”

John 1:48 Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

John 1:49 Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

- By revealing His knowledge of secret things, Jesus demonstrated His divinity and Nathanael accepted it as evidence Jesus was Messiah
- Likewise here, Abraham and Sarah have received evidence to confirm their suspicions concerning their visitor: He is the Lord
- Abraham answers that Sarah is in the tent, but of course if they knew her name, then

they also knew where she was already

- So the point of the question was to confirm the Lord's identity while drawing attention to Sarah and the promise
- The Lord repeats the news that Sarah would give birth in a year
 - In the previous encounter with God Abraham had been told that the child would arrive in the same season in the next year
 - That means it was likely a little longer than a year, but now it is exactly a year away
- During this time, Sarah was listening at the tent door
 - It's hard to know how much Sarah has heard from Abraham's previous conversations, but it's likely she has heard nothing from the Lord
 - She probably knows only what Abraham has chosen to share with her
 - She knows her name has been changed and the men were circumcised
 - But does she know the full extent of the promise?
 - I wonder if Abraham might have hidden this detail from her not wanting to get her hopes up or cause her concern
 - But now the Lord Himself is determined to bring this knowledge to Sarah
 - And as she hears it through the tent, she laughs
 - The reason for her laughter is given in v.11
 - The text says they were both old and she was past childbearing
 - In Hebrew, the text literally reads "Sarah had ceased in the way of a woman"
 - This is a euphemism for a woman reaching menopause
 - So from a human perspective, it was literally impossible for her to bear a child
- Sarah's laughter was a silent laughter to herself
 - She reacted in a way similar to Abraham but different
 - In v.12 she asks, now that I'm old, shall I have delight or pleasure; that is shall I have the child I've always wanted
 - Sarah's thoughts go something like this:
 - I've always wanted a child and we've been hoping for one all our marriage
 - If God wanted to give me a child, He certainly would have done so by now
 - If God didn't see fit to give me a child when the timing would have been best, it's laughable to think He would do it now that I'm past the age of childbearing
 - In other words, her laughter is an indication that she doesn't yet believe God's promises
 - We have confirmation that she hasn't believed because of how the Lord responded to her

- He corrects her and accuses her of laughing rather than accepting His word
- How can it be that Sarah hasn't believed the promises of God up to this point?
 - She followed Abraham from Ur
 - She has agreed to live as a nomad in the desert though it was not what she was accustomed to
 - She has gone into Egypt
 - She has heard secondhand about the promises and the covenant and seen her husband obey God's commands
 - Yet she still doesn't believe?
- The faith of Abraham doesn't substitute for the faith of Sarah
 - She was being blessed by God in the covenant He made with Abraham because of her association with Abraham
 - And this was part of the covenant God made
 - Those who bless Abraham would themselves be blessed
 - How did Sarah bless Abraham?
 - By being an obedient, supportive wife
 - Even when she was not herself believing in the promises of God, nevertheless she followed Abraham obediently
 - Notice in v12 she addresses Abraham as "lord"
 - This is a term of respect but it also implies obedience to authority
 - Sarah respected her husband so much that she followed his authority even though she herself lacked the faith to follow God in her own heart
 - This gives us the full understanding of Peter's statement in his first letter concerning the purpose of submission

1Pet. 3:5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

1Pet. 3:6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

- Sarah's willingness to call her husband lord led her into a relationship with the Lord
 - For had she not been obedient and trusting in following Abraham even as Abraham himself was following the Lord, then Sarah would never have been in this situation
 - She would never have had the opportunity to encounter the living God by way of her husband's relationship
- As the Lord revealed her thoughts back to her in v.12, He asks her if anything is too difficult for the Lord?
 - This is similar to the Lord's comments in Matthew

Matt. 19:26 And looking at them Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

- The point of the Lord’s comment is that Sarah has been focused on the natural rather than trusting in God’s word
 - By the power of men and in the realm of the physical, Sarah could never have children
 - But by the power of God’s promise and through His faithfulness, He could make anything happen
- He is calling her to believe
 - And the Lord delivers His promise to her personally, saying He will “visit” her this time next year
 - This statement has double meaning
 - Not only will the Lord visit Sarah in the sense of bringing His promise into reality
 - But since we know Isaac is a picture of Christ, the Lord is saying that He will come as a child to her
 - Not literally, but as a picture
- Sarah, for her part, feels the fear of the Lord and shock of realizing He knew her thoughts
 - She initially denies her mistake
 - But the Lord persists and says, no you did laugh
 - He makes clear she must repent and accept the conviction of her unbelief
 - And then by that repentance, she might come to believe in the promise
 - Did Sarah ever come to accept and believe? Scripture says she did

Heb. 11:11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

- As we began this chapter last week, I made mention of two outstanding issues in Abraham's relationship that God must resolve before the promised child is born
 - First was the issue of Sarah
 - More specifically, the issue is Sarah's faith or lack thereof
 - We have been watching Abraham grow in his faith and reliance on God, but until Chapter 18, we heard little about Sarah and her relationship with God
 - We know she has been following Abraham obediently and patiently
 - And we heard last week from 1 Peter that Sarah is an example of how a woman's beauty is best exhibited in her willingness to show respect for her husband
 - Nevertheless, her obedience to Abraham is not a substitute for faith in God's word
 - And when she personally heard God's word – probably for the first time – her initial response was unbelief
 - But the Lord in her presence revealed her unbelief and brought conviction
 - Though Sarah initially lied to cover up her sin, Hebrews tells us that this encounter led her to faith
 - And by that faith, she gained the ability to conceive
 - So now Abraham's faith is matched by a woman of faith, and into that family of believers the child of promise will be born
 - The second issue God will resolve in Chapter 18 is Abraham's lack of appreciation for God's full nature and character
 - Up to this point, God has revealed only one side of His character and nature
 - Abraham has experienced God's mercy when He called Abraham out of Ur
 - Abraham has experienced God's grace when He pronounced Abraham righteous by faith
 - He has experienced God's faithfulness when God kept His word to rescue Abraham out of Egypt and bless him, though Abraham sinned
 - He has experienced God's goodness as he received assurances of an inheritance and a son
 - Yet if Abraham is to fully understand the God he worships and serves, Abraham must appreciate the full nature of God's character
 - That means Abraham must understand that God is also a God of justice, and judgment and wrath against sin
 - Without a healthy perspective of God, Abraham and his family would fail to appreciate and understand the seriousness of God's word
 - And the high expectations that holiness requires
- So as we pick up again in this chapter, the Lord unfolds a plan to show Abraham another side to His character and nature

- And the Lord gives Abraham an opportunity to participate with the Lord in this plan so that Abraham might learn through his relationship

Gen. 18:16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

Gen. 18:17 The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

Gen. 18:18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?

Gen. 18:19 “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”

- After the meal, the Lord and the two angels (which Moses continues to call “men”) prepare to move toward Sodom
 - Abraham, we’re told, moves with the men to send them off
 - This was to be expected, much like we walk a guest to the door of our home today
 - In that day Abraham would have accompanied the men to the limits of his encampment, probably to the point of where his livestock were grazing
 - As they walk, Moses records the words of the Lord
 - Curiously these words are not spoken to Abraham, as far as we can tell
 - By the Spirit, God revealed this detail to Moses
 - That’s no different than the way Moses received all the details of these stories
 - It’s no less remarkable that Moses knew about Sarah in the tent or any other detail of Abraham’s life
 - In all cases, Moses must have received these details from the Lord
 - As students of Scripture our responsibility is to ask, why did the Lord want us to know these thoughts, thoughts the Lord didn’t even reveal to Abraham himself?
 - The thought is phrased in the form of a question
 - Shall I hide...?
 - But since the question is never asked to anyone (and because we know the Lord already has the answer), then we recognize this is really a statement
 - I want to show Abraham...
 - God is going to invite Abraham into the next series of events
- And what exactly is God trying to show Abraham?
 - God gives us the answer in vs.18-19
 - We need to rephrase the Lord’s words from a question to a statement to

understand it

- God begins:
 - “Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and through that nation, I will bless all the nations of the earth”
 - “I have chosen him to raise up this nation, and by his experiences and example, I will train up his household and all those who will follow”
 - “Together, they must understand that the way of the Lord is both righteousness and justice so they may receive all that I have promised”
- The key to understanding the Lord’s thoughts is in the two halves that define the “way of the Lord”
 - Righteousness and justice
 - God is a God of righteousness: perfect in nature and thought and deed, always doing what is good
 - Perfect in mercy and love and blessing
 - But He is also a God of justice: perfect in judgment, always bringing wrath for sin and never overlooking injustice
 - God’s perfection and righteousness compel Him to bring a just penalty against every sin in His creation
- God’s people must understand and appreciate both sides of God’s character if we are to truly know Him, serve Him and be blessed
 - The Gospel at its core is a message of both judgment and mercy
 - We have sinned against God
 - He is a God of righteousness, so He must judge all sin and there must be a payment for our debt
 - But because He is also merciful and loving, He has made a payment available on our behalf in Christ Jesus
 - Christ lived a perfectly righteous life that pleased a righteous God, and then paid our debt on the cross to satisfy the wrath of God against sin
 - That’s the full Gospel message
 - But increasingly, churches preach only one half of the Gospel
 - Some are preaching God’s love without justice
 - They talk of God’s mercy without acknowledging his wrath for sin
 - Conveniently, they never draw attention to the depravity of our hearts, the holiness of God and the terrible price He requires for sin: eternal death
 - They give no attention to the cross of Christ, nor the atonement of His blood sacrifice, nor God’s expectations that His people have been bought with a price and must now put aside sin and live a life that is holy and pleasing
 - Instead, they preach God loves everyone regardless of the condition of their

heart, that He wants us to be rich and that “our best life is now” rather than in the glory of His presence

- On the other side, some preach of God’s justice and wrath for sin without the grace of God’s forgiveness and mercy
 - This message works to expose and condemn our sin, always emphasizing we are sinners and in debt to God
 - They overlook that our righteousness before God is not obtained by our works but by faith alone in Christ’s work
 - Typically, this view emphasizes God’s judgment so much that they aspire to the role of judge themselves, judging and condemning others for sin
 - In place of God’s mercy and grace they teach legalism, because they confuse following human rules with pleasing God by faith
- These unbalanced messages are not the gospel and they do not yield true disciples
 - Those who preach only love without justice will attract unbelievers who seek approval for their sinful lifestyles and the desires of the flesh, and want God’s acceptance without repentance of sin
 - Those who preach only God’s wrath without grace will appeal to unbelievers who seek to be saved by their works rather than by humbling their hearts and relying upon Christ’s work alone
- God wants Abraham to be a man who can teach a household and a nation about the full nature of God so that the Gospel might be truly understood
- How does God accomplish this plan for Abraham?
 - Simply put: through prayer in action
 - God will reveal His intentions to Abraham’s heart so that Abraham may act to intercede through prayer
 - And by those prayers, God will do a work in Abraham as well

Gen. 18:20 And the LORD said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.

Gen. 18:21 “I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

Gen. 18:22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.

- In Abraham’s presence, the Lord announces His next stopping place
 - He and His messengers had visited Abraham, where they had been refreshed
 - And now the Lord announces He will make Sodom His next stop
 - Sodom and Gomorrah were two sister towns located in the fertile valley at the southern end of the Dead Sea
 - There is virtually no archeological evidence of their existence today, for

- reasons that will become apparent later in this story
 - But they were renowned in their day – and still today – for their depravity, in particular, unnatural sexual practices
 - Of course, the word sodomy comes from these practices
- We also remember this is the place Lot decided to settle when he separated from Abraham
 - As Abraham offered Lot the opportunity to select any place in the land, Lot saw the well watered land of Sodom and pitched his tents outside the city
 - Later, we discovered that Lot had moved into the city
 - So when the kings of the north invaded and captured the city, they took Lot and his family as well
- The Lord announced to Abraham that the sin of this city is exceedingly great and grave and He must visit the city to inspect the situation
 - The Hebrew words in v.20 carry important meaning
 - The word “great” in Hebrew means numerous, as in quantity
 - The word “grave” means abounding in honor or respected
 - Taken together, the Lord says the perversions of Sodom have become commonplace (everyone is doing it) and honored and respected (everyone says it’s OK)
 - We should take note that any time a culture begins to practice and accept sinful perversions, they are ripe for God’s intervention
 - How He chooses to respond is a matter of His timing and purposes, but even if He delays for a time, that shouldn’t offer comfort for the sinner
 - Judgment will come eventually for everyone, whether in death or at the Lord’s coming
 - In this case, God decided to bring earthly judgment today to train Abraham, so He says He will visit this city to learn if the reports are true
 - Like the question in vs.17-18, we know God doesn’t lack for understanding or knowledge of the situation
 - He knows how sinful these cities are already
 - So the Lord’s statement was given for a purpose, to accomplish a work in Abraham
 - And we can see that in the way the Lord sends messengers to investigate, yet He Himself stays with Abraham
 - It’s clear to us as we read this description that the Lord is waiting with Abraham for a reason
 - And that reason is so that Abraham will engage with the Lord in the conversation that follows
 - Before we look at the exchange, take a moment to notice how much the Lord loves His children and desires a relationship with them

- Do you see how the Lord is working all things here for Abraham's benefit?
 - He has planned his visit from the beginning to expose Abraham to God's work on earth
 - He visited with Abraham, ate with him, walked with him
 - And now reveals His heart for justice and His plans to inspect the city
 - Obviously, the Lord need not do any of these things
 - The Lord could have brought judgment upon the cities without so much as a word to Abraham
 - But the Lord longs to make Himself known to His children, and He does that by inviting us into His work
- And Abraham for his part received the Lord, ate with the Lord, walked with the Lord and listened to the voice of the Lord
 - As Christians we are given instruction in the New Testament to adopt all of these same practices
 - To receive the Lord and fellowship with Him through the Spirit in our hearts and through baptism
 - To eat with the Lord in remembrance of His sacrifice on the cross
 - To walk with the Lord in seeking the counsel of His word and obeying it
 - To listen to the voice of the Lord speaking through the Spirit in prayer and study
 - Having taken those steps, we will be in a position for the Lord to invite us into His work so that we may be trained up through it
 - But if these disciplines are lacking in our life, the work of the Lord goes on with or without us
 - He is dependent on no one, but He goes out of His way to include His children in His work
 - Because that is the heart of a father
- You may have heard me tell the story of father who has a young son
 - And the father intends to complete a project in his garage
 - He has an old car that needs some engine repair
 - And through a lifetime of experience working on engines, the father has learned many valuable lessons
 - He learned patience to practice the right techniques
 - He learned attention to detail
 - He learned how to organize his work and how to care for his tools
 - He learned how to overcome set backs and persevere when his first attempts fail
 - And now the father wants to share those learnings with his young son

- So the father puts on his work clothes and announces loudly so as to make sure his son will hear him, “I’m going to spend some time in the garage, and I sure could use some help...”
 - What does the father hope to see happen next?
 - He hopes his son will jump at the chance to be included in his work
 - He wants the son to recognize the signs of his father at work (i.e., the clothes, the tools in his hands, the announcement)
 - And he wants the son to accept the invitation
- The son could choose to ignore the signs
- Or the son could recognize there was work going on yet simply decline to join in
- In either case, the father’s work will be done anyway
 - But what a shame that the son would lose an opportunity to join his father
 - He never receives the lessons the father was prepared to teach
 - He forgoes the maturing opportunity that these experiences will produce
 - Most of all, what a shame that the son would forfeit an opportunity to build a closer relationship with his father
- That’s what’s at stake for us as sons (and daughters) of our Father in Heaven
 - If we’re willing to be honest with ourselves, we know how to recognize the Father at work
 - We see the telltale signs all around us
 - God steps into our day with an announcement that His work is at hand and He invites us to participate with Him
 - Sometimes He speaks through a church announcement or mission trip or volunteer request where we have opportunity to serve
 - Sometimes it’s a job change or personal tragedy
 - Sometimes it’s a coworker or a friend who asks us for advice
 - Sometimes it’s a prayer request
 - Sometimes it’s a knock at the door, literally
 - And when we see these opportunities, we can stay silent or we can jump in
 - The choice is ours, as are the blessings

- When we last met, we left Abraham and the Lord standing together on a hillside overlooking the Arabah valley below the Dead Sea
 - Some 25 miles to the southeast lie the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - These cities were among the most sinful, the most depraved of any places ever known on earth
 - So evil were these towns that the Lord decided to make examples of them
 - Moments earlier the Lord dispatched the two angels who had accompanied Him to Abraham's tent, into the cities
 - In Abraham's presence, the Lord instructed the angels to investigate reports of the great wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah
 - And if these reports were true, the Lord would take action against the cities
 - This was the plan the Lord announced before Abraham, but we noted in our last lesson that the Lord was already certain of the sin in the cities
 - Therefore His angels were not visiting the cities merely to confirm the reports
 - They were traveling with another purpose entirely, one which becomes evident later in our story
 - And likewise, the Lord's comments in Abraham's hearing revealed His true intentions
 - The Lord wanted to show Abraham what would happen next and why it must happen
 - So the Lord could teach Abraham important lessons he must understand if he is to raise a nation according to God's desires
 - Moreover, the Lord wants to give Abraham the opportunity to join in the Lord's work through prayer
- We'll begin reading today in v.22, just as the Lord and Abraham are left alone to contemplate the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah

Gen. 18:22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.

Gen. 18:23 Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Gen. 18:24 "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?"

Gen. 18:25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

- As this scene begins, we find the Lord standing alone with Abraham
 - And it's clear that the Lord has remained here in Abraham's presence to allow

- opportunity for this conversation
 - The Lord has determined to show Abraham what He will do in Sodom
 - And now comes the conversation the Lord intended to have with Abraham
- But the Lord waits for Abraham to begin the conversation
 - The Lord has revealed Himself to Abraham and He has revealed His plans
 - And now it falls to Abraham to respond and join the work
- What choices did Abraham have?
 - Abraham could have chosen to stand silently, effectively remaining on the sidelines, while God's work went forward
 - But we know God wants Abraham to get involved, hence the Lord's decision to reveal His plans as He did
 - How could Abraham respond?
 - The Lord has revealed His plans in such a way that only one response is possible
- The Lord announced that He was prepared to bring judgment against the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah if the angels found their depravity to be true
 - Abraham knows of the depravity of these cities
 - After all, if the news of their depravity has reached to Heaven, then certainly the news traveled a few miles away to Abraham
 - He knows that these cities will be found guilty as charged when the angels visit
 - And he makes the correct and obvious conclusion: the cities would be destroyed by God's wrath
 - Earlier, these cities had come under attack by a powerful ruling authority
 - The kings of the north came to judge the cities for their rebellion against the kings' authority
 - The cities were laid waste, and everyone in the city was taken away
 - Even Abraham's own relative Lot and Lot's family had been caught up in the calamity
 - But Abraham intervened to save the city
 - Not to save the king and people of Sodom, for they deserved the judgment from the kings
 - Rather, Abraham intervened – with God supporting him – to rescue Lot, who was unfairly included in the judgment
 - Now here again, the city is about to face judgment, but this time from the ultimate authority
 - There is no force or king greater than the Lord
 - So if Abraham is to rescue his nephew again, he can't assemble his men for battle

- Instead, Abraham will have to appeal to the Lord Himself
 - And in doing so, Abraham once again becomes the man intervening for the sake of Lot and his family
- So as Abraham contemplates the Lord's wrath upon a depraved and unrepentant city, he worries about the fate of Lot and in v.2 he drew near to the Lord
 - This is essentially prayer, a petition placed before the Lord
 - Whether the Lord is seated in Heaven or standing next to us, it makes no difference
 - We draw near to Him when we petition Him, placing our requests before Him
 - Abraham begins to speak with the Lord in the form of questions
 - He asks the Lord if He will indeed (or also) sweep away the righteous with the wicked?
 - The city of Sodom is undoubtedly filled with unrighteous
 - And they are deserving of God's judgment
 - In this case, the judgment is earthly...the destruction of the city and the loss of their earthly lives
 - But then that will lead to their eternal judgment in a future day
 - Nevertheless, the sweeping manner of destruction will stand as an example of how God responds to rebellion
 - Knowing God's actions will create a perception among men, Abraham seizes on an opportunity to rescue Lot once again
 - He asks the Lord to consider the example He will create if He appears to treat wickedness and righteousness in the same way?
 - What will people say if the righteous are swept away in the same judgment with the wicked?
 - Even though the righteous enter into a glorious eternity after death, nevertheless the world will perceive the Lord to have been unjust
 - Abraham appeals to God's perfect character and name
 - He asks if the Lord would risk His reputation by treating both the righteous and the unrighteous alike?
 - Notice in v.25 Abraham says, shouldn't the Judge of the earth be seen as One Who deals justly?
- Abraham is praying or petitioning the Lord in exactly the right way here
 - Abraham's appeal to the Lord is based on an expectation that the Lord will act in ways consistent with His character and nature
 - This the foundation of effective prayer
 - We are told in Scripture to seek for His will, not our will
 - The model Jesus gave us begins by calling to mind the holiness of God's "name", which means His nature and very being

- Then Jesus says we should call for the Father's kingdom and His purpose to be done, not our will
- James echoes these expectations

James 4:2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

- If we petition the Lord with wrong, worldly motives, we should expect Him to refuse our requests
- Because His desire is to see us following Him and His plan
- Moses made the right choice when he prayed to the Lord in the desert

Num. 14:11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?"

Num. 14:12 "I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they."

Num. 14:13 But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up this people from their midst,

Num. 14:14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people, for You, O LORD, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

Num. 14:15 "Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say,

Num. 14:16 'Because the LORD could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.'

Num. 14:17 "But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared,

Num. 14:18 'The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.'

Num. 14:19 "Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

Num. 14:20 So the LORD said, "I have pardoned them according to your word;

- The Lord gave Moses the opportunity to become the father of a new nation

- While this possibility might have appealed to Moses' pride, it wouldn't have been consistent with the Lord's glory
- So Moses appealed to the Lord's character and to His reputation among the nations, and the Lord responded
- And when we pray for the Lord's will and His glory and His name to be magnified, then we are praying in the right way
- Abraham's specific prayer request was that if 50 righteous exist in the city, would the Lord wipe the city away?
 - We can see the wheels turning in Abraham's mind, can't we?
 - He wants to save Lot and his family
 - But for some reason, Abraham is afraid to ask for this specific result
 - He doesn't say, please save Lot's righteous family
 - Instead, Abraham asks for the entire city to be saved if 50 righteous live in the city

Gen. 18:26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."

- Of course, we can take the Lord at His word
 - Had Abraham stopped here and 50 were found, the city would not have been destroyed
- This is exactly the work that the Lord wanted to see from His servant Abraham
 - A prayer that petitions the Lord to move in ways that are consistent with His character
 - And by this petition, Abraham begins to align himself with that work of God, exhibiting the Lord's purposes in his own desires
- But remember our story of the father and the young son working on an old car in the garage?
 - The father wants his son to work with him, but he also expects the son will be clumsy and unfamiliar with the process
 - So when the son grabs the wrong tool or tightens the nut when he should have loosened it, the father just smiles and waits for his son to discover his mistake
- And so the Lord waits as well, as Abraham discovers his error
 - What if there aren't 50 righteous people in Sodom?
 - Knowing the depravity of the city, it's entirely likely that the city may have fewer than 50 people who follow the Lord
 - If so, Abraham will fail to save Lot as he hoped
- So Abraham wonders if he can get the Lord to agree to a change in terms

- And thus begins the most remarkable example of bargaining with God in the entire Bible

Gen. 18:27 And Abraham replied, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.

Gen. 18:28 “Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?” And He said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”

Gen. 18:29 He spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty.”

Gen. 18:30 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

Gen. 18:31 And he said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.”

Gen. 18:32 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.”

Gen. 18:33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

- Abraham draws near the Lord for a second time
 - I find it interesting that the Lord was still standing and listening throughout this exchange
 - He invited Abraham into this exchange and encouraged it by His presence and patience
 - It's clear that Abraham felt once he had set the pattern for his petition that he was bound to it
 - He asked God to spare the entire city if a certain number of righteous could be found in the city
 - And so as Abraham felt the need to improve his odds for Lot's sake, he moves in increments from 50 to 45 to 40 to 30 to 20 to 10
 - The readers know what Abraham is truly seeking: to save Lot
 - And we're as struck by Abraham's persistence and boldness as we are by his obtuseness
 - Why didn't he just ask that the righteous in Lot's family be spared?
 - Perhaps it was because Abraham wasn't sure how much righteousness existed in Lot's family?
 - In fact, what does it say about righteous Lot that Abraham felt the need to bargain down so low?

- Lot has been living in the city for nearly a quarter of a century
 - We know him to be a representative of the living God, an ambassador for the Lord living among the reprobate
- Surely, Lot has managed to rescue a few along the way?
 - He has his wife and children and their future husbands
 - And what about friends, business associates, neighbors?
 - Abraham seemed to understand that Lot hadn't been very persuasive
 - He only felt comfortable when he reached 10
- Watching Abraham bargain in this way, we learn several valuable lessons concerning prayer and witnessing
 - First, when we pray we are to pray specifically
 - John told us to pray specifically in His will

1John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

- And as Jesus said, the Father knows what we need before we ask
 - So ask specifically, in the Father's will, and in accordance with His character
- Abraham wanted Lot and his family saved
 - But he asked for the city to be spared, which really wasn't what Abraham wanted
 - And he asked for this to happen only if a certain number of righteous were present in the city
 - His request talked around the real point and forced him into a negotiation when one wasn't needed
 - Yet still we marvel at the patience of the Lord
 - He entertained all of Abraham's requests without showing the least bit of displeasure
 - If anything, the Lord was pleased to see His servant working so hard to appeal to the Lord
- This gives us our second lesson: pray boldly
 - Abraham approached the Lord without fear, expecting to see his boldness rewarded, not rebuked
 - He appealed to God's character but wasn't afraid to ask and ask again
 - But even Abraham fell short eventually
 - Abraham stopped at 10, probably because he assumed it was good enough
 - Could he have gone farther?
 - Abraham stopped asking before the Lord stopped agreeing

- When you pray, be bold
 - Name your request plainly
 - Be sure it's inline with God's character and nature and purposes
 - And don't give up on God...be persistent
- Finally, we learn something about Lot
 - He was a righteous man, but he lived a sorry life of faith
 - He has consistently chosen the world over living a life for the Lord
 - When he separated from Abraham, he was attracted by the well-watered valley of Sodom
 - He traded the testimony of living in tents for the worldly security of the city of Sodom
 - And he has been caught up in the troubles that come upon the world
 - Many believers over the centuries have followed in Lot's footsteps
 - Most make no excuses for their choices
 - They prefer to earn the world's approval and gain a name for themselves here
 - Rather than earning the Lord's approval and earning eternal riches through their earthly sacrifices
 - But others believe they think themselves wiser than Lot
 - They choose to unite themselves with the world, but as missionaries of sorts
 - A marriage to an unbeliever, a business partnership with an unbeliever, fellowship with a unbiblical church community, a friendship with a worldly and unbelieving friend
 - And they tell themselves that they can be the influence to bring faith and godliness
 - If this is truly God's call, then they can expect to go in His power and see the fruit He has intended
 - But if God is not giving this specific call, then beware
 - Lot probably told himself similar lies
 - He probably told himself he could do more for the Lord if he lived in the city
 - He could witness to the Lord while living among the people of Sodom
 - But he was simply making excuses for his own desires
 - The reality is quite different
 - The Bible makes clear that we do our best work for God when we stand apart from the world
 - Jesus told us to be salt and light in the world but He asked, what good is salt if it has lost its saltiness?

- Yes, we are to reach out to the world to bring them the Good News
 - But we are most effective in bringing that message when it comes from a source as distinctive as the message itself
 - We cannot expect the world to take much interest in our message when the messenger lives a life no different than their own
- Some might argue that we must identify with the ones we are trying to reach, and that is very true
 - But we may only identify in ways that don't compromise our identity in Christ
 - We can learn their languages, eat their foods, live in their towns
 - But we cannot be mistaken for one of them, especially as it relates to following the Lord and His word
- Lot lived in Sodom for 25 years but, as we'll soon see, he couldn't convert his whole family much less the city
 - And because he chose to identify more closely with the city rather than with his Lord, he will pay a dear price when the Lord's angels come calling
 - Lot learned the lessons we all should remember: we can't make the world holy by our association
 - But it can make us worldly
- As Paul taught:

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2Cor. 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

**“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

2Cor. 6:17 “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

**“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will welcome you.**

- As we move into Chapter 19, and since I've been away, we should probably take a moment to remember what we've covered recently
 - In Chapter 18, God is teaching Abraham to understand better God's character and nature
 - He wants Abraham to be prepared to raise a people who would know and follow the Lord God
 - What's He teaching Abraham?
 - God is a God of both mercy and justice, lovingkindness and wrath, grace and judgment
 - God will hold the unrighteous under penalty for their sin
 - And He will grant mercy to His children by faith and rescue them from the coming judgment
 - And what better way to teach those lessons than to allow Abraham to see God at work in all those ways in the neighboring cesspools of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - For inside those cities Abraham knew there were both sinners and saints
 - Men who perverted God's creation and at least one man who stood opposed to sin
 - And so God announces – in Abraham's presence – that He will judge the city
 - And the rest of that encounter fell to Abraham to respond
 - And Abraham did respond, praying that the Lord would spare the entire city should a handful (10 people) of righteous be found in the city
 - The Lord agreed, but the request was really the wrong one for Abraham's sake
 - He wanted to save Lot and his family, but he didn't ask specifically for that outcome
 - But we understand that God will turn all things to good, so we await to see what God will do with Abraham's request

Gen. 19:1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.

Gen. 19:2 And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square."

Gen. 19:3 Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

- As Chapter 19 opens, you might have noticed similarities to Chapter 18 in the way this

chapter begins

- For example, as Chapter 18 opened we found Abraham sitting in the doorway of his tent
 - The tent of Abraham has become a symbol in our study of Abraham's trust in and reliance upon God's promises
 - Hebrews tells us that Abraham steadfastly remained a nomad living in tents
 - This was his way of testifying to the culture that he was willing to wait for his reward in a heavenly future
 - Lot, on the other hand, is sitting in the gate of the city
 - The gate of a city was a multi-chambered room built within the entrance of the city wall
 - People who came from outside to conduct business with the city would be allowed into the city gate to meet with magistrates or other officials
 - So to "sit in the gate" meant to officiate as a city judge or other leader
 - Lot wasn't living a testimony of resting in the Lord; he was living a life that embraced the world
- Notice the next parallel in the way Lot greets the angels
 - He rose from his place in the city and bowed down to meet them
 - Did Lot recognize them as angels? Probably not at first, like Abraham before him
 - It was likely unusual for men to visit Sodom given its reputation for sexual perversion
 - Any man venturing into this city was asking for serious trouble
 - So Lot was probably trying to coax the men into accompanying him to safety
 - Perhaps this was Lot's reason for greeting them with such haste
 - Perhaps he was intent on rescuing any person who entered the city unaware of the danger
 - In fact, that could explain Lot's interest in sitting in the gate
 - Perhaps he was serving in this role precisely to intercept potential victims and warn them or rescue them
 - Lot for his part may have been given this prominent position after his uncle Abraham had saved the city
- So Lot extends an offer to the angels that they would stay with him and eat
 - Abraham extended a different offer, but he did so for different reasons
 - In Abraham's case, he wanted the honor and blessing to host a visitor
 - And after Abraham realized he was hosting the Lord and angels, he was undoubtedly grateful to have been visited

- Lot extends his invitation to preserve the visitors' honor
 - The difference in these two accounts leaves us with the impression that energy and blessing are flowing in opposite directions
 - For Abraham, his pious obedient life had lead to a peaceful rest in his tent, ready to receive the Lord and receive His blessing
 - But Lot is sitting in the city, working in the world, and anxious to give something of blessing to the Lord's messengers
- Which person would you rather be?
 - The answer is obvious, isn't it?
- When Abraham made his offer, the Lord agreed
 - But when Lot made his offer, the angels initially answered no
 - This causes Lot to urge them even more strongly to stay with him
 - Finally, they agreed
 - Again, Lot has to expend greater energy
 - Throughout this story, take note of how hard Lot must work to obtain the things that come easily to Abraham
- Finally, notice that here Lot serves unleavened bread to his guests
 - Unleavened bread resembles a cracker, since it doesn't have yeast and isn't given time to rise
 - But in Chapter 18, Sarah is told to make bread cakes, including kneading the bread
 - This indicates a bread that rises into a cake, which requires many hours of preparation
 - Lot is under the stress and pressure to move the meal along quickly for fear that their evening will be interrupted
 - Abraham was calm and Lot was in a hurry
 - The contrast is so remarkable, especially since we know both men were men of faith
 - Both knew the Lord and trusted in His promises by faith, and yet each lived such different lives

Gen. 19:4 Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; Gen. 19:5 and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."

- The evening was late, and it was nearing time for sleep when Lot's house was surrounded
 - The men of the city were at Lot's house seeking the visitors

- Clearly, Sodom didn't get visitors very often, and when it did the news spread quickly
 - Within a few hours, the men of the city had organized and come to the house to accost the guests
 - The degree of depravity is truly stunning
 - Even today we rarely if ever see this kind of universal depravity
 - Truly this town had reached the depth of human sin
- It's particularly sad to see that the group included both the young and the old men
 - Not even age had brought wisdom to this city
- From outside Lot's home they call to him demanding to see the visitors
 - And they say they want to have relations, which means they intend to gang rape these men
 - This is something we only expect to see in a prison
 - Now we see more clearly why Lot was so concerned for these men and was working so hard to keep them and feed them quickly
- How did Lot arrive at this kind of life?
 - He entered into a bargain with the world
 - In return for allowing him to live among them and enjoy their worldly successes and comforts, Lot traded his peace of mind and the quiet life of a man of faith
 - Paul commands believers to make it our ambition to lead a quiet life (1 Thess. 4:11)
 - And while Lot's experience is certainly an extreme example, it's an accurate representation of the challenges believers face when they marry themselves to the world
 - And to be specific, Lot made choice after choice to live like the unbeliever rather than to live in ways that typified God's people
 - He adopted their lifestyle, he placed himself in harm's way
 - And all the while Abraham made opposite choices
 - Coming to a story like Lot and seeing the contrast between Lot and Abraham compels us to consider our own life choices
 - Every day we face choice after choice to either conform to God's word or conform to the world
 - Some occasions we choose for one and other times we choose for the other
 - Have you noticed that as you chase the world, life gets more hectic, more stressful, more challenging?
 - Obviously, following God can bring its own challenges and trials
 - Obedience isn't a guarantee of an easy life

- Nevertheless, Scripture promises that the trials that come with faithful obedience will only serve to grow us and strengthen us, leaving us lacking nothing

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- The troubles that worldly living produces, on the other hand, will wear us down, take our energy and choke off our spiritual maturity
- Abraham is strong, steady, speaking with God and listening to His counsel
 - The Lord is inviting Abraham to know Him better and join in His work
 - And the Lord is bringing blessing to Abraham even when Abraham takes a misstep here and there
- Lot on the other hand is frazzled, fearful, stressed and tired from the never-ending effort to compensate for the sin of those he has surrounded himself with
 - The Lord isn't spending time with Lot, as is evident by the need to send these messengers on a fact finding tour
 - And when the Lord does visit Lot, it's a rescue mission in which Lot is called to leave the world behind

Gen. 19:6 But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him,

Gen. 19:7 and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly.

Gen. 19:8 "Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof."

Gen. 19:9 But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door.

- Now we reach the most disturbing part of Lot's story (at least so far)
 - Lot is determined to save his guests from the humiliation – to say nothing of the violence – of this mob's attack
 - It's not hard to understand Lot's desire to protect his guests
 - But in the ancient east, it was supremely important for a host to care for the wellbeing of his guests
 - Lot understood this requirement all too well

- He is determined to preserve his social responsibility and personal dignity
- So he tries to go outside to reason with the unruly crowd
 - There are some important details in this passage
 - First, Lot calls these men his brothers
 - This is a revealing term
 - Lot has come to identify with these men as his brothers in some sense
 - Clearly, Lot isn't related to this men, so we know he didn't mean the term in the sense of physical brother
 - In Genesis 13:8 Abraham had said he and Lot were brothers, in the sense that they were kin and should show love and regard for one another
 - But now Lot calls these evil men of Sodom "brothers"
 - Not even Jesus was willing to call his earthly family His brothers

Matt. 12:47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."

Matt. 12:48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

Matt. 12:49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers!

Matt. 12:50 "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

- But then in what way did he mean it?
 - Were these his friends?
 - Look at their response to his rebuke
 - They quickly distanced themselves from him
 - They called him an alien
 - While Lot wanted to call them brothers, they reminded him he wasn't one of them
 - Then they pushed him forcefully to go past him into the house
- Obviously, they weren't his brothers in any way
 - It's becoming clear that Lot has forgotten which family is truly his family, the one where he should find his identity
 - But they were never fooled
- Don't ever forget that as much as we might want to identify with friends in the unbelieving world, they will never accept us unless we leave behind everything that identifies us with our faith
 - The moment we start again to act according to our spiritual values they will disown

us in an instant

- Our spiritual outlook will bring conviction and cause friction
- Ironically, we are the ones who are fooled, thinking we can find common ground
- Comically, Lot asks the crowd not to act wickedly
 - What possibility does this statement have of persuading the crowd?
 - If simply asking wicked people not to act wickedly worked, we wouldn't need jails
 - If this worked, why didn't he ask them a long time ago?
 - Obviously, it doesn't work and it didn't work here
 - Lot is unwilling to acknowledge that the people he has chosen to identify with are not his family and not his friends and do not share his values
- And then finally, we see the depths to which Lot is willing to share in the depravity of this city
 - Unbelievably, Lot offers the crowd his two virgin daughters instead of the men
 - As the father of an unmarried teenage daughter, I find Lot's statement incomprehensible
 - What was Lot thinking?
 - The first and obvious answer is that he viewed this option as the lessor of two evils, but that's still a pretty poor answer
 - How would he explain this decision to his daughters?
 - Most likely, Lot has weighed the two possible courses of action in terms of how it impacted his personal reputation
 - If he allows the guests to be raped, his reputation as a host will be ruined which would be a profound embarrassment
 - Notice his reference to the men having come "under my roof"
 - If his daughters were assaulted, on the other hand, he and his family would be perceived as victims of a crime
 - His daughters would have been disgraced, unlikely to ever find a husband and probably injured or pregnant
 - But at least Lot would have preserved his social honor
 - And it would be better for Lot to allow his daughters to become victims than to suffer social disgrace himself
- Whatever Lot was thinking, this offer speaks volumes about the state of the man's spirit and the corruption evident in his walk with the Lord
 - Lot was saved by God's grace, according to the word of God, but he was a sorry excuse of a follower of God
 - Lot is an example of what happens to men saved by grace but captivated by the world
 - I'm sure the first day Lot arrived in Sodom he wouldn't have offered his

daughters to a strange crowd of men

- We have to wonder how he avoided such an assault himself?
 - What kind of bargains did he have to make to stay safe from the homosexual rapists?
 - Given he was willing to offer his children, what wouldn't he have done to remain at peace in this city?
- Over the 25 years he's been in this town, the constant barrage of sin has worn him down, and now he's become the kind of man willing to trade his daughters for strangers
 - Let Lot's long slow fall be a reminder for all of us
 - Bargaining with the world is like sleeping with the enemy
 - You have crawled into bed with something that wants to extinguish the light within you and crush your spirit
 - And you have to learn to sleep with one eye open, watching for the attacks
 - And as you grow weary in the fight, you begin to lose ground like Lot did
 - The longer we play the game, the more tired we get, and eventually the world wins
 - Give yourself over to Hollywood, and they hypnotize you
 - Sell your soul to the mall or the office or the golf course and they will also take your peace of mind and your spiritual energy
 - Like the seed that grows up around thorns that choke it off (Luke 8)
 - If we associate ourselves with vice and vulgarity and crudeness and promiscuity and paganism and occultism and brutality and materialism, just watch what it does to our spiritual condition over time
 - Maybe the first year or two things go swell
 - But come back in 25 years, and maybe you too will be willing to sell your family to preserve your pride and chase away the demons in your life
- Why even go there?
 - Reflect on Abraham and his life instead
 - He wasn't perfect, but he stayed in his tent of dependence on the Lord
 - He rested in the Lord
 - The Lord's provision was always enough
 - The Lord's voice was all the praise he required
 - The Lord's visit was a lifetime of honor
 - And his peace came from looking to eternity for his fulfillment

A family had twin boys whose only resemblance to each other was their looks. If one felt it was too hot, the other thought it was too cold. If one said the TV was too loud, the other claimed the volume needed to be turned up. Opposite in every way, one was an eternal optimist, the other a doom and gloom pessimist.

Just to teach them a lesson, for Christmas their father loaded the pessimist son's room with every imaginable toy and game, while the optimist son's room he loaded with a pile of horse manure.

That night the father passed by the pessimist's room and found him sitting amid his new gifts crying bitterly.

"Why are you crying?" the father asked.

"Because my friends will be jealous, I'll have to read all these instructions before I can do anything with this stuff, I'll constantly need batteries, and my toys will eventually get broken." answered the pessimist twin.

Passing the optimist twin's room, the father found him dancing for joy in the pile of manure. "What are you so happy about?" he asked.

To which his optimist twin replied, "There's got to be a pony in here somewhere!"

- Before rejoining Lot as he stands between the hostile crowds and the visiting angels in his house, we need to find our “pony” in this story
- Let's begin by remembering Abraham's prayer for his nephew
 - Abraham asked the Lord to spare the city if ten righteous were found
 - The Lord agreed, but we're left wondering what will happen to Lot and his family
 - At first it seems likely that there would be at least ten in the entire city who knew the Lord
 - Lot and his family are at least four, perhaps as many as six if his daughters have taken husbands
 - But will there be ten?
 - And if ten aren't found, will God hold Abraham to the original bargain thereby destroying Lot with the city?
 - If so, what kind of lesson will God be teaching Abraham about God's character?

- Secondly, there's the question of the power of prayer to influence God in the course of these events
 - Sodom and Gomorrah are certainly deserving judgment and the Lord is already determined to judge them for their sin
 - But when God agreed to honor Abraham's request, He seemed to leave the outcome of the cities in doubt
 - How does Abraham's prayer work side by side with God's sovereignty?
 - Is Abraham determining the outcome of Sodom and Gomorrah or is it God?
- Finally, we should remember that this account of Lot and Abraham offers a stunning picture of God's plan for a future judgment
 - As we observed in earlier chapters, Abraham can be seen to represent Hebrews while his believing nephew Lot can represent the Gentile believer
 - Lot is blessed by his association with Abraham, as we will see

Gen. 19:9 But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door.

Gen. 19:10 But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.

Gen. 19:11 They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.

Gen. 19:12 Then the two men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place;

Gen. 19:13 for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

- We ended in v.9 last week as Lot confronted the crowd of men only to have them call him an alien
 - Then they threatened to accost him
 - In fact, the tone of their statements would seem to suggest that he has so far avoided their mistreatment
 - But tonight they intend to abuse Lot
 - His time in this depraved city has run out
 - So the angels (Moses is still calling them men) open the door, reach out and drag Lot back in, shutting the door after him
 - Finally in v.11 the supernatural power of these angels is revealed in the text
 - They strike the crowd with blindness

- The word for blindness is a unique Hebrew term used only in relationship to an angelic power
 - It literally means to cause confusion, probably a dazed mental state, combined with a lack of vision
 - Notice the men were still determined to find a way into the house, even though they were blinded supernaturally
 - You might think that just the sudden occurrence of the blindness would have been enough by itself to stop the attack
 - Can we doubt how utterly depraved these men had become?
- At this point in the account, the story takes a sharp turn
 - The angels clearly begin to focus on destroying the city as judgment for its wickedness
 - They haven't taken a census or examined every person
 - Yet they are ready to begin the destruction
 - In fact, they state plainly that the Lord sent them to destroy the city
 - We could read this statement to suggest that the judgment was always to be the result for the city
 - So it wasn't necessary to seek for ten righteous
 - The angels seem to know that there is no point
 - They tell Lot to get his family ready to leave the city before the destruction
 - We know he has at least two daughters and a wife
 - But the daughters are betrothed to be married
 - Their future spouses are called sons-in-law since they were betrothed
 - So Lot was preparing to allow his daughters marry into the men of this city, despite what we all witnessed happening
 - What kind of future awaited this family in Sodom?
 - Lot's decision to live in this city has done so much damage already, and it would have only been worse
 - Why do the angels make this request of Lot?
 - In fact, why is Lot being given any warning at all?
 - It's clear that there aren't ten righteous in this city, so we know the Lord will go forward with His plan to destroy the city
 - We're watching the Lord at work through His angels to bring grace to His children
 - And He's working through the angels as His ministers to the elect

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- Now we see why the angels were involved at all
 - We wondered back in Chapter 18 why the Lord was engaged in this fact-finding trip which we knew wasn't necessary
 - God already knew the condition of the city and He knew the city's final outcome would be destruction, as it should be
 - We also knew that it was part of God's plan to teach Abraham about Himself
 - And it was an opportunity for God to invite Abraham into God's work through prayer
 - So God appears with His angels, already determined to bring judgment to Sodom and Gomorrah
 - And the Lord purposely reveals His plan to Abraham
 - Abraham recognized the events unfolding around him, recognized the urgency to get involved, and prayed for the Lord to spare Lot
 - But Abraham used imperfect words, praying for the city to be saved rather than asking for Lot to be saved
 - Makes no difference, because the Lord knows His heart
 - And as Jesus Himself told us concerning our prayers:

Matt. 6:8 “So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

- And these angels are now standing in Sodom even though they had no real reason to visit in the form of men
 - And as we'll come to understand in the next passage, their true function is to minister to the righteous in the city

Gen. 19:14 Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, “Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city.” But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

Gen. 19:15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.”

Gen. 19:16 But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.

- Lot's received the warning from the angels, and he was surely convinced as to their angelic identities having just witnessed the blindness of the crowd
 - So he takes their warning seriously and proceeds to call upon his family members

- His wife and daughters are still living in his home, since the weddings haven't taken place yet
- But his sons-in-law are living in their own homes
 - So Lot calls upon each of them during the night
- When Lot delivers the truth, the sons-in-law assume he's joking
 - How sad is this situation for Lot?
- Remember back in Chapter 18, we considered what it said about Lot's testimony that his uncle Abraham needed to bargain God down to ten righteous
 - We noted that Lot has been living in this city for nearly 25 years as a representative of the living God
 - As a man who knows the living God and trusts in His promises, we would have expected Lot to have been a more powerful influence in that city
 - Peter tells us that Lot was concerned by what he saw there

2Pet. 2:7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2Pet. 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

- Nevertheless, Lot was unable to bring revival to the city
- But the the situation turns out to be even worse than Abraham thought
 - Lot hasn't even been able to influence his future sons-in-law into following the Lord
 - What's more, Lot's own authority in matters of God and God's word is so weak that when he brings an urgent warning late at night, the men laugh it off
 - What a sad commentary on Lot's testimony in this city
 - As we said last week, to play with fire is to be burned
 - And while this world will tolerate us living among it, the price we pay for getting too attached is severe
- While we have good reason to fault Lot for his choices and the weakness of his testimony, we need to be careful
 - We can't assign him the blame for the unbelief of those around him
 - The state of a person's heart toward God is not something we control
 - We can't even set our own heart upon God and His word until and unless the Lord permits us to hear and follow
 - So clearly Lot wasn't responsible for the unbelief of his sons-in-law
 - Yet we can't deny what we see God doing everyday around us
 - He delights to use our witness and our persistence in presenting the truth in love to persuade hardened hearts to receive the truth

- We can't pretend that our efforts are unimportant or irrelevant in the cause of building the Kingdom
 - Nor can we take credit when our message finds a receptive heart
- Having failed to persuade his sons-in-law, Lot returns to his home in the pre-dawn hours of the morning
 - Lot is conflicted about what to do next
 - He believes that judgment is coming as promised and he wants to bring his entire family with him
 - But with his sons-in-law refusing to believe his warning, Lot is paralyzed
 - He seems willing to risk his own destruction and the destruction of his family for no particular reason
 - Then the angels urged Lot once more to leave the city before judgment came
 - In fact, the angels tell Lot that the judgment is so imminent, they must leave now or they will be caught up in it
 - The effort taken by these angels to reach Lot tells us clearly that this was, in fact, the mission they were sent to accomplish
 - They angels didn't need to parade through the city as mortal men in order to make an evaluation
 - Their real mission was to save Lot, which was precisely what Abraham wanted, yet never asked for specifically
 - Now we see them working hard as those ministering spirits (as Hebrews calls them) trying to help this righteous man to make the right decision
 - Remarkably, we're told Lot hesitated
 - Hesitated? What in the world would cause a man to hesitate in light of what he knows is coming?
 - If God sent you an angel – and you knew it was an angel – and the angel told you to escape a certain death...
 - Would you hesitate?
 - What if the command to leave was so urgent that it necessitated leaving behind everything?
 - That's the condition that's been placed before Lot here
 - He's lived in this city for 25 years
 - What if I gave you that command right now?
 - Get up from where you're sitting, don't grab a thing, and begin walking out of town leaving everything behind
 - Could you do it?
- Jesus addressed this very issue on several occasions in the Gospels
 - First, Jesus taught that a willingness to leave the world behind was a legitimate test of faith

Luke 18:18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

Luke 18:20 “You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

Luke 18:21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

Luke 18:22 When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Luke 18:23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

Luke 18:24 And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

Luke 18:25 “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Luke 18:26 They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”

Luke 18:27 But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

Luke 18:28 Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You.”

Luke 18:29 And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

Luke 18:30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”

- This ruler left Jesus sad – he hesitated – because he wasn’t willing to believe that the riches of heaven are worth trading everything in this life
 - When Jesus then remarked that the allure of riches is a powerful barrier to faith, the disciples ask how anyone could be saved?
 - They recognized that everyone shares this same sin no matter how much we possess
 - We all want what we have and then some
 - Jesus said only by God’s power is it possible to save a man, but that those who follow Christ will gain much more than they lose
 - We know Lot has always had an eye for the finer things
 - He sought for the rich valley and later for life in the city
 - As a city leader, Lot must have amassed considerable wealth
 - Now he’s so attached to all he has that he’s ready to die for it

- Praise the Lord that He will remain faithful to His promises to us even as we are faithless to Him Who has saved us
 - Peter reminds us of this truth in recounting the story of Lot

2Pet. 2:6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;

2Pet. 2:7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2Pet. 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

2Pet. 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- The Lord rescued Lot while destroying the cities as examples
- And in v.9 Peter says that this story is proof that the Lord knows how to find a way to rescue the godly while keeping the unrighteous under punishment
- But take note of what the Lord is ready to do for us
 - Peter says the Lord rescues us from temptation
 - Lot is hesitating because he is tempted
 - He has been tempted by the world and he is tempted to stay one minute longer, hoping to find some other solution
 - Some compromise that allows him to keep everything while avoiding the judgment that is coming
 - But that bargain isn't possible
 - It's never been possible except in Lot's mind
 - But now is the moment of truth
- The angels see that Lot will not save himself, so they are forced to take action
 - They take each of Lot's family by the hand and bring him outside the city
 - The angels save Lot from the city, removing him from the temptation that held him in place
- And this was their mission: to save the righteous in the city
 - And that was Abraham's request though he didn't ask for it
 - Abraham wanted the Lord to relent in His judgment over Sodom and Gomorrah in order to save Lot and his family
 - But there weren't ten righteous, so the city will be destroyed – yet Lot will be saved
- The angels were sent to save Lot and his family, because God already knew how many would be saved and He planned a way to do it

- In fact, the angels each had two hands (since they appeared as men)
- And there were exactly four people who needed to be removed from the city
- Two angels means four hands: just the number God needed to save those He intended to save
- So when Abraham prayed to the Lord, did he accomplish anything?
 - He didn't change the Lord's plan to destroy the city
 - Though the Lord did agree to consider that plan if ten were found
 - On the other hand, the Lord did grant Abraham his desire
 - Even though Abraham didn't ask for it
 - Think about the wisdom and power of God to work through prayer
 - He knows what we want, is always already prepared to do the right thing, never changes His mind, yet allows us to see our prayers answered
 - And the whole time the purpose in our praying stays the same: to train us up in the character and nature and ways of the Lord

- Our study of Lot, Abraham's nephew, reaches its climax today
 - Lot received the warning of impending disaster for the city
 - He was told to gather his family and prepare to escape
 - He did his best to persuade his family but he couldn't persuade anyone
 - Finally, as Lot hesitated the angels stepped in to complete their mission to rescue Lot and his family
 - They grab Lot, his wife and his two daughters and pull them out of the city
 - But as we observed last week, the rescue the Lord provided was a rescue away from temptation, not destruction
 - Lot was paralyzed as he stood looking around at his world and all that it meant to him
 - He was so tempted by the world, he was unwilling to save himself in the face of God's coming judgment
 - And as Peter taught us last week, the Lord knows how to rescue the righteous from temptation
 - So Lot is set outside the city, and now that he is free from the temptation of his home and lifestyle, he has no reason not to leave
 - But he's still in harm's way, so he must act
 - And unfortunately, the love for the world that has captivated Lot and clouded his judgment is still operating in Lot's decisions

Gen. 19:15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city."

Gen. 19:16 But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.

Gen. 19:17 When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away."

Gen. 19:18 But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords!

Gen. 19:19 "Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die;

- Lot and his family sit in the fertile valley of Arabah just outside the city walls
 - Dawn has arrived, and the judgment from God is prepared
 - Today the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and all who dwell there will come to an end

- The destruction will be so complete, that even today archeologists debate the exact whereabouts of these cities
- As the angels prepare to leave and begin the destruction of the city, they give Lot another command to escape
 - Previously, they told Lot to leave the city so he could survive the judgment
 - Here again, they give Lot the same command
 - Specifically, they tell Lot that the entire valley lies in harm's way
 - They must move to higher ground, to the mountains
- Clearly, the angels didn't bring Lot far enough away to ensure his physical safety
 - They have left it to Lot to take that step
 - And now that he's been pulled away from temptation, he will find this decision much easier – or so he should
- From where Lot stands now, he has two routes for his escape
 - He could take his family and travel west, into the mountains of the Negev desert
 - This would be the logical place to go, since this is where his Uncle Abraham is sojourning
 - These mountains would be familiar ground, a place he has known from the time he lived there with Abraham
 - More importantly, he would be rejoining his relative, where he could expect to receive immediate support in Abraham's wealth
 - Lot's other choice would be to go east, to the Abarim mountains of Botzrah and Petra
 - But there is nothing there for Lot, except strangers and harsh conditions
 - Interestingly, Lot chooses neither
 - In v.18 Lot protests against the angels' instructions
 - He says "Oh no my lords"
 - Lot says he can't be expected to live in the mountains
 - Looking at Lot's request closely we can understand this request as a petition, a prayer
 - In some ways, Lot's prayer is similar to Abraham's prayer
 - He begins in v.19 making an appeal to God's character and mercy and promises
 - God has promised lovingkindness (a term of covenant) to Lot on the basis of faith
 - And God is showing himself true to that promise by His willingness to rescue Lot from Sodom
 - But quickly, Lot moves to a personal appeal
 - He says he can't be expected to live in the mountains because disaster will overtake me

- There is great irony in Lot's response
 - The angels of the Lord have told Lot, escape for your life
 - The word for life in Hebrew is *nephesh*, which means soul or life
 - The angels say Lot must leave the valley physically if he want to save his physical life
 - But the full sense of their command is more than merely preserving physical existence
 - The angels are also telling Lot to save his soul
 - They are telling him to act to preserve his eternal rewards, to ensure his good testimony on the day of his judgment
 - If Lot wants to save his soul, he must put this world behind him
 - We can see this by paying close attention to the angels' instructions
 - Do not look behind you
 - Looking behind doesn't increase his physical jeopardy
 - But it suggests longing for what you're leaving
 - Don't stay anywhere in the valley
 - The entire valley wasn't going to be destroyed, just the two cities
 - So remaining in the valley indicates an unwillingness to separate from this sinful world and all its influences
 - They want Lot to make a break from the world he united himself with
 - If he doesn't, he will suffer great physical and eternal loss
 - But in response, Lot says don't make me leave this world behind or great disaster will overtake me
 - The angels have been speaking of eternal jeopardy
 - And Lot raises the concern of physical and material jeopardy
 - The angels are focused on the eternal while Lot is still stuck in the temporal
- Lot has revealed his heart clearly, and it's not a pretty sight
 - Lot's only goal and focus in life is to maintain a relationship with the physical world, and he's blind to the eternal life that follows
 - Consequently, Lot is living for the here and now and the expense of the glory that is to be revealed
 - Paul came to an opposite conclusion
 - Speaking about the trials of life, Paul says they are insignificant compared to the glory we will see in eternity

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- How could we ever trade our eternal rewards for temporary ease and wealth and acceptance in this world?
- Paul joyfully traded a position of prominence and a life of wealth for the chance to glorify God in Christ and the opportunity to earn His approval in eternity

Phil. 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Phil. 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

Phil. 3:9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

Phil. 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Phil. 3:11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Phil. 3:12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Phil. 3:13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

Phil. 3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Paul said he counted everything, he traded everything he had in this world, counting it lost for the surpassing value of knowing Christ
 - He says he traded rubbish – literally dung – that he may press on for the goal of the prize which is found in Christ
 - By the context of Paul's statements, the word "prize" isn't salvation
 - This is the same world Paul uses in 1 Cor. 9:24 when he says:

1Cor. 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

- Paul is talking about an eternal inheritance or reward made available to the believer who serves God faithfully
 - And Paul traded the what the world offered – things that were merely dung – and by that trade he gained the opportunity to compete for heavenly riches
 - And Paul calls the Church to imitate him, to set aside anything that might hold us back from a life of obedience and service to God

Heb. 12:1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Heb. 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Sadly, Lot takes a different path

Gen. 19:20 now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved.”

Gen. 19:21 He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken.

Gen. 19:22 “Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar.

Gen. 19:23 The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

Gen. 19:24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven,

Gen. 19:25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

- Lot suggests he could exist comfortably in Zoar, a nearby town in the same valley
 - The name Zoar isn't spoken in the same breath as Sodom and Gomorrah, but it could have been
 - The three cities were part of five cities in close proximity in the valley
 - We have every reason to believe that all five shared many of the same sinful practices, though Sodom and Gomorrah have been immortalized by God's judgment
 - The kings of these five cities were the allies in Chapter 14 that came together to fight the kings of the north
 - So Lot is asking to remain attached to the same worldly influences that caused him this trouble
 - He is a carnal believer unwilling to separate from the world
 - And in typical fashion, Lot minimizes the impact of this compromise
 - Notice in v.20, Lot emphasizes the physical size of the town
 - He says it's small, just a little town
 - As if to say, it's not that important and not too much to ask, not too much to risk
 - Moses has been carefully drawing a contrast between Abraham and Lot, and it's coming into full view now

- Abraham's prayer minimized the number of righteous required to ensure God's rescue for his believing nephew
- Lot has tried to minimize the sin of an unrighteous city to ensure he could maintain a disobedient lifestyle
- Abraham sought to magnify God's glory through a righteous outcome
- Lot sought to magnify his earthly pleasure through a selfish outcome
- So what does the Lord do with a child like this?
 - Obviously, God could reject Lot's request, forcing Lot to do the right thing
 - The angels could drag him again into the mountains
 - But forcing Lot to move to the mountains doesn't solve the real problem in Lot's heart
 - Lot's heart is set against the will of God
 - God enters into a relationship with men to glorify Himself
 - And God intends to make Lot's life a witness to God's glory one way or another
 - So if Lot will not glorify God through obedience, God will use Lot as a negative example
 - He will grant Lot what he wishes to teach a lesson
 - Sometimes this is how the discipline of the Lord operates, and it's a sobering thought
 - Not every door God opens for us is intended to delight us
 - Some are intended to show us the error of our ways
 - We can be a witness for the Lord through our obedience or our life can become a wreck along the side of the road for others to slow down and see and learn from
 - In truth, each of us have a mixture of both kinds of witness in our lives, but the question is where are we headed from here?
- The angels grant Lot his request
 - Maybe we should ask the same question we asked when Abraham prayed: did Lot change God's mind?
 - The answer again is the same: no
 - The Lord revealed his intentions to Abraham in Chapter 18, which was to inspect and judge Sodom and Gomorrah
 - There was never any intention to destroy Zoar
 - So when Lot asked to flee there, the angels agree since it was not part of the judgment
 - But the angels remind Lot that he must flee his present location to avoid the coming judgment

- Showing yet again that saving Lot was the primary mission of the angels
- Then as the new day begins, God rained judgment down on Sodom and Gomorrah
 - The exact manner of judgment is a bit of a mystery, as it should be given it was a supernatural event
 - We can understand the term “fire” but we can’t understand how fire comes down from the sky
 - Secondly, the word brimstone is an unknown word
 - It comes from the same Hebrew word as gopher, as in gopher wood; the wood used in the ark
 - We don’t know what gopher wood was and we don’t know what brimstone is
 - But it doesn’t sound good
 - Whatever happened, it destroyed the cities to the point where virtually nothing remains
 - They were literally wiped off the map
 - Archeologists who have excavated the area have found evidence of five large ancient cities located on the eastern side of the southern end of the Dead Sea
 - Only one is still inhabited today, that is Zoar
 - These cities appear to have been very prosperous in their day, as their tombs appear to hold over a million skeletons
 - The area today is dominated by unusual rock formations high in sulphur, which is different from the surrounding geology
 - The message God sends by such a destruction is clear: God will judge sin utterly and completely
 - In this day God’s judgment was limited in scope and in time
 - God judged only two cities and only at a moment in time
 - But he wants us to learn a lesson from this example
 - In a day to come, God will repeat this judgment on a worldwide scale, eventually extinguishing the sinner forever

2Pet. 2:6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;

- While these cities are exhibited as examples for the ungodly, Lot is the Bible’s example for the believer who would walk in the ways of the world
 - But Lot’s failure to live a life that honors his witness, particularly as a spiritual leader in his home as a husband and father to his family, has terrible consequences
 - He and his family begin to walk toward Zoar

- But as he does, Lot's influence on his family comes full circle

Gen. 19:26 But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

- Lot's wife goes unnamed in Scripture
 - But her example lives on
 - She must have been taken from among the Sodomites, so Sodom is her home town
- But her union has left her without a faith in God's promises
 - And in the moment when she is tested, she reveals her true heart
- Jesus reminds us of this example when he taught the disciples about the power of God's judgment to separate the wheat from the chaff, the believer from the unbeliever

Luke 17:26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

Luke 17:27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

Luke 17:29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

Luke 17:31 "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.

Luke 17:32 "Remember Lot's wife.

Luke 17:33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

- Jesus says remember Lot's wife...remember her example
 - She was attached to Lot by marriage
 - And by that relationship we might have assumed she was in agreement with her husband in having faith in God's promises
 - That she was a saint
 - But Jesus tells us to remember her example as one who lost her life
 - She sought to save her physical, earthly life because she loved it more than the Lord

- And in making that choice, she revealed her true heart
- She was an unbeliever who lived for the world only
 - And her backward glance, in disobedience to the angels' orders, became God's mechanism to reveal her unbelieving heart
 - As Jesus said

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

- Why does God turn her to salt?
 - The Bible uses salt as a metaphor for spiritual witness to the world
 - As Jesus taught this same principle to His disciples

Matt. 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

- Salt is a seasoning that sharpens flavor, makes it more distinctive
 - Salt is also a preservative and a fertilizer
- In all these ways, salt pictures the effect of the believer in the world
 - We draw a distinction between God and the world, His ways and the world's ways
 - We stand apart from the world to show God's truth in the face of the world's lies
 - We are also a preservative in the sense that we are the remnant preserving God's promises during this time of waiting for Christ's return
 - Finally, we are a fertilizer, as God plants His word in the hearts of men, we help it grow through discipling and encouraging
- But if we don't maintain our saltiness, that is the strength of our witness and holy living, how can we serve the purposes God has decreed?
 - If we give God no other choice, He will make our lives into an example in the way of Lot's wife
 - We can stand as a witness by how we live our life or in how God ends our lives
 - Because Lot's wife wasn't a witness to the truth in her life, she becomes an example for evermore in her disobedience and death
 - We don't even know her name...yet still she is infamous

- We've been in our study of Abraham and Lot and Sodom for some time now
 - In fact it's been so long, we may have lost sight of what God is actually at work doing through these two chapters
 - First, we know that God set about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah to set an example for future generations of how God will judge sin
 - Secondly, we know God invited Abraham in on this plan to instruct Abraham concerning God's character and nature, so that Abraham might instruct future generations of Israel
 - Third, we know Abraham responded as God intended, praying for God to spare the righteous, and God agreed to Abraham's request
 - Then we watched as God did everything He promised, yet He still worked His plan exactly as He intended while maintaining perfect justice
 - The city was destroyed, the guilty received punishment, the righteous were rescued, and God kept His word with Abraham
 - Meanwhile, we also learned a great deal about the man Lot
 - We came to see him as a man of faith worn down by his association with the sinful world
 - As a man living a life of compromise and suffering great loss as a result, both in this world and in the next
 - And we witnessed God dealing with Lot as a Father deals with His children
 - He brought discipline and allowed the consequences of Lot's sin to rest upon him and his family
 - But nevertheless, God showed mercy to Lot in keeping with His character and His promise to Abraham
 - Through these events we also come to see a simple picture of how God will deal with Jewish and Gentile people in His plan for salvation
 - Just as God befriended the man Abraham, God has entered into a covenant with the descendants of Abraham, the Jewish people
 - God will remain true to His promises to that people
 - And just as Lot, the Gentile relative of Abraham, was blessed by his association with Abraham, so will Gentile people be blessed by their trusting in the promises God delivered to Israel
 - And just as God brought judgment against the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord promises to bring judgment upon the world upon His return
 - And just as God rescued the few righteous in Lot's family from the cities prior to their destruction, likewise God promises to rescue the few righteous Gentiles prior to the coming world judgment
 - And just as the rescue of Lot's family was accomplished by the ministry of angels, so will be the rescue of the righteous in the future day, as Paul describes:

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th. 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- We call this coming rescue of the Gentile church the Rapture or the Resurrection
 - Having seen the Lord's faithfulness in delivering disobedient Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we gain all the more assurance that the Lord will keep His word for our sakes
- We ended with Lot's wife having looked back and having turned to salt
 - Her true heart was exposed, and she suffered destruction like the rest of Sodom
 - And thus Lot's family has been reduced to just Lot and his two daughters, a worldly family alone in the world with nothing
 - But what of Abraham?
 - Our story began with the Lord's meeting with Abraham and Abraham's compelling prayer
 - So now that the city has been destroyed, what has Abraham learned?

Gen. 19:27 Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD;

Gen. 19:28 and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

Gen. 19:29 Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

- Just the previous day Abraham had prayed to the Lord to spare the city if ten righteous were found
 - Obviously, Abraham's intent was to save Lot and his family
 - But Abraham's prayer requested that the entire city be spared
 - Saving the city was simply Abraham's way of accomplishing the goal of saving Lot
 - Here we are on the following morning, and Abraham awakens early to see what has become of the cities

- He walks to the edge of his encampment, to the same place he had prayed with the Lord
- And as Abraham looks down into the distant valley, he sees thick, black smoke ascending like the smoke of a furnace
 - This isn't a small thin wisp of smoke on the horizon
 - This is a huge billowing cloud of smoke rising from an impossibly hot furnace
 - Even from this distance of over 20 miles, Abraham can see it clearly
- Well, if God wanted to teach Abraham a lesson about how God responds to sin, we can say "mission accomplished"
 - Abraham will have an indelible memory of the kind of response that unchecked depravity provokes from God
 - And undoubtedly he taught this lesson to all his children
- But what else was going through Abraham's mind as he stared into that cloud of black smoke?
 - What happened to Lot?
 - It's likely that Abraham didn't know Lot's disposition, at least not at first and maybe never
 - So as Abraham stares at the smoke, he would have concluded that God didn't find the ten righteous, and so the cities were destroyed
 - And this is absolutely true
 - God didn't find ten righteous for there were not ten to be found
 - And as God promised, He destroyed the cities
 - But what Abraham doesn't know is that God still gave Abraham the desires of his heart concerning Lot
 - Ironically, Abraham has received what he desired but he doesn't know it
 - Yet He does know that God has done exactly as He promised
 - And because of Abraham's prayer, the world knows that there was not even ten righteous in these cities
 - So by His prayer Abraham contributed to God's purposes in helping communicate the absolute depravity of these cities
- I wonder if Abraham was resentful or angry at God?
 - The text doesn't tell us, but I believe v.29 is included in the narrative to make sure we leave the story with the right perspective
 - Moses says God remembered Abraham, meaning God understood Abraham's heart and acted to show favor (or grace) to Abraham
 - God rescued Lot, which is all that Abraham wanted
 - But God wanted Abraham (and us) to remember not the rescue of a few righteous but rather the powerful judgment for the overwhelming number of

sinful

- This was the intended lesson of Sodom
- And this is the memory Abraham carries away from this moment
- Perhaps one day Abraham eventually learned that Lot was saved by God's goodness
- But what if Abraham never learned of Lot's rescue? Would that lead you to think less of God's goodness?
 - Have you ever considered that at times God may have answered your prayers in ways you never knew?
 - Perhaps you received exactly what you wanted, even if it wasn't exactly what you requested
 - And perhaps God did that work in secret, to His glory and without informing you
 - Perhaps He was preventing us from taking pride in our participation or perhaps He simply wanted us to learn a different lesson
 - Be careful about assuming that we will always be the audience for God's handiwork in response to our prayers
 - Even if we don't see the final result, we can trust God is at work for His glory and the good of His name
 - Our prayers don't change God, but they always have impact, whether on ourselves or others
 - And we must be prepared to offer them without expectation of a direct, visible answer
 - In fact, sometimes it may appear that our requests were denied, as was the case for Abraham in this moment, when in fact they were granted
 - Even if we hear nothing back from God, it doesn't mean that God failed us, since His timeline is usually much longer than our patience
- There is a story of a youth pastor who had an encounter with one of his ex-students, and he wrote this:

Yesterday, I ran into an old high school student who was part of the youth group I led in the early part of this decade. This student has had a rough life since high school graduation, hooked on drugs, in and out of trouble, kicked out of his home.

My heart has grieved for him whenever I have received updates about his life over the years. Yesterday, I ran into this same former student, and he was clean and sober, a huge smile on his face and a new commitment to follow Jesus with his life. Talk about a day maker!

The next day I was cleaning out some old files in my church office and

interestingly enough, I found a prayer request list from a student group from six years earlier, and it included a request from that same young man who I had met the previous day. I had completely forgotten why I held onto this prayer list.

"Dear God, help me to walk in your foot steps. Let me understand what is right and wrong. God give me the wisdom and obedience to do the right things. Help me to think through the consequences of my actions. I know how much I mean to you Lord and I want to grow closer to you. Thank you for your forgiveness and understanding Lord. In your name, Amen."

After 6 years later, it looks like God has answered this simple prayer of a high school student.

- **As we grow in our walk with the Lord, we learn that we are really poor judges of God's plan**
 - We just don't have a big enough picture; we can't see everything God sees and we can't understand everything God knows
 - We have no understanding for how a certain event will impact the future of all things God is accomplishing
 - Like the apostle Peter who rebuked Jesus at the suggestion that Jesus must be betrayed and die
 - Peter thought that was a terrible idea, but he had no idea how good an idea that truly was
- We don't understand these things, but God knows all things
 - And so we are told to trust Him knowing He is good
- Finally, the story of Lot includes a final, sad footnote

Gen. 19:30 Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

- Lot goes to Zoar, the small city he requested as his sanctuary
 - But in one verse, we're told he promptly leaves for the mountains after all
 - We can easily imagine why Lot grew afraid while trying to start again in Zoar
 - Zoar was the only city in the valley to escape judgment
 - So when the one surviving family from the other cities wanders into Zoar, how do you think the city population responded to them?

- Undoubtedly, they reacted quite negatively to their presence
 - They probably assumed they were cursed and feared the same judgment might follow them to Zoar
- The angels had told Lot he should escape to the mountains, but Lot wasn't practiced at listening to the voice of the Lord
 - And so he found his way to the mountains the hard way
 - There is a certain irony to Lot's situation
 - He rejected the nomadic life of his uncle Abraham because he preferred the lush, easy life of a city
 - But now that his sinful choices have caught up with him, he is living in caves, an even worse existence than when he enjoyed the wealth of a nomad
 - The pursuit of the world may achieve short-term benefits, but it inevitably leads to longterm losses
 - When we remain in the course God sets for us, it may appear to be a sacrifice – and in a sense it is
 - But in the longterm it grants us far greater reward and in the meantime, peace
- So Lot and his daughters retreat to the mountains
 - Can you imagine how pitiful they must have appeared?
 - No possessions, no future, destitute and rejected by the very people they sought to live among
 - For Lot's daughters, the calamity is even greater
 - Young women in that day hoped for one thing above all else: to be married
 - To be without a husband and sons was a fate worse than death, because it led to a life of poverty and shame
 - But here they are in a cave, rejected by the only city and the only people they knew...or so they thought
 - So the daughters make other plans

Gen. 19:31 Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth.

Gen. 19:32 "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father."

Gen. 19:33 So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

Gen. 19:34 On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."

Gen. 19:35 So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

Gen. 19:36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

Gen. 19:37 The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

Gen. 19:38 As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

- The firstborn hatches the idea
 - She states that there is not another man on earth to unite with them in marriage
 - We know she didn't mean this literally, since she just left Zoar and knows there are men there
 - What she means then is there are no men left in their world who would want them
 - The men of the other four cities in the valley are gone
 - And the one remaining city will have nothing to do with them
 - So for these women, it appears that there are no men left in the world
 - But what she's really saying is there are no men left in the world we know and love
 - The world of the valley
 - Because there are men in Abraham's household, back in the heights
 - These daughters are now suffering in the shadow their father created for them
 - He raised them in Sodom, and so that is all they know
 - As the saying goes, you can take the girl out of Sodom, but you can't take the Sodom out of the girl
 - As Christians, we should recognize the principle at work here in Lot's family
 - Our sin will have consequences beyond our own situation
 - We bring consequences upon others as well, and those consequences can extend into later generations
- Their plan was simple enough
 - Get Dad drunk, and when he has lost his senses, they enticed him into an incestuous encounter
 - First the older and then the younger on successive nights
 - The text makes a point of emphasizing that Lot knew nothing of the events
 - The shame rests squarely on the daughters, since Lot did not knowingly participate, but Lot doesn't escape without some culpability
 - Obviously, he raised these daughters and chose to live in an environment where

they could develop into such morally corrupt women

- And he agreed to become drunk...twice
- Lot will have plenty to answer for, and as the story comes to an end in Scripture, he has become the Bible's poster child for the worldly and disobedient saint
- Did you notice how similar Lot's account is to the account of Noah?
 - Noah was a righteous man by faith rescued from a disaster brought upon the world for its extreme sin
 - After the event, Noah becomes drunk and is taken advantage of by his children
 - The outcomes of these two accounts are also similar
 - Each story brought us to the conclusion that God's judgment didn't solve the problem of Adam's sin
 - Both Noah and Lot retained their sin nature even after the judgment had passed
 - The problem of sin still awaits a solution, one found only in the coming Seed Messiah
 - Secondly, each episode ended in offspring who bear the brunt of God's anger
 - In the case of Noah, the cursed offspring were the Canaanites, who later caused Israel to play the harlot
 - In the case of Lot, the daughters give birth to two boys who founded two of Israel's greatest enemies in Scripture, the Moabites and the Ammonites
 - In both the story of Noah and of Lot, man's sin gave rise to a future consequence for God's people, which God ultimately turned to good in chastising and disciplining His people

- You may remember a statement I made at the beginning of our study concerning the story of Abraham
 - I said that Abraham didn't begin his walk with the Lord as Abraham, the father of faith
 - No, he began as Abram, the idol worshipper in Ur
 - But over time God made him into Abraham
 - Likewise, I offered the conclusion that we don't begin as Abrahams either
 - We were all called into faith just as we were, pagans like Abram, prone to sin and failing to trust in God
 - But God began a work in us to move us forward into a life of faith and obedience
 - So that we might ultimately become Abrahams
 - Over the last four lessons, we saw Abraham displaying some strengths
 - He has shown great hospitality to the Lord
 - He made intercession to the Lord on behalf of his nephew
 - And as we left him in Chapter 19, he was watching the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah burn, probably unaware that Lot had been saved
- But Abraham still has some old habits left over from his days as Abram
 - He still struggles to trust in the Lord and often reverts to old patterns of sin
 - And now Moses shows us that Abraham is still working through struggles and still has growing to do

Gen. 20:1 Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar.

Gen. 20:2 Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

- Haven't we seen this before? Abraham making Sarah claim to be his sister
- Abraham had been staying near the Oaks of Hebron, about 18 miles south, southwest of Jerusalem
 - Now he decides it's time to move again and he goes southwest to the Negev
 - He settles in Gerar, the valley region between Kadesh Barnea on the east and Shur on the west
 - This is approximately near the brook of Egypt on the southern border of Israel with Egypt
 - Remember the last time Abraham placed himself on the border of Egypt?
 - When the famine struck, it became that much easier for him to step over the border and run to Egypt, something God did not ask
 - It seems anytime Abraham moves physically near to Egypt, it becomes an

opportunity for him to revert to living like the world

- Just as with the last time Abraham moved near Egypt, he begins to feel threatened and resorts to an old trick to protect himself
 - Abraham tells everyone that his wife is actually his sister
 - You might think that after the last time he would have learned his lesson
 - His wife was abducted so she could marry Pharaoh
 - I can't imagine the "I told you so" looks he was getting from Sarah this time around
 - Yet she remains a stunning example of obedience even as she knows her husband is acting stupidly again
 - She clearly trusts in God to protect her despite her husband's errors
 - And she knows that her best course of action is always obedience to the Lord's direction for her, even if it means enduring these situations multiple times
- Predictably, the king of Gerar takes an interest in Sarah, just as the Pharaoh had in the previous incident
- The king is called Abimelech, which is not a name but a title
 - All kings of Gerar use this same title, just as all kings of Egypt were Pharaoh and all emperors of Rome were called Caesar
- Abraham's scheme has resulted in the same terrible outcome for Sarah
 - The possibility that Sarah might become another man's wife and conceive a child by that other man would be devastating for God's plan
 - He has promised that Abraham's child of promise would come specifically from Sarah
 - This child is part of the line that will produce the nation of Israel and ultimately the Messiah
 - But the stakes are even higher this time
 - Last time this happened we knew that Sarah was appointed to give birth to the child of promise, the seed child
 - But the date of that arrival was still in question
 - This time we know that the child will be born in the next year
 - It's a critical time in Abraham and Sarah's story
 - If Sarah is allowed to become a wife of Abimelech, how will anyone know for certain the father of the child?
 - This incident could derail God's entire plan for the seed line
- But God will not permit the sin of Abraham to interrupt His plan

Gen. 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for

she is married.”

Gen. 20:4 Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless?

Gen. 20:5 “Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.”

- This passage opens with one of my favorite lines in the Bible
 - God calls Abimelech a dead man because he has taken Sarah as his wife
 - Calling him a dead man is a phrase taken right out of our modern vernacular
 - God means this phrase in two ways
 - First, God is using it to mean something like “I promise I am going to kill you... you are as good as dead”
 - Secondly, He means that Abimelech is dead already in another sense
 - God has taken away the ability to produce children from all in Abimelech’s household
 - His body is dead in the same way that Sarah considered her body to be dead and unable to bear children
 - So ironically as God was preparing to bring life back to Sarah’s body, He brings reproductive death to Abimelech’s body
 - And God tells Abimelech clearly in a dream that the cause of this punishment is his taking of Sarah as a wife
 - The potential for Abimelech to compromise God’s plan for Abraham and Sarah was too great, so God prevents the consummation
 - And then He goes a step further and tells Abimelech he must act to correct the problem
- Abimelech responds by defending his actions and challenges the Lord to act fairly
 - He says he acted in good faith
 - Abraham told me she was his sister, not his wife
 - So should he be held guilty for doing this thing?
 - He asks if his innocent mistake should be reason for God to destroy a nation
 - If the king’s family died or couldn’t produce offspring, it would result in a challenge to the throne, and a potentially destructive power struggle
 - Notice the similarities in Abimelech’s appeal to Abraham’s prayer in Chapter 18?
 - God is announcing His intent to judge sin and Abimelech seeks mercy for an innocent
 - And like before God invited Abraham to pray for Lot
 - In the same way God says Abraham must pray before Abimelech will receive

God's mercy

Gen. 20:6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.

Gen. 20:7 “Now therefore, restore the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”

- So it seems God is at work here in at least two ways
 - First, He wants to protect Sarah and the child of promise
 - Secondly, he wants to teach Abraham yet another lesson
 - God’s acknowledges that Abimelech is innocent of wrongdoing
 - Furthermore, God says He has been at work already preventing Abimelech from touching Sarah
 - God makes clear how important it was that the seed child be protected from paternity disputes
 - But then God presents a solution to Abimelech
 - First, he directs that Abimelech restore Abraham’s wife
 - Secondly, Abraham will pray for Abimelech and he will live
 - The more we think about this solution, the more interesting it gets
 - First, why did God give Abimelech this dream?
 - Why didn’t God just act like he did in Egypt and strike the nation with a plague?
 - He seems to go out of His way to give Abimelech a warning and a chance to avoid the punishment
 - I think the answer is that Abimelech was an upright man, and unlike Egypt and Pharaoh he wouldn’t have killed Abraham over Sarah
 - He simply saw an opportunity to take a beautiful woman as a wife
 - Had Abraham told the truth about Sarah, it seems Abimelech would have let them alone
 - So the Lord is again showing that He deals fairly
 - Secondly, God says He didn’t let Abimelech sin against Sarah
 - Yet God still brings this judgment
 - Why didn’t He just tell Abimelech to let Sarah go and be done with it?
 - Instead, he tells Abimelech that Abraham must first pray to heal Abimelech
- God has chosen to resolve the situation in this particular way because He desires to solve Abraham’s mistake while teaching Abraham a lesson

- First, God wants to protect and restore Sarah, the future mother of Isaac
- Secondly, God wants to ensure that Abimelech has an incentive to respect Abraham despite Abraham's sin
 - Abimelech and his nation of Gerar are a significant presence in the land
 - And if they became enemies of Abraham and his future generations, it would have been a serious threat
 - So the Lord instills the fear of the Lord in Abimelech and tells him that Abraham is a prophet
 - Furthermore, Abraham is the key to Abimelech's survival
 - Now Abimelech has all the incentive in the world to treat Abraham well, despite Abraham's treachery
- Finally, God wants Abraham to see the consequences of his lying and his failing to trust in the Lord
 - Abimelech will have to meet with Abraham and explain the situation so that he might receive prayer
 - In the process, Abraham will receive a rebuke for his lying
 - And he will come to recognize what God is prepared to do to preserve His seed line and discipline His children

Gen. 20:8 So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened.

Gen. 20:9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done."

Gen. 20:10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?"

- Abimelech rises from the bed in the morning,
 - Immediately, he retells his dream to his servants, and they became frightened
 - Obviously, as he retold the story, he did so in a way that communicated the seriousness of what he had heard
 - Clearly, Abimelech took this dream seriously
 - Next, Abimelech calls Abraham to make an appearance in his court
 - Now remember, Abimelech understands that Abraham is the key to Abimelech's survival
 - What do we suppose Abimelech will say to Abraham?
 - We might expect Abimelech will show great restraint and speak nicely to Abraham, after all Abraham must pray for Abimelech to save him

- Instead, Abimelech reads Abraham the riot act, so to speak
 - He asks why have you done this to me? What did I do to you to deserve this great sin?
 - He goes on saying what you did should never have been done to anyone, so what reason did you have for treating me this way?
- These statements are absolutely true, but they are strongly worded and very confrontational – they border on an insult
 - Isn't Abimelech concerned that he will upset Abraham and cause Abraham not to pray for Abimelech?
- I greatly admire Abimelech's courage and righteous anger in the way he confronts Abraham
 - In our world today, we are taught to hide our true feelings about others to be polite or so we might manipulate them into liking us and meeting our desires
 - We don't value transparency near as much as civility
 - But Abimelech speaks frankly and transparently with Abraham
 - He shows no concern for what Abraham might think or how he might respond
 - Abimelech has righteousness on his side, and so he fearlessly rebukes Abraham to his face
- We should remember the example of Abimelech in our own dealings with others, especially our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ
 - Paul taught us that transparency and accountability are to be valued in the Church body

1Tim. 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

1Tim. 5:20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

1Tim. 5:21 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

- Paul solemnly charged church leaders – before God and Christ Jesus – to hold to these principles
 - In Abraham's case, God orchestrated this encounter precisely because he wanted Abraham to receive this rebuke in a public way
- Because the only way we rise above our sin so we can pursue a life that pleases the Lord is if we are made to face our failings
 - And in our relationships within the body, the Lord wishes to bring the conviction that leads to better things

- When we hide our true thoughts and gloss over each other's imperfections, we might feel better...but we won't be better
- Abraham's response follows

Gen. 20:11 Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.

Gen. 20:12 "Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife;

Gen. 20:13 and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

- Abraham explains his mistake using three classic excuses for sin
 - First, he claims ignorance
 - He says he thought surely there would be no fear of God in this place
 - How was he to know that Abimelech and his people would respect life and marriage and do the right thing?
 - Moreover, Abraham claims he had no reason to think they might know the Living God
 - Abraham's point is that he was acting reasonably when he lied
 - But is there ever a situation in which we may lie without sin?
 - When our life is in danger? When we are trying to protect others?
 - That's what Abraham is claiming here...that his lie was justified under the circumstances to save his life
 - But at the end of the day, a lie is always wrong because it is proof we don't trust in God
 - Abraham thought a lie would protect him better than God could but God's actions prove this assumption was wrong
 - God acted to preserve Sarah right from the start
 - He was more than capable of handling Abimelech or anyone and so Abraham's lie was completely unjustified
 - Secondly, Abraham quibbles over whether it was really a lie at all
 - He begins to explain that Sarah is really his sister, at least a half sister
 - As if that somehow addresses the real issue at hand
 - The issue here isn't whether Sarah is truly Abraham's sister or not
 - The issue is that Sarah was his wife
 - And when Abraham maintained that Sarah was only his sister, he was lying by omission

- He failed to disclose the obviously important detail that he and Sarah were married
- This kind of playing with words is simply a sign that repentance hasn't taken hold in his heart
 - Abraham is too busy explaining away his guilt rather than embracing it and learning from it
 - Now we see clearly why the Lord wanted Abraham to experience this encounter
- If the Lord orchestrates a similar moment in our lives for the good of our own conviction, make sure you don't ruin it by running to pointless excuses
 - Consider the rebuke carefully and accept it as from the Lord
- Finally, Abraham gives the third classic excuse for his sin: he blames God and circumstances
 - Abraham says it was God Who caused him to leave the protection and security of his home
 - Implying that God has forced Abraham into a position where he must resort to this tactic
 - And so in response to God's (obviously unfair) command, Abraham has told Sarah to go along with this charade
 - And notice, Abraham says this was something he expected Sarah to do everywhere they went
 - So Abraham has been engaged in this deception as the routine, not the exception
 - We've only heard about two occasions because they resulted in these extraordinary outcomes
 - In reality, nothing in God's instructions of Abraham's situation compelled him to make up this lie
 - And especially after he watched God rescue both he and Sarah in Egypt, Abraham should have realized he could trust God to care for him
- Even though Abraham offers Abimelech these pathetic excuses, Abimelech responds based on his fear of the Lord

Gen. 20:14 Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him.

Gen. 20:15 Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please."

Gen. 20:16 To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared."

Gen. 20:17 Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.

Gen. 20:18 For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

- After this incident, Abimelech must have had little respect for Abraham, but he had plenty of respect for Abraham's God
 - He gives Abraham the keys to the kingdom, including the right to settle anywhere in the land and animals and servants
 - Once again we see God's unconditional promise to bless Abraham at work
 - Though Abraham is faithless at times, God is always faithful
 - Abimelech next restores Sarah to Abraham
 - Abimelech refers to Abraham as her "brother" probably to mock Abraham
 - And then Abraham prays for Abimelech
 - God brought Abraham through this moment in the desire to show Abraham how he still fails to trust God fully
 - Abraham has believed God's promises and has been declared righteous on that basis
 - But in the everyday needs of his life, Abraham still runs to the world's methods for protection
 - And ironically, God uses the pagan king of a pagan nation to show a prophet of the Living God where he still needed to grow spiritually
 - Don't be surprised when the love God has for us leads Him to do the same in our lives

- Abraham and Sarah have led remarkable lives
 - When we first came to know them in Chapter 12, they were living as pagan worshippers
 - Then God visited them in Ur interrupting their lives and setting them on a new course, westward
 - They walked hundreds of miles to an unknown country, where they were told they would receive an inheritance in a future life
 - Meanwhile, they are left to wander in a country that was not their own
 - They've visited Egypt, fought battles with foreign kings
 - Watched judgment fall from Heaven against cities
 - Been separated twice as Sarah was taken by two different kings
 - They've gained a son by a concubine, but still long for one of their own
 - And they've both received promises from God on multiple occasions that a son would eventually come
 - It's been a busy twenty five years
- A year ago they were promised that the child would arrive shortly
 - And now Sarah's pregnant and the time has come

Gen. 21:1 Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised.

Gen. 21:2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

Gen. 21:3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

Gen. 21:4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

Gen. 21:5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Gen. 21:6 Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

Gen. 21:7 And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

- Chapter 21 opens with our focus squarely on the Lord and His word
 - In vs.1-2, we're told three times that the Lord had spoken or said or promised that Sarah would have a son
 - And in v.2 we're told that she conceived and bore the son she was promised
 - And Abraham produced this child when he was in his old age
 - And Sarah was likewise beyond her years to bear

- But nevertheless here they were with a child...literally a miracle birth
 - And the entire tone of these first verses is one of faithfulness on the part of the Lord
 - He said it and it happened
 - There were only two things that might have caused Sarah and Abraham to doubt
 - There was time between when God spoke and when He acted
 - And during that time, things looked hopeless
- Those are the circumstances when the Lord works best and does His most effective at building our faith in Him and His word
 - The first promise came twenty five years earlier
 - And God had always planned for the birth to take place at this time and in this place
 - Isaac has arrived right on time
 - But twenty five years is a long time to wait
 - And even the most patient person begins to wonder and doubt after twenty five years
 - Abraham and Sarah let their impatience get the better of them at least once, when they tried to produce the child by their own flesh
 - And while they waited, they took note of each passing year and their weakening bodies
 - And their eyes told them everywhere they looked that childbearing was simply not a possibility
 - But what the body cannot do in weakness and what the eyes cannot see, faith can accomplish
 - And Abraham and Sarah's faith in the Lord's word brought them to this point
 - And so we're told that the Lord's word was fulfilled after 25 years
 - Much like the promise we received that our faith has saved us
 - And in the moment our bodies fail, we will stand before Jesus for our rewards in our next life
- And now that Abraham and Sarah's joy is complete, they respond in obedience to the Lord's instructions
 - Abraham names the child Isaac as he was told
 - And Abraham circumcises Isaac on the eighth day as the Lord commanded
 - Isaac becomes the first child under God's covenant to be circumcised on the eighth day
 - He is the first born since the covenant was established

- And Sarah is astonished at watching God fulfill His promise
 - She remembers the Lord's words at the tent opening when He caught Sarah laughing at the promise
 - Isaac means laughing, and now Sarah exclaims that the name has become a source of joy for her
 - Now others will laugh with her when they learn she bore a child at such an advanced age
 - She is incredulous at watching the Lord's work
- Isn't this how we all reaction to the Lord's grace in our lives?
 - So often we find ourselves in a difficult or even desperate situation
 - Though we know the Lord will be faithful to pull us through somehow, still we doubt at times
 - We may grow depressed and despondent fearing the worst
 - And then the Lord comes through and saves the day in some way, and we sit back and laugh to ourselves
 - We wonder how we ever doubted the Lord in the first place
 - If you've been there with me, then you can sympathize with Sarah here

Gen. 21:8 The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

Gen. 21:9 Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.

Gen. 21:10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac."

Gen. 21:11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.

- At somewhere between age 2 and age 3, a child would be weaned
 - And weaning was cause for a celebration
 - So Abraham holds a party for his son Isaac, but there is a problem on the weaning day
 - Sarah caught Ishmael mocking Isaac
 - The word for mocking is similar to the word for Isaac, making it a play on words
 - Ishmael's name isn't used here, but rather his identify
 - Moses emphasizes that he is the son of an Egyptian
 - And remember he's probably in his late teens by now, making fun of a toddler
 - And so Sarah reacts angrily demanding that Abraham put this episode behind them by expelling the child and his mother from the household
 - The issue comes down to inheritance

- Sarah does not want this child to share in the inheritance of the family wealth
 - Ishmael was the first born in the family and Sarah wanted to be sure there was no challenge to Isaac for the position of honor in the family
- So she demands that Abraham send Hagar away with her son
 - She was asking Abraham to divorce the woman that Sarah had given to him in the first place
 - In effect, Sarah was insisting that Abraham could only be a parent to one son, not both
- Obviously, this pained Abraham greatly
 - Sarah was asking him to send away a son he undoubtedly loved greatly
 - Abraham knew that Isaac was the promised son, not Ishmael, but that didn't lead Abraham to love Ishmael any less
 - And now he was hearing from his wife that he must send his son away forever
 - Since Ishmael was already a young man, this wasn't as cruel as we might have assumed
 - We're not talking about a woman and her toddler leaving the home
 - Nevertheless, it's still a very hard thing for Abraham to consider
- What should Abraham do here? Should he divorce his wife and lose his son?
 - At this point, Abraham would have almost certainly tried to seek a compromise
 - He probably wanted to find a way that both boys could grow up together
 - One child would be the one that Abraham created in his flesh through the Egyptian woman
 - The other child would be the one God made possible by grace through a promise that Abraham received in faith
 - But certainly there must be a way the two can co-exist
 - But God agreed with Sarah and directed Abraham accordingly

Gen. 21:12 But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.

Gen. 21:13 “And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.”

Gen. 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

- God appears to Abraham again and makes clear that separation is actually the right thing to do

- He tells Abraham to put aside his feelings of distress over Ishmael and Hagar
 - Instead, do as your wife has told you
 - This is the only time in all the Bible God tells a husband to do as his wife instructs
 - I'm surprised that Abraham didn't respond saying she's not my wife, she's my sister
- God gives Abraham the reason for the separation: Isaac is to be the one through whom God's promise will be carried
 - God made a promise to Abraham concerning not only himself but also his descendants
 - And now God reiterates that Isaac was given to Abraham specifically to carry that promise forward
 - Ishmael would have nothing to do with the promise
- Furthermore, God doesn't want Abraham's descendants to be numbered through Ishmael
 - Everything that is Abraham's must also be Isaac's
- But God knew that this separation would be difficult for Abraham, and so God comforts Abraham with the news that Ishmael is still one of Abraham's offspring
 - And therefore God is obliged to bless this offspring and make him into a nation
 - Since that was the promise God gave to Abraham and his descendants
 - Though Ishmael will not become a part of Israel, nevertheless he will father all the Arab nations
 - And we can see how God used Abraham's mistake to chastise the nation of Israel
 - In fact, these two people groups will become enemies for most of human history
 - So Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away
 - The manner of the send off carries significant symbolic meaning
 - The bread and water were basic rations and they signified no inheritance
 - She was receiving nothing of Abraham's estate
 - Then he placed the water and bread on her shoulder
 - This indicated that she would receive no further support in the future
 - She must bear her own needs now
 - Abraham was making clear that he was cutting her and Ishmael off from any portion in His family wealth now and in the future
 - Knowing Abraham had a heart for his child, we must assume that Abraham was trusting in God's promise when he cut them off so completely
 - He heard God say He would care for them and bless Ishmael, and so Abraham acted in faith to God's word

- Then Abraham gave her his son, indicating he was no longer under Abraham's authority
 - The boy was now under Hagar's authority
 - Abraham was disowning his son
- Finally, he sent her away
 - She was required to separate herself physically from Abraham and his encampment
 - The effect of all these steps was to signify that Abraham saw Hagar and Ismael as dead to him
 - This kind of separation was as close to a separation from death as was possible
 - It mirrors the way the Prodigal Son asked his father for his portion of the inheritance
 - His request was a way of saying that the son felt his father was as good as dead to him
- We know Abraham is merely following God's instructions in all that he is doing
 - But that leaves us questioning why God is doing this?
 - We might ask why God is permitting much less ordering a divorce?
 - And why must Abraham separate so completely from the son he loves?
 - Is this fair to Hagar and Ishmael?
 - The answers come to us from Paul in the New Testament
 - And he shows us that the real life account of Isaac and Ishmael are also a story designed by God to teach a greater truth concerning His Son
- Paul gives us the framework for understanding God's intentions here in Galatians 4

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

Gal. 4:22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

Gal. 4:23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

Gal. 4:24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

- Paul's letter to the church in Galatia is our most powerful letter for placing the Law of Moses and the grace of the New Testament in their proper perspective
 - Unfortunately, the church in Galatia had been taught by Judaizers that living according to the Law was still a requirement for the Christian
 - This teaching was wrong, but it was attractive to a group of Christians who felt satisfaction in pursuing the rigors of the Law

- But for Paul it presented a clear and present danger to the Gospel
 - Teaching Christians that following the Law was God's expectation, created the impression that both God's grace and the Law were intended to work together for our righteousness
 - And nothing could be farther from the truth
 - As Hebrews 7:19 says, the Law made nothing perfect
- So in Paul's fourth chapter, he begins to draw an example from our story of Isaac and Ishmael here in Chapter 21 of Genesis
 - Remember, the Jewish people understood the Law to mean the five books of Moses, including the book of Genesis
 - So Paul asks to those who are interested in following the Law, do they not read the Law?
 - Meaning haven't they read Chapter 21 of Genesis?
- Then Paul begins to remind them of our story this morning, of Abraham's order to set loose Hagar and Ismael
 - Abraham had two sons, one was the product of a bondwoman
 - A bondwoman means a concubine, a type of slave
 - Abraham's first son was born to a slave woman, the product of slavery
 - His second son was born to Sarah, a free woman
 - Therefore, Isaac would be born free from the beginning
 - Furthermore, the son born to the slave woman came by way of the flesh
 - Abraham produced this child by his own efforts in his body, not according to God's spirit
 - But the son born to the free woman came by way of God's word, a miracle birth by God's spirit
- Then Paul gives us the connection to Law and grace: he says there is a picture formed between these women, their children and two covenants
 - The covenant that came at Mt. Sinai is pictured in Hagar
 - Mt. Sinai was the place that God delivered the Old Covenant, the covenant of Law in which Moses received the Law
 - Those who are under that covenant, the covenant of Law, are in bondage to the flesh
 - They are bound by a Law that exposes their sinfulness and leaves them condemned
 - They are a slave because the Law's demands are never ceasing and the possibility of escape from its condemnation is nil
 - The Law places demands on the flesh and the flesh is weak
 - Even when men tried to keep the law, it was an act of the flesh, of human will

- And as such, it can never bring us to righteousness

Rom. 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

- The Law is holy and good, but it is powerless to turn sinful flesh into righteousness
 - Instead, it produces slavery
- Also, Hagar is the Egyptian, and this reinforces the idea of slavery
 - Egypt of course will be the nation to enslave Israel before they received their covenant of Law
 - What's more, Egypt is the picture of the world, of the principles of the world

Gal. 4:25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Gal. 4:26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

Gal. 4:27 For it is written,

**“REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR;
BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR;
FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE
THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.”**

- Paul uses present day Jerusalem as a picture of all people.
 - They are in slavery with Hagar too, since they are her children
 - Paul meant that the Jerusalem that is on Earth today is a reflection of the world
 - It is part of the world today, filled with sinful people like every other city
 - And all people are in slavery held under condemnation by the Law
 - Our sinful nature is condemned by the Law, since the Law tells us we don't measure up to God's standard
- But there is another Jerusalem waiting for us
 - This one exists in the Heavenly realm and one day it descends to replace the one that we have today
 - It also has a population of people who will occupy its borders
 - Those who are of faith in Christ are citizens in that future Jerusalem, and we will live there set free from sin
 - And we will not be under condemnation by the Law, since we will have been made perfect by the work of Christ
 - For Sarah who had no prospect for children, became a mother to far more children than did the fertile Hagar

- Then Paul reaches the main point of the allegory

Gal. 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Gal. 4:29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

Gal. 4:30 But what does the Scripture say?

**“CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON,
FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF
THE FREE WOMAN.”**

- Paul says we who have believed in the Gospel are like Isaac, children of the promise
 - God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah was to produce a physical heir
 - And they believed in that promise and it brought them the son they desired
 - Likewise, we were “produced” as a result of that promise
 - Because that promise included the promise of a Messiah who would save a people
 - Since we have been saved by that Messiah, we are the products of God’s promise to Abraham, just as Isaac was a product of the same promise
 - But then Paul calls us to consider what happened between the slave child and the free child?
 - The slave child persecuted the free child
 - This is always the way it will be
 - The children of the world, of the flesh, of sin and the enemy will always have enmity for the children of God
 - Just as God placed enmity between the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed
 - And so God commanded Abraham to cast out the slave woman and her son because the two simply cannot coexist
 - These two have nothing in common and one must leave when the other arrives
 - There is no compatibility
- Paul finishes with the exhortation

Gal. 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Gal. 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

- Having come to faith, we are children of the promise, of the New Covenant given by faith in Christ

- We are no longer children of the slave woman, children who are under condemnation of Law
- Christ set us free by completing the works of the Law on our behalf
 - And therefore, Paul tells us not to subject ourselves again to the yoke of slavery
 - Paul tells us in Romans that we have been released from the Law by way of a death
- That's what we see here in the story of Abraham and Hagar
 - Abraham isn't divorcing this woman as much as he is declaring her dead
 - He is declaring Hagar and Ismael to be dead to him
 - And by that death, Abraham is freed from that relationship
 - And now he moves forward with only the child of promise
 - And this is the lesson to us today
 - Our faith in Christ brought us into a new and better covenant
 - And through Christ's death, we are said to die to the Law and are freed from its requirements
 - And now we are free to serve Christ by the Spirit
 - But the two are not designed to coexist...one replaces the other

- The time has finally come for Abraham and Sarah to separate the child of flesh and bondage from the child of promise and grace
 - Ishmael and his mother must leave Abraham's home, while Abraham and Sarah raise Isaac
 - Hagar herself was a product of Abraham's sin in going into Egypt
 - And then Ishmael was a product of Sarah's sin of impatiently offering Hagar to her husband
 - The chain of sin has led Abraham and Sarah here
 - And the effects of their mistakes will be felt for thousands of years as Arabs and Jews battle
 - But even in the midst of their sin, the Lord remains faithful to His word
 - God's word is so certain and unchangeable that even God Himself cannot ignore it
 - So when God promised to Abraham that the Lord would bless Abraham's descendants, it must be so
 - Consequently, Abraham was able to set his wife and his first child free trusting that the Lord would care for them as He promised

Gen. 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Gen. 21:15 When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes.

Gen. 21:16 Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.

- As we read last week, Abraham signifies a complete separation from Hagar and Ishmael
 - The simple rations hung on her shoulder mean she will receive no inheritance from Abraham
 - This was a stipulation God gave through Sarah's words
 - The slave boy shall not be a fellow heir with the child of promise
 - When the greater thing comes by grace, the old shall be put away
 - Abraham gives the boy into her hands, signifying that she takes responsibility for him henceforth
 - And off they went into the wilderness of Beersheba
 - Beersheba is southward, indicating she was headed back to Egypt
 - And it's an unforgiving desert wilderness

- The water rations Abraham gave her were minimal and unlikely to keep her and her son alive for long
- If Abraham had not trusted God to care for them, he would have been assigning them to a death sentence
- Sure enough, she and her son wandered in the wilderness for a time
 - They wandered long enough to reach a critical point
 - The teenager succumbs first to the heat and exhaustion, and he is faint or passed out from dehydration
 - So Hagar places him under desert growth for some shade
 - It's only a matter of time before he dies, and her with him
 - So she went 40-50 yards away and sat with her back turned to him, facing away from him so that she wouldn't have to watch him die
 - Clearly she feels desperate and the circumstances have reached a life threatening stage
 - And she sits weeping over her predicament
- Abraham's sin has hurt everyone, and now it seems poised to crush two people he had come to love
 - We've said it before, but it bears repeating...
 - When we make choices that place us outside God's will, we will suffer penalty one way or another
 - But if that reality isn't cause enough for us to think twice and step away from our sin, then at least consider how your sin will impact others
 - There is no such thing as a victimless sin
 - The full impact of our sin is not limited to merely natural and foreseeable consequences
 - God has stated in His word that He is prepared to visit the sins of one generation down through later generations

Num. 14:18 'The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.'

- Ishmael and Hagar offer a case study of that principle at work
 - Hagar and Ismael are now suffering because of their father and husband's sin
 - And the descendants of Isaac will suffer at the hands of the sons of Ishmael for many generations
 - God enforces this principle for two reasons
 - So that He can motivate us to set aside sin knowing it will have severe ramifications

- And so He may use families as living examples of the corrupting power of sin and to demonstrate the seriousness of sin
- To be clear, God isn't saying He causes the penalty for your sin to rest on others in your family
 - Everyone is accountable for their own sin only
 - Rather, He is setting forth a principle that the circumstances of our earthly lives may suffer as a result of the sin of others
 - And God directs those consequences primarily upon the family of the sinner
 - Fathers and mothers bring consequences to children
 - Spouses bring consequences upon one another
 - Brothers and sisters upon one another
 - Children upon their parents
 - But the Lord is also good to break that cycle and bring grace anew and restoration to families
 - Many believers bear a testimony like me of having been the first in their family to come to the Lord
 - And by that starting point, the Lord may bring many generations of believers into a family
 - Consider the power of your decisions the next time you contemplate whether to obey the Spirit or follow your flesh
 - If not for your own sake, for how your decisions may impact others you love...or will love one day
- Here now God is ready to step in and keep His promises to Abraham

Gen. 21:17 God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Gen. 21:18 "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him."

- Notice who's crying gains the Lord's attention?
 - In v.17 we're told the Lord hears the young boy crying
 - Apparently, the boy is as distressed as his mother
 - He is not responding to Hagar's crying
- Why didn't the Lord respond to Hagar's crying?
 - His promise was extended to Abraham and His descendants
 - Though Hagar is a woman who has also received the Lord's grace in her life, her earthly life is not God's first concern

- Ismael is the one God is rescuing
 - God's reputation is on the line with Ishmael
 - Ishmael must live to be a mighty nation or else God will be made to be a liar
- Look at God's statement to Hagar
 - He asks her what is the matter with you?
 - Do not fear for the Lord has heard the cries of the lad
 - And He tells her to take the young boy's hand
 - He's telling her that if she wants to live, she needs to remain close to this young man
 - For he will receive the Lord's blessing in his life
- Here we see a powerful corollary to the earlier principle on sin
 - The corollary is that those on whom the blessing of God rests may be a blessing in turn to others
 - In Ismael's case, the blessing was his because of the promise God made to his father, Abraham
 - There is no evidence in Scripture that Ismael was a follower of the living God; an OT saint, in other words
 - Nevertheless, Ishmael was blessed by association with his father, who in turn was blessed on the basis of faith in God's promises
 - God's promises to Abraham concerning Ishmael expired when Ishmael died, so that his children did not directly inherit a promised blessing
 - Nevertheless, God's promise said that nations would come from Ishmael
 - So even in the promises of God, it meant that Ishmael would be blessed with children and that those children would grow and have children, etc.
 - Even today, the Arab nations are blessed with wealth, which is an indirect result of God's promises to Abraham
 - As children of God, we have been included into the promises of God made possible through His Son, Jesus Christ
 - And we will see God's blessing in our lives, just as Jesus said:

Matt. 7:9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

Matt. 7:10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

Matt. 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Matt. 7:12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

- Our Father has a heart to give us good gifts in an infinite number of forms, and He delights to receive our thanks in recognition of those gifts
 - And just as we have a choice in whether to sin and allow that sin to cascade down through the lives of others, we also have a choice concerning God's blessing
 - We can decide whether God's blessings to us will become opportunity to bless others, or whether we'll keep it to ourselves
 - As children of God who have received His outpouring in material blessings, we can live generous, selfless lives before others
 - We can speak in kind and grace-filled ways in a world that knows only coarse and boastful language
 - We can choose to show hospitality and generosity and consideration in a world where such things are increasingly rare
 - And by making the most of those opportunities to share earthly blessings, we can also win opportunities to share our spiritual blessing
 - We can share the Gospel and perhaps bring another family into the promises of God
 - And the cycle will start again there
- So Ismael is blessed through Abraham and Hagar is blessed through Ishmael as God rescues them

Gen. 21:19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.

Gen. 21:20 God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer.

Gen. 21:21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

- Hagar's eyes are opened to see a well of water
 - The water well was likely nearby all the while, but only now does she notice it
 - I find it interesting that God waits until they are near their end before He brings the rescue
 - He could have given them water earlier by causing Hagar to see the well sooner
 - Instead, He comes to the rescue only now
 - And the solution was not supernatural, but rather the water was nearby all the while
 - I like to remember this moment when I find myself in my own desperate moments, when things look bleak
 - Perhaps the solution is nearby, and the Lord is simply waiting for me to place my need before Him

- Only after I appeal to Him may He show me my rescue, so that He receives the glory for that work in my life
- So as God promised, the boy grew up under God's watch, and lived in the wilderness becoming an archer
 - Ismael settled in Paran, which is the heart of Arabia in northern Sinai
 - Eventually, Hagar finds him a wife from among the Egyptians
 - There will be a brief reunion between Isaac and Ishmael at the death of Abraham
 - And later we'll see that Esau takes his wife from Ishmael's family
 - So the chosen line of Abraham will remain separate from the rest
- Now the chapter ends with a curious scene again involving Abimelech

Gen. 21:22 Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do;

Gen. 21:23 now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned."

Gen. 21:24 Abraham said, "I swear it."

- The king of Gerar, Abimelech, comes again to see Abraham
 - This is the same king as the one Abraham had deceived earlier
 - In that last encounter Abimelech had learned that Sarah was under God's protection and that Abraham was a prophet of God
 - And apparently God's blessing of Abraham is so apparent and powerful that it causes the king of Gerar to feel threatened
 - He worries that Abraham may be interested in displacing the king from his own land
 - Previously, the king had told Abraham he could have any place in his land to live
 - Now he wants to be sure that his generosity wouldn't be used against him
 - The king visits with the commander of his army
 - This was a none-too-subtle show of force to Abraham
 - Standing armies didn't exist in this day
 - When an army was needed, the people of the kingdom would come to join the fight
 - But Phicol by himself sent the same message: Abimelech was willing to fight to hold on to his land

- Abimelech says that he knows God is with Abraham in all that he does
 - This is a revealing statement
 - It says a lot about God and a lot about Abraham as well
- God has chosen to make Himself visible to the world through the lives of one man
 - And later through a nation of people who will come from this man
- And God's presence is so powerful and so evident that even a wandering shepherd in a desert land gives powerful evidence of God
 - God's blessings upon Abraham must have been tremendous
 - Animals and family multiplying beyond all expectations in the middle of arid lands
 - Causing all who see him to marvel and give glory to God
 - This is a man who carries his testimony wherever he goes
- So in v.23 the king asks Abraham to enter into a covenant with him concerning the land
 - The king wants assurances that Abraham and his growing family will not become a threat to a future generation of Abimelech's family
 - You can sympathize with this king
 - A strange tribe wanders into his land only to prove more powerful and blessed than anything you've seen
 - Naturally, you wonder where this is headed
 - If Abraham's God called Abraham a prophet, then perhaps that God would honor covenants made between the king and this prophet
 - So he is suing for peace even before the war begins
 - And in response, Abraham agrees to enter into such a covenant
 - The covenant will allow him to continue in the land indefinitely, along with his relatives
 - And in return, he will treat Abimelech fairly
 - Remember, Abimelech knows that God is with Abraham
 - But he also knows that Abraham hasn't always been upright and trustworthy
 - So a covenant or treaty was necessary to ensure peace
- Abraham sees an opportunity to secure some kindness for himself as well

Gen. 21:25 But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.

Gen. 21:26 And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today."

- He raises a complaint with the king concerning a well which Abraham had dug but Abimelech's men had seized
 - A well was a big deal in Abraham's day
 - Water was life in the desert, and a well was a difficult and expensive undertaking
 - Abraham dug the well as a matter of necessity and Abimelech's men seized it probably out of envy or to protect the land
 - To dig a well was a way of claiming land rights in an area
 - Men would fight to the death over a strategic well
 - Entire cities would rise up around a well
 - It's worth noting that Abraham did try to fight Abimelech over the well once it was seized
 - And Abraham is mentioning it now to show good faith, that he didn't defend his rights with force
- But now he wants Abimelech to restore the well to him as a condition for the treaty
 - Abimelech denies knowing of the event, which was probably true
 - And his denial is an apology and an acknowledgement that Abraham had rights to the well he dug
- And so they enter into an agreement

Gen. 21:27 Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.

Gen. 21:28 Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

Gen. 21:29 Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?"

Gen. 21:30 He said, "You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well."

Gen. 21:31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath.

Gen. 21:32 So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.

Gen. 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

Gen. 21:34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.

- As we studied in the prior chapters, covenants involved several steps to cement the agreement
 - When covenants are presented in Scripture, the narrative won't usually relate all the details, but we can assume those steps took place
 - In this case we see only the payment Abraham makes to the king in exchange

- for the right to sojourn in the land
 - Notice that this is a covenant between equals, a parity covenant
 - It shows that Abimelech respects Abraham as an equal on account of God's power and blessing in Abraham's life
- Abraham then takes a few of the sheep, seven to be specific, and sets them apart from the rest
 - The king takes note that this is unusual and recognizing it has special significance asks what it means
 - Abraham says the seven are a sign that this well is Abraham's and that he dug it
 - In effect, if Abimelech accepted these seven lambs, he was acknowledging that his men were wrong and the well was Abraham's
- Abimelech accepts the lambs and makes the covenant
- And the effect of this moment is to secure Abraham and his family a place in the land for as long as Abimelech and his descendants reigned in Gerar
 - The name Beersheba means the well of seven to remind everyone of this moment
 - And in this place, Abraham called on the name of God in recognition of His blessings to Abraham
- Isn't it curious that the story of the promise child's arrival is sandwiched between two curious accounts with Abimelech?
 - Think back to God's promises to Abraham
 - He would have a promised seed child and he would have an inheritance in the land
 - Earlier in his encounter with Abimelech, Abraham placed Sarah in a position where Abimelech could endanger the promised child
 - But God came to the rescue by forcing Abimelech to do the right thing for Abraham
 - Now Abraham finds himself in a position to be threatened by the king's men seizing Abraham's wells
 - And so Abimelech comes to Abraham and offers a treaty to ensure Abraham has free access to the land for as long as he lives
 - First God protected His promise of a seed child, and now He has secured Abraham a place in the land
 - God is working to ensure Abraham's blessings
 - Neither the child Isaac nor this piece of land in Gerar are the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham
 - They are both just down payments, in a sense
 - The true fulfillment of the seed comes in the birth of the Messiah
 - And the final fulfillment of the inheritance is the land of Christ's Kingdom

- The Bible calls Abraham the father of faith
 - Abraham is the man Paul uses as his example when he taught the way to salvation was always by faith in God's promises
 - Abraham has seen God appear before him seven times and make amazing promises
 - And Abraham has taken some bold steps in following God, but he's also made some mistakes
 - In fact, his life has been a mixed bag of good and bad
 - And yet God wants Abraham to stand as the example to all who follow
 - So now that Abraham has sent Ishmael away, God decides it's time to bring Abraham's life to a test of faith
 - The testing will expose Abraham's true heart

Gen. 22:1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Gen. 22:2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

- The events of Chapter 22 are set after the events of Chapter 21
 - In fact, this chapter is probably 20 or more years later and maybe as much as 30 years later
 - In Chapter 21 Isaac had just been weaned
 - In this scene, we'll see him as a full-grown adult capable of carrying a heavy load of wood up a mountain side
 - One thing is we know for sure...Isaac can't be a teenager
 - If he were a teenager, then killing him wouldn't have been a sacrifice 🤔
 - At this later point in Abraham's life, God appears an eighth time to Abraham to test him
 - A test from God is always an opportunity to demonstrate faith
 - Tests are not temptations; they are not designed to cause us to fail
 - Tests are intended to let us succeed
 - They are designed to show us approved
 - They give us opportunity to show what we have learned
 - If we fail a test, it's not the the fault of the teacher
- As God appears to Abraham, He announces the test
 - Abraham must offer his son as a burnt offering on a mountain God will show him

- Has any man been given a more difficult test of faith?
 - As if to increase the degree of difficulty in this test, God announces the test with special emphasis on Isaac's importance
 - God describes Isaac as Abraham's only son, the one Abraham loves
- God is demanding Abraham make a human sacrifice to please him
 - The very notion seems out of keeping with God's character
- Remember that other pagan religions in Abraham's day routinely practiced human sacrifice in their rituals
 - So God was asking nothing more of Abraham than unbelievers were willing to do in keeping with their faiths
- Of course, human sacrifice is wrong, and God has no intention to actually bring Abraham to the point of murdering Isaac
 - Remember, Moses begins the chapter telling us this is a test
- What can we imagine went through Abraham's mind in the moment he heard these words?
 - First, he must have felt shock and confusion over why God would expect him to do such a thing
 - God was right...Abraham loved Isaac
 - So killing him would be an unimaginable horror
 - But Abraham loved God also
 - He has trusted God's promises for something like 60 years at this point
 - God has been faithful time and time again
- Abraham knows that God has promised to bring an uncountable number of descendants from Isaac
 - So Abraham determines to do two things
 - Obey God's instructions
 - While trusting in God's promises

Gen. 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

- Everything about Abraham's response demonstrates a heart of obedience
 - He rises early in the morning, he prepares his donkey and chops the wood for the sacrifice
 - Then he leaves for the place God has told him
 - Apparently, the Lord has revealed the location for Abraham to travel

- And this place is some distance away, three days travel in fact
- Abraham decides to bring two young servants with him for this trip
- Three days is a long time when you're on a mission to kill your son
 - Many things must have gone through Abraham's mind on that trip
 - What kind of conversation took place between the father and the son?
 - Abraham hasn't revealed the purpose of the trip to his adult son, except that the Lord has instructed them to make a sacrifice on a distant mountain
 - I wonder if he ever had a moment of doubt or second thoughts?
 - Reading a story like this we can't help but ask ourselves if we would do something like this?
 - Perhaps the better question is, under what circumstances would we be willing to obey a command like this?
 - We know that Isaac is the son God has deemed to be the one through whom the world would see blessing
 - We can't understand how God could keep that promise while still asking us to kill the son
 - The only way we could go forward in obedience is to assume that death isn't the end of God's plan
 - That God's promises aren't stopped by physical death
 - We would have to believe that we go on living even after this physical body dies – resurrection into a new body will follow
- This is exactly what Hebrews says Abraham did believe

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

Heb. 11:18 it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."

Heb. 11:19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- The writer of Hebrews reminds us Abraham had heard that Isaac was the one who would lead to many descendants
 - Yet God directed Abraham to kill him
- So Abraham considered or concluded that God was able to raise people from the dead
 - Abraham already knew that God had a plan that transcended his physical lifetime
 - That's why Abraham has been living in the desert as a wanderer rather than living in cities in comfort
 - It was a lifestyle God directed because it reflected a willingness to wait on God to provide the eternal inheritance

- So if Abraham was willing to wait for the promises of land to be fulfilled after death, then he reasoned the promise for descendants would also be fulfilled after Isaac's death
- This is the heart of Abraham's test
 - Where did Abraham place his trust? In God's word or in what he can see?
 - Was there anything in his life so dear to him that he couldn't give it up to God?
 - How ironic it would have been had Abraham denied God the sacrifice God required?
 - After all, the child Isaac was given to Abraham in a miraculous way as a result of Abraham's trust in God's promise
 - So now that God is asking Abraham to offer that son back to God, is Abraham going to withhold the very one that God gave Him in the first place?
 - God has also given you a miracle birth
 - As we sat in our sin and ignorance, the Lord gave each of us a new birth in faith
 - And with that new birth came promises of great eternal blessing
 - Now the question is whether we will give this life back to God as a sacrifice to Him
 - Paul says this is exactly what God requires of each of us

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- God asks each of us to turn our life back over to Him
 - And the specific sacrifice He requires is that we do not conform our lives to this world
 - Rather, we transform into people that prove or demonstrate the perfect and acceptable will of God
 - We become walking billboards for what we learn in God's word as we renew our minds in accordance with His truth
 - And then we live it out, demonstrating that truth outwardly
 - It will be a sacrifice to live this way, because it will run counter to the world in so many ways
 - We will live in opposition to the world but in accordance to God's will
 - And as we mature in our walk with the Lord, He will continue to turn the dial up on

our spiritual sacrifice

- Our life in Christ is a never-ending push toward holiness, and the Lord will forever demand we live what we learn
- He wants our billboard to grow brighter and brighter
- Abraham has been given his opportunity to shine by obeying a difficult command
 - Will Abraham withhold Isaac? If Abraham trusts God's word concerning Isaac, then he will obey God's instructions
 - And by his obedience, Abraham will display God's perfect plan
 - What is the plan or story God wants to tell through Abraham's obedience?
 - It's a story connected to God's promises to Abraham concerning the blessing
 - That through Abraham's seed would come a blessing for the world
 - Hebrews 11:9 alluded to this story when it described Isaac as a type
 - Because of Abraham's obedience in this test, Isaac becomes a type or a picture of something greater
 - Specifically, Isaac becomes a picture of Christ
 - And if Isaac is a picture of Christ, then we can say that Abraham is a picture of the father in a way
 - For he is the one offering to sacrifice his son, his only son, just as the Father was willing to sacrifice His only Son
- To see that picture more clearly, let's move forward in the story

Gen. 22:4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.

Gen. 22:5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

Gen. 22:6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

Gen. 22:7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Gen. 22:8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

Gen. 22:9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Gen. 22:10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

- After three days of walking, they see the mountain in the distance

- The young men are told to stay with the donkey and the father and son walk the rest of the way alone
 - This explains the need for the men to accompany Abraham and Isaac
 - They stay behind to watch the donkey
- Abraham says he and his son will go to the mountain to worship
 - This entire episode is worship for Abraham
 - This is the same way Paul described our life of sacrifice
 - Our spiritual service of worship
 - How do we worship God? By obeying Him
 - By making sacrifices in our lives to demonstrate our trust in Him and His word
 - By conforming ourselves to His word and not to the world
 - That's worship
 - Abraham is going to worship God by obeying Him
- It's also important to note that Abraham says he and Isaac will return
 - It's a simple statement, but it says a lot
 - It says that Abraham didn't expect to be without a son
 - It says he knew God would yet still fulfill His promises to bring a nation by Isaac
 - It says Abraham trusted in God's word and God's faithfulness and God's goodness MORE than he trusted in his own understanding
 - Abraham's obedience isn't remarkable because Abraham was willing to lose Isaac
 - Abraham's obedience is remarkable because he was so confident death wouldn't be enough to take Isaac from him
 - And then the two depart, with Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice
 - Isaac is picturing Christ again here
 - He traveled to the sacrifice on a donkey
 - And like Christ, Isaac is carrying the wood on which he will be sacrificed
 - And as they walk with wood, knife and fire, Isaac calls to his father with the obvious question
 - Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?
 - Interestingly, Isaac uses the term "Abba" for father
 - The same way Jesus refers to His Father in Heaven
 - Isaac is a full grown man, a man capable of disagreeing with his father, of running away or overpowering Abraham
 - It's beginning to dawn on Isaac that something's not right

- Yet he's still following his father obediently
- Abraham answers that the Lord will provide for himself a lamb
 - But the sentence construction in Hebrew can be translated another way
 - The same Hebrew words can mean "the Lord will provide Himself as a sacrifice"
 - Probably without knowing it, Abraham was preaching the Gospel
- The answer satisfied Isaac, but soon enough they reached the top of the mountain
 - This region of this mountain is Moriah, the mountainous area upon which David built his altar and later Solomon later builds the Temple
 - This becomes home to the Temple mount
 - And on these same hills, Jesus is sacrificed on a cross
 - Yet another way in which this story pictures Christ's sacrifice
 - As they reach the place, Abraham built an altar from uncut stones, as was God's direction
 - And then he arranged the wood on the altar to burn the body
 - And then he bound his son
 - Up to this point, Isaac has been absolutely obedient to the father
 - And at this point, the truth of what will happen is clear to everyone
 - Since we know Isaac could escape, the fact that he remains is proof of his faith as well
 - He is remaining fully obedient to a father who has made clear his intentions to kill his son
 - Abraham binds his son we're told, but even this detail adds to Isaac's obedience
 - Isaac obviously submitted to the binding
 - Abraham probably bound him to ensure he would not try to stop him at the last minute or struggle in death
 - This is a perfect picture of Christ as well
 - Christ went willingly to the cross; no one forced Him to go
 - He was obeying the Father's direction despite the pain and suffering He knew He would experience
 - Yet Christ was also bound by nails to the wood of the cross
 - So that even the binding of Isaac was a parallel to Christ
- Finally, in v.10 we reach the climactic moment
 - Abraham stretched out his hand with the knife
 - He's ready to draw the knife across his son's neck as he might a lamb's
 - In this moment Abraham's faith has been fully demonstrated

- No one witnessing this moment could doubt Abraham's trust in God
- His behavior makes clear his faith
 - More than that, Abraham's obedience has perfected or completed his faith
 - His faith has produced the work God intended, it has served its purpose for God's glory
- James makes this point in using Abraham as an example

James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

James 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

James 2:24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- Abraham's faith was perfected or completed
 - Abraham was declared righteous in Chapter 15 of Genesis
 - But if we look back at his life since that moment, it's been a series of ups and downs
 - No one's perfect, of course, but Abraham's life could cause some to question exactly what he believed
 - Abimelech is certainly wondering
- But now there is no doubt
 - One of the reasons the test in Chapter 22 of Genesis exists is to demonstrate the strength of Abraham's faith in God's promises
 - Without this chapter, Abraham's testimony would have been a lot murkier
 - But not so now...James says he was perfected or completed in this moment
 - In other words, his life's purpose in faith has been met
- God has a purpose in saving each of us
 - He didn't choose us on the basis of our merit or our worth
 - His plan was in place before the foundation of the earth
 - But we do matter to Him, of course
 - So we should be always seeking to understand how our life of faith will be perfected in obedience to God's test
 - Will it be a call to mission work?

- Will it be a call to leadership, or to devotion in prayer or giving to the needs of the saints?
 - Will it be a service of teaching or hospitality or music?
 - Will it be in devotion to a spouse or to raising godly children?
 - Will it be some combination of these or something altogether unique?
- Our role in all this is just like Abraham
 - To hear the Lord when He calls, to answer “here I am”
 - And then to obey sacrificially
 - To hold nothing back
- To determine to obey completely while trusting in God

- As Abraham stands at the top of Mt. Moriah preparing to sacrifice his only son, he must have been warring with his own fears and doubts
 - Did God really expect him to take such an unthinkable step?
 - How will it feel to watch his son die?
 - We remember that the Father in Heaven experienced similar thoughts in some way we can't understand as He put His own Son to death
 - But Abraham is operating in faith, not by sight, and so he prepares to complete the command God has given

Gen. 22:9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Gen. 22:10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Gen. 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Gen. 22:12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

- Abraham has bound his grown son and placed him on top of the wood on top of the altar
 - And he has stretched out his hand with the knife in order to take his son's life as God has commanded
 - We noted last week that it was remarkable to think his grown son, Isaac, hasn't resisted his father through all of this
 - Even though sooner or later he must have figured out what dad was planning to do
 - Certainly he knew something was amiss when he was bound
 - And though Scripture doesn't record any conversation in the moment, I suspect something was probably said
 - So we marvel at Isaac submitting to his father's authority under these circumstances
 - Though we typically focus on Abraham's obedience to the Father in Chapter 22, let's not lose sight of Isaac's obedience to his father
 - But in reality, Isaac's obedience is yet another reflection on the faith and strength of Abraham
 - Abraham raised a son who respected his authority so much that he would submit to such a moment
 - And we understand that Isaac's obedience of his father was a reflection of Isaac's understanding that Dad was following the Lord

- This is how all strong parental-child relationships are formed
 - The obedience of the child should be modeled after the parent's obedience to the Lord
- Submission to authority and respect for authority is a learned behavior
 - It must be taught and modeled and reinforced
 - And ultimately, it must draw a connection to our relationship to the Lord and our own walk of obedience
- One of the reasons Scriptures teaches that elders and pastors should have obedient, believing children is for the way it reflects on their own walk of obedience
 - There are no guarantees in life, least of all in raising kids
- But Scripture tells us to anticipate that obedient, submitted relationships will be contagious
 - If the father is submitted and obedient to the Lord, then the wife will be more likely to follow in submission and obedience to both the Lord and the husband (in that order)
 - If the parents are obedient and submitted to the Lord and demonstrate that pattern to the children, then the children will more likely follow in their footsteps
- Isaac's extraordinary obedience and submission to Abraham was not the result of a moment of clarity
 - It was the result of an upbringing in the family of a man who has taken to heart the words of the Lord back in Chapter 18

Gen. 18:17 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, **Gen. 18:18** since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?

Gen. 18:19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

- The Lord revealed Himself to Abraham so that Abraham could understand God's expectation for holiness in Abraham's own life
 - And so that Abraham would command his children to keep the way of the Lord
 - Abraham was told to command his children in this respect
 - To make holiness an imperative, a non-negotiable from the earliest years
 - Clearly, he has done this very thing, and Isaac is now demonstrating the effect of that upbringing
- But there is always an element of God's grace in the lives of our children

- No child is perfect, not even Isaac
 - Later we'll see that Isaac makes some of the same mistakes that Dad made
- But on our judgment day, our test will not be what our children did with their lives
 - It will be, what did we do to model obedience and submission to the Lord?
 - And did we command them to keep the way of the Lord?
- So just as Abraham is ready to bring the knife against Isaac's throat, then the Lord intervenes
 - The Lord calls Abraham's name from Heaven, repeating it twice
 - The repeating of the name marks an emphatic call
 - And Abraham's response is equally emphatic...Here I am!
 - We probably can't appreciate how relieved Abraham felt in that moment
 - Faith in God notwithstanding, Abraham must have rejoiced at the prospect of being spared from killing Isaac
 - This call is said to come from the Angel of the Lord
 - As we noticed earlier in our study, this is a phrase describing the Second Person of the Godhead; the Son, Jesus Christ
 - Notice in v.12 the Angel of the Lord says you have not withheld your son from "Me" which equates the angel with God
 - Clearly, this person is identifying Himself as the Lord who commanded Abraham to make this sacrifice in the first place
 - So this is the Lord, Christ, speaking to Abraham
- The Lord stops Abraham at the moment of truth, and He orders Abraham not to go through with the sacrifice
 - His reason for stopping the sacrifice is that now the Lord knows that Abraham fears God
 - Since Abraham has come this far and was prepared to sacrifice Isaac
 - This answer raises a few questions for us to consider
 - First, why did the Lord ask for this sacrifice only to have Abraham stop short?
 - First, we remember that this was called a test from the beginning
 - God wasn't seeking a human sacrifice from Abraham
 - In fact, in all history there has only been one time that God has required a human sacrifice: His own Son
 - He required the sacrifice of His Son to stand in our place for sin, since only a man can stand in the place of another man
 - But sacrificing Isaac wouldn't have accomplished anything for sin
 - Since Isaac had his own sin, his death wouldn't have been an acceptable sacrifice for the sin of Abraham or anyone else

- He would have been dying only for his own sin
 - So God stops the unnecessary sacrifice when it had met its purpose as a test
- That leads us to the second question: how did Abraham pass the test?
 - Since he didn't actually complete the sacrifice, how does the Lord know he would have gone through with it?
 - The Lord says He knew that Abraham fears God
 - The Lord is saying He knew Abraham's heart
 - And Abraham was acting out of fear of the Lord in bringing Isaac to this point
 - Fear of the Lord is a special term in scripture
 - All at once it conveys reverence, obedience and genuine fear
 - Abraham shows his reverence for God by his willingness to give his worship to the Lord
 - And he shows his obedience for God's word in his willingness to come to this place and prepare the sacrifice and draw the knife, just as the Lord instructed
 - But there is also a place for fear in our relationship with the Lord
 - Fear should be a natural and appropriate response as we come to know and follow the Lord
 - Jesus Himself used the word fear in giving us counsel on how we should view the Father

Luke 12:4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

Luke 12:5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

- Jesus calls upon believers not to fear the world and those enemies of God who might wish to harm us
 - They can do nothing more than harm a body that was destined to die anyway
 - But God is not only the One Who determines the course of our earthly life, but more importantly He holds judgment over our soul
 - On the day of judgment we fall into His hands and are at His mercy

Heb. 10:30 For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

Heb. 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- We will have no power, no appeal, no higher authority

- As believers our judgment will not be for the purpose of condemning us
- It will be an assessment of our work and an assignment of reward
- But in that moment we will understand fear of the Lord
- If we marvel at Abraham and wonder if we could have acted with so much faith, perhaps the difference between Abraham and us is that Abraham knew the fear of the Lord while we don't
 - Reverence and obedience and fear combined to produce a proper perspective on the holiness of God
 - And it was that understanding that brought Abraham through this test successfully

Gen. 22:13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

Gen. 22:14 Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

- At this point, Abraham notices that there was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns
 - The Lord never directs Abraham to the ram; Abraham just notices it
 - We understand the ram was a supernatural provision
 - But neither did God direct Abraham to conduct a sacrifice with the ram
 - Nevertheless, Abraham had come to this point to worship God in sacrifice
 - And since the Lord had made the provision available, Abraham gladly used it instead to conduct the sacrifice
 - Notice Abraham declares that this ram would be sacrificed instead of his own son
 - Abraham is saying that Isaac was condemned to die
 - He had walked up that mountain expecting to witness the death of his son
 - But now his son would not have to die
 - Because the Lord had provided an alternative
 - God made another available in Isaac's place so that Isaac wouldn't need to die
 - But it does deeper than that
 - In his heart, Abraham considered Isaac dead
 - He had been preparing for this moment during the three-days walk
 - So that by the time he reached this point, Isaac was as good as dead to Abraham
 - Then suddenly Isaac was spared and returned to Abraham
 - And it could be said that Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, as if he had died and was resurrected

- Here we see another parallel to Christ, another way in which Isaac pictures Christ
 - Jesus was dead and the world thought Him gone for a time
 - But then He returned from the dead
- Hebrews makes this point in describing Isaac as a picture of Christ

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

Heb. 11:18 it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.”

Heb. 11:19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- Abraham received “him”, that is Isaac, back from the dead
- And so Abraham names this mount the place where the Lord made a provision
 - This place is Mt. Moriah
 - It will later become the mountain upon which Solomon will build the temple of God
 - It will become the place of Jerusalem
 - And it will become the mountain upon which the Lord will be crucified
- Indeed, it is the place where the Lord made a provision for all mankind
 - What was a test of personal faith for Abraham became an opportunity for the Lord to create a powerful testimony through Abraham’s obedience
 - What testimony will God create through our obedience?
 - Abraham and Isaac gave the world a beautiful example of God at work through Christ to provide a sacrifice in our place
 - But that testimony was only possible because Abraham feared the Lord and obeyed His voice

Gen. 22:15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

Gen. 22:16 and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,

Gen. 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Gen. 22:18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Gen. 22:19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

- Here the Lord appears before Abraham for a ninth time and a second time in this same moment
 - And again we see the Angel of the Lord declaring Himself to be God
 - As He swears by Himself, that is by His own name, that He will indeed bless Abraham as the Lord has stated beforehand
 - Each of the major tenets of the Abrahamic covenant are repeated in this promise
 - Including that all nations of the Earth will be blessed through Abraham's seed
 - The promises aren't different than Abraham had heard before, but this is the first time the Lord had sworn the oath to Abraham
 - In ancient times a man might take an oath in the course of entering into a covenant
 - An oath was a solemn binding statement that invoked the name of a greater authority as witness
 - More importantly, by invoking the name of the higher authority, the person taking the oath was saying that if they failed to keep this agreement, they would be at the mercy of the greater
 - The higher authority was usually a king or judge who had the power to condemn the individual to death if they failed to keep their covenant
 - So as God makes this oath, He swears by His own name, since there is no higher authority
 - He is saying that God Himself will be bound to put Himself to death to ensure He keep His word to Abraham
 - The writer of Hebrews explains this passage in this way

Heb. 6:13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

Heb. 6:14 saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."

Heb. 6:15 And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

Heb. 6:16 For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

Heb. 6:17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

Heb. 6:18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

- Hebrews explains that when God wanted to leave Abraham with absolute assurance that God would keep His word, He swore by Himself
 - And by this oath God committed to keep His promises to the death

- The death, of course, was the death God experienced in the Son Jesus
- Literally, God went to death to ensure He would keep the oath He is swearing here
- And God made such a commitment to Abraham – and the writer of Hebrews adds that it was also for us – so that we would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us
 - Abraham had great reason for hope in the promises of God
 - Those promises had brought him a son and would bring him an even larger family
 - They have given him prosperity in the land, but they will eventually give him an even greater inheritance in the kingdom
 - And they have led to the blessing of others around Abraham, but even now they are blessing far more people in the world through the opportunity to believe in God's promises
- These were hopes that God delivered to Abraham by way of His promises
 - These hopes were set before Abraham
 - But Abraham had to take hold of them
 - He had to accept that God was trustworthy and that God would keep His word
 - And God delivered an oath so that Abraham would have no more doubts
 - By His obedience to God's command and his willingness to sacrifice his son, Abraham put an end to any doubts concerning his faith in God's word
 - And likewise, God takes an oath to put to end any doubts that He will bring the blessings He has promised
- We are like Abraham in this way
 - We have faith and by that faith we have been saved from the penalty of our sin and with that salvation came hope for resurrection and for blessing in eternity
 - But we have to take hold of that hope
 - That's why the writer says that God used two unchangeable things to give us reason to take refuge
 - And what should be our expected response?
 - We who have taken refuge (been saved) must take hold of the hope that is set before us
 - We take hold of the same hope of reward and blessing knowing God keeps His word
 - Consider the difference between having taken refuge and taking hold of the hope set before us?
 - Taking refuge is accomplished by faith alone
 - The hope (of blessing and reward) is only available to those who have taken refuge
 - Therefore, taking refuge is independent of the hope that makes it available

- We can have a hope sitting in front of us but not take hold of it
- We can live without realizing the hope that is available
- As a result, it just sits there
- But once it's explained to us and we understand it
 - And then set our mind upon it like Paul running the race, everything in our lives changes
 - We run for that prize and not earthly prizes

- The story of Abraham is drawing to a close in Genesis
 - We still have a couple of chapters before we note Abraham's death
 - But Moses is preparing us even now to move to the next patriarch, Isaac
 - And it's worth noting that the occasion for this transition was Abraham's success on the mountain
 - Having passed the test, Abraham's faith has been demonstrated and the promises of God are secure in his heart
 - But before Abraham may leave the earth peacefully, he knows he must attend to two important details
 - First, he must prepare a place for he and his wife to be buried
 - Proper burial was an important sign of respect, but Abraham has nowhere he can claim for his resting place
 - He has remained a wanderer in the land
 - He has never bought any land or even allowed someone to give him a portion of land as a gift
 - The most he has obtained is the right to sojourn in the land of Gerar
 - But Abraham wants to be buried in a place he can rightfully call his own
 - And this will also be the resting place for his wife
 - So he must make arrangements to buy a plot of land
 - The second thing Abraham must attend to is finding a wife for his son
 - This was the most important duty of a patriarch
 - Fathers selected wives for sons and arranging marriages was of supreme importance
 - Abraham had Isaac late in life, and so he feels a sense of urgency to find Isaac a wife soon
 - Today we learn how Abraham handled the first priority
 - And in coming weeks we'll learn how Abraham finds Isaac's wife
 - But interestingly at the end of Chapter 22, Moses inserts a moment of insight concerning finding Isaac a wife before he begins the story of Abraham's burial place

Gen. 22:20 Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor:

Gen. 22:21 Uz his firstborn and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram

Gen. 22:22 and Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel."

Gen. 22:23 Bethuel became the father of Rebekah; these eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

Gen. 22:24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah and Gaham

and Tahash and Maacah.

- After Abraham returns from Mt. Moriah with Isaac, he receives some welcome news
 - Abraham learns that his brother Nahor has also been raising a family back in Ur
 - We remember from Genesis 11 that Abraham's father, Terah, had three sons: Abraham, Nahor and Haran
 - Haran died in Ur before having any daughters
 - Abraham married Sarah and left Ur with his father, headed to Canaan according to God's instructions
 - That left Nahor as the last living relative of Abraham back in Ur
 - It's been about 65 years since Abraham last heard anything about his brother back home
 - But now Abraham learns that Nahor's wife, Milcah, has given Nahor a large family
 - Nahor has eight sons
 - And then Nahor took a concubine and produced four more sons
 - But Moses is careful to note that one of Nahor's sons, Bethuel, born to Nahor's first wife, was the father of Rebekah
- This news might have given Abraham reason to return to Ur
 - First, it would be natural for Abraham to want to be near his family, especially as he entered the last years of his life
 - Not only could he find a wife for Isaac among friends and family members, but Abraham could also expect to be buried on the family land
 - Instead, Moses carefully records Abraham's determination to remain living in the land but not joining with its people
 - Abraham is going to find a burial place in a land that is not his home
 - And he's going to find a wife for his son that won't call Canaan home either
 - A woman from Ur who sees Canaan as a foreign place as well

Gen. 23:1 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.

Gen. 23:2 Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

- Sarah dies at the age of 127
 - Sarah is the only woman in Scripture to have her age at death noted
 - At this point Abraham is 137 old himself
 - They've been married for probably over 100 years

- And Abraham goes into the tent where Sarah had been lying and weeps for her
- We understand how hard it is for someone to lose a spouse after a long marriage
 - But how hard is it to lose someone after over 100 years of life together?
 - The separation must have been unbearable
 - In fact, Abraham will live another 38 years without Sarah
 - And her death also greatly affects Isaac, leaving him sad and desiring a wife to fill the void left by his mother
- We can also assume that Abraham's mourning was greatly lessened by his confidence in knowing he would see her again in the kingdom
 - This is the same hope that comforts all believers in the face of death – that the death process leads to something greater
- We're told Sarah dies in Hebron
 - Hebron is 25 miles northeast of Beersheba, which was the place that Abraham was living in Chapter 22 when he took Isaac to Mt. Moriah
 - The name Hebron came along later, as Moses indicates in the text
 - The name of the place in Abraham's day is Kiriath-arba
 - It gains the name Hebron later from Abraham
 - The word *hebron* means friend, as in the friend of God
 - Hearing that Sarah died in this area tell us that Abraham is still sojourning, not settling down in the land
 - In Chapter 22, he was living in Beersheba but he has left the land of Gerar and has moved into another area of Canaan
 - Just to reiterate...a nomadic lifestyle is very unusual for anyone with the wealth of Abraham
 - Normally, a man like Abraham would have settled down in a city or built his own city
 - But Abraham does not want the world to think that he sees this earth as his inheritance from God
 - He understands that his inheritance in the land will come in a future time
 - But Sarah's death places Abraham in a difficult situation
 - He has nowhere to place the body of his beloved wife
 - And one day Abraham will want to join her in death, so he needs to find a place that he can assure will remain available to him forever
 - Since he's been careful to avoid setting down roots in Canaan, he has nowhere to turn
 - So Abraham turns to the locals seeking to obtain a burial plot

Gen. 23:3 Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth,

saying,

Gen. 23:4 “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

Gen. 23:5 The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,

Gen. 23:6 “Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.”

- Abraham immediately left his wife’s body and entered the nearest city
 - The nearest settlement was a city of the sons of Heth, a Hittite
 - Abraham goes into the city and meets with the sons of Heth in the gate of the city
 - The “sons” of Heth refers generally to the ruling clan of the town
 - They are the elders of the city and the land
 - All land belonged to a king, but he permitted individuals to own the land provided they paid taxes or rendered service to the king in armies, etc.
 - So Abraham goes to the city elders asking to purchase just enough land to bury his wife
- Any purchase in the Eastern culture followed a very specific pattern of negotiation
 - It was a carefully orchestrated dance intended to ensure that both sides obtained the best possible terms while saving face
 - Neither party could appear to have been taken advantage of
 - Abraham, however, follows the traditions and culture only enough to ensure he obtains the land
 - Otherwise, he doesn’t try to negotiate to improve his position
 - For example, Abraham begins by announcing he needs to purchase the land to bury his wife
 - Immediately, the sons of Heth and all those listening in the gate know that Abraham is desperate
 - He can’t wait long for the negotiation to conclude
 - This is like buying a ticket for an airplane that is already boarding
 - But the sons of Heth themselves would lose dignity if they appeared to gouge Abraham over his misfortune
 - So they play their part in this dance
- They begin in calling Abraham “lord”, as a sign of respect
 - They compliment him as a “mighty prince” among them
 - There is certainly plenty of truth to these statements
 - God has indeed blessed Abraham as He promised

- Abraham is mighty in many ways, and his reputation precedes him throughout the land
- Then they make their dance move: they tell Abraham he can have any of their choicest graves
 - At first it sounds like a generous offer
 - Abraham gets any plot he wants for free
- But that's not how things worked in that day, and Abraham knew it
 - Had Abraham accepted this "offer" he would have greatly offended the sons of Heth and probably never received any plot
 - Instead, Abraham must give regard for the gracious offer and then refuse it

Gen. 23:7 So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

Gen. 23:8 And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, Gen. 23:9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site."

- **Abraham had been seated on the ground during the discussions, which was customary, but now he rises to bow**
 - Bowing in this way was a sign of respect acknowledging the extreme kindness of their offer
 - This was the dance that they expected and Abraham understood
 - In fact, Abraham bows before both the city elders and the people of the land
 - Apparently this negotiation had attracted a crowd in the gate from among those going in and out of the city
 - The elders wanted credit for their fake offer of generosity, and Abraham was giving it to them
 - Abraham continues in the negotiation by ignoring their offer but then taking another step forward in the process
 - He says that if they did want him to bury his wife in their land, then please direct Ephron to sell Abraham the cave of Machpelah
 - Apparently, Abraham knew of this cave and believed it would serve as a good burial place
 - The city elders had the power to broker a sale, and Abraham is asking them to make this deal happen
 - Abraham adds that he wants it given in their presence, meaning right away
 - Here again Abraham is not doing himself any favors, because he makes it

clear he must do the deal immediately

- Then the deals moves forward...

Gen. 23:10 Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying,

Gen. 23:11 “No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.”

- The owner of this cave happened to be sitting among the sons of Heth in the gate
 - This tells us he was probably one of the elders or leaders of the city
 - Abraham may have chosen that particular cave because he noticed the owner was already present on that day in the gate
 - Thus it would ensure Abraham could make a quick deal
 - The cave owner Ephron answered Abraham’s request by joining in the negotiation dance
 - He calls Abraham “my lord” also
 - And he says he will “give” Abraham both the cave and the entire field that held the cave
 - At first this would seem like a very kind and generous offer
 - But again, this is a negotiation dance
 - Neither the land nor the cave would be free in the end
 - Everyone including Abraham knew that
 - Secondly, the offer of the entire field was not a sign of generosity either
 - Under Hittite laws of the day, the king would collect taxes on anyone who owned land
 - But the taxes were paid by the owner of the entire field or plot of land
 - Someone who owned only a small piece of the land would not pay taxes
 - So Ephron wants Abraham to take the entire field so that Ephron will avoid paying taxes on land that Abraham is using
- Now it’s Abraham’s turn again...

Gen. 23:12 And Abraham bowed before the people of the land.

Gen. 23:13 He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.”

- Once again, Abraham bows to show thanks and recognition of the generous offer (all the while knowing it wasn't sincere)
 - Then Abraham answered by agreeing to pay for the entire field
 - And he insists he will pay for the field
 - The insistence to pay was completely expected by the culture
 - But Abraham's quick agreement to buy the field was a concession on his part
 - Abraham isn't interested in playing this game any longer than necessary to obtain a burial place for his wife
 - Since Abraham conceded so quickly on the earlier point, Ephron decides to push Abraham harder

Gen. 23:14 Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,

Gen. 23:15 "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead."

Gen. 23:16 Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard.

- Ephron cleverly asks why should a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver stand between their friendship
 - In effect, Ephron is saying let's not argue over a piece of land that is "only" worth 400 shekels
 - As if that's such a small amount we shouldn't even be talking about payment
 - Just go bury your dead
 - His repeating of that phrase was intended to remind Abraham that the clock was ticking on getting his wife in the grave
 - He wanted Abraham to feel the pressure
 - In reality, an acre of land in Abraham's day was generally valued at about 40 shekels
 - So Ephron is asking Abraham to pay about 10 times the actual value of the land
 - In today's dollars, the land would be worth about \$5,600 but Ephron said why are we arguing about land worth only \$56,000
 - Clearly, he was trying to take advantage of Abraham's desperation and gouge him, and everyone knew it
 - But again, Abraham can't show it or he would dishonor the other party in the negotiation
 - At this point in the negotiation, Abraham would have been expected to find some face-saving way to ask for the price to be reduced
 - This was the most difficult part of the process for the buyer, because it required that he find a way to request a reduction in the price without looking too weak

- In the end, the buyer was expected to bring the price down but still pay the highest price he could before he lost face
- So what does Abraham do?
 - He simply weighs out the silver according to the commercial standard, meaning Abraham made sure he paid the exact amount
 - And he paid in view of everyone in the gate
 - He makes clear he is not dependent on a good deal nor does he intend to place himself in a position where anyone can say they did Abraham a favor
 - He grossly overpaid for the land

Gen. 23:17 So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over

Gen. 23:18 to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

Gen. 23:19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

Gen. 23:20 So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

- And so Abraham now has a place in the land, but only a single field and only because he was required to buy it all
 - Abraham is now able to ensure that his remains and those of his wife will never leave the land God gave him
 - But he bought only what was necessary
 - He never buys any more of the land, content instead to wait for the Lord to give Abraham the land promised
 - Abraham was willing to buy a little land in Canaan at an exorbitant price rather than returning to the land of his ancestors where he could have been buried for little or nothing
 - Notice that the last verse of the chapter seems to be unnecessary, since v.19 puts an end to the story
 - But v.20 is needed because the point of Chapter 23 is not the burial of Sarah
 - The point of Chapter 23 is that Abraham has established once and for all that his family will call Canaan home
 - Isaac and Jacob as well as Abraham used this burial site. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were all buried here.
- This place is home now

- In our study last week, we noted that Abraham's life was drawing to a close
 - But before he could die, there were two matters of unfinished business in his life
 - He needed to secure a resting place for himself and his family
 - And he needed to secure a wife for his son, Isaac
 - Abraham addressed the first issue upon the occasion of his wife's death
 - He bought the cave of Machpelah
 - And now Sarah is lying there awaiting her husband
- It's now been three years since her death, and Abraham turns his attention to addressing the second outstanding question: where will Isaac find his wife?
 - Remember last week we learned that Abraham was determined to remain in the land where God planted him
 - Even when culture and tradition would have dictated that Abraham journey back to his ancestral home and be buried with his family, he stayed in Canaan
 - The world would have said that Canaan was not Abraham's land, but Abraham lived by a faith that knew it was to be his one day
 - And now that it's time to find a daughter in law, Abraham is going to make a similar counter-culture choice by faith
 - The world would have expected Abraham to intermarry with the Canaanite people
 - Finding a local daughter for his son would have ensured a strong family connection with the Canaanites
 - Abraham and Isaac could have strengthened their rights to live in the area
 - And Abraham could have been directly involved in the process of selecting the proper Bride
 - Instead, Abraham is going to live by faith again
 - He knows God has given him the land of Canaan, but God has also made clear that Abraham is to be separated from these people
 - He has lived as a nomad, never permitting anyone to claim they made Abraham rich
 - And he won't have a woman from the Canaanites lay claim to any part of his family
 - So let's study the way Isaac receives a bride
 - And as we embark on this study, we're also going to watch a beautiful and important picture of Christ developing in this story
 - But this picture isn't only of Christ
 - You and I are also represented in this story

Gen. 24:1 Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way.

Gen. 24:2 Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh,
Gen. 24:3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live,

Gen. 24:4 but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

Gen. 24:5 The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?"

Gen. 24:6 Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there!

Gen. 24:7 "The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.

Gen. 24:8 "But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there."

Gen. 24:9 So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

- Moses says that Abraham is advanced in years and God has blessed him in every way
 - God's blessings for Abraham include long life, wealth, a loving wife, a promised son and the freedom to sojourn in the entire land of Canaan without worry
 - And these are the least of Abraham's blessings
 - In a future day, after the Resurrection of the Saints, Abraham will receive his eternal inheritance
 - And that inheritance will pale in comparison to the one he has seen in his earthly life
 - And in this way, God will have blessed Abraham in every possible way
 - Every believer shares in a measure of this same blessing
 - We all receive some measure of blessing in this life
 - To some degree, our blessings will follow our obedience but we have no guarantee of anything this side of Heaven
 - But in the life to come, we'll receive our eternal inheritance, and this coming blessing will dwarf whatever we receive here
 - As Paul wrote:

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to

be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- Then came the time for Abraham to seek a bride for his son
 - Since Abraham will not leave his home in Canaan, he sends his servant back to find a wife for Isaac
 - Abraham wants the servant to act according to Abraham's specific instructions
 - He must find a wife among his household back in Ur
 - The servant cannot seek a wife from among the Canaanites
 - Abraham is worried that the servant might get lazy and fail to make the trip all the way to Ur
 - He might return with a woman from some other place and simply claim she was from Ur
 - So Abraham requires the servant to participate in a tradition of the day
 - The servant places his hand under Abraham's thigh, the text says
 - The Hebrew word for thigh is actually far more personal
 - It could also be translated loin
 - The servant was asked to swear while holding something very dear to Abraham as a sign that if the servant failed, Abraham's descendants would exact revenge upon him
 - The sacred oath would ensure the servant did everything in his power to obey Abraham's command
- And the instructions Abraham delivered to the servant were strict: find Isaac a wife from Abraham's relatives and bring the wife back to Canaan
 - The servant asked the logical question: what if the woman didn't want to return?
 - Abraham answered first that Isaac was not to go to Canaan...the woman must come here
 - He then repeats the promise God had given to him
 - Abraham's descendants would inherit the land of Canaan
 - And Abraham was determined to see his son remain in the Land and inherit the promises
 - In fact, Isaac will be the only one of the three patriarchs to never leave Canaan at any point in his entire life
 - He lives out his years in the land
 - Abraham responds as only a man of faith would
 - He says God appeared to Abraham and swore that Abraham's descendants would inherit the land of Canaan
 - Clearly, that oath God gave Abraham in Chapter 22 has had the intended effect in Abraham's life

- He has taken hold of the hope set before him, namely that he would receive the land God promised
- Based on that oath, Abraham is absolutely sure that God will keep His promises
- And because God has made this promise, Abraham is absolutely confident that God will work all things to ensure that this promise will come to pass
 - Abraham's faith in God give him confidence to pursue this course of action on Isaac's behalf
- In v.7 Abraham says that if God has promised this thing, then he can be sure God will bring Isaac a wife without requiring Isaac to leave the land
 - So Abraham tells the servant that God will go before the servant to ensure the servant finds the right bride
 - And should the servant find no woman willing to return, then he would be freed from the obligation
 - They would both take such an outcome to be a sign of God's will
- This is such a beautiful and clear picture of living by faith
 - First, it begins with an understanding of God's promises
 - Then it moves to a faith that God will keep His word
 - Which then brings about a change in our thinking and behavior
 - Ultimately producing a confidence that as we walk with God, He goes before us causing all things to work for good according to His plan
 - This is wishful or positive thinking
 - This is faith in action
- So the servant swears he will obey Abraham's request and follow in faith

Gen. 24:10 Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

Gen. 24:11 He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.

Gen. 24:12 He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.

Gen. 24:13 "Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;

Gen. 24:14 now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' — may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

- As the servant departs for Ur, he takes a substantial entourage with him
 - He has ten camels carrying a variety of his master's goods
 - Collectively, these camels are the price to pay for the Bride
 - They are a small fraction of Abraham's wealth, but they will still be a significant gift to whomever receives them
 - The number ten in Scripture is always the number for testimony
 - So the ten camels are a testimony of Abraham
 - Of his wealth, of his generosity and his desire for his son to have the perfect bride
 - And then he sets out for Mesopotamia
 - He will likely travel the fertile crescent which is the half circle that extends from Canaan northeast around Arabia and back down the Euphrates river valley
 - The total distance will be 500 miles one way
 - This is a long distance to go to find a bride for Isaac
 - We notice also that it is a trip from the West to the East
 - From the Promised Land back to the world
- Eventually, he reaches the city of Nahor
 - The city isn't named Nahor
 - It is the city of Nahor because this is the town where Nahor, Abraham's brother, lives
 - The servant would have known to come to this town based on the news that Abraham received concerning his brother a number of years earlier
 - The town had a well near the outskirts of the city
 - Since wells were a precious resource, they were located strategically to support the entire town
 - Women had the duty of drawing water and bringing it back to the home, often several times a day
 - Since wells were a gathering place of women, they were also popular places for men looking for a companion
 - Three notable OT figures found their wives at wells
 - Isaac, Jacob and Moses
 - And Jesus had several interesting encounters with women at wells in the Gospels
 - The servant brought his camels to rest at the well outside the city expecting this might be a good place to come upon the woman for Isaac
 - The question is, how to know which woman to select?
 - The servant had no doubt he would see women that day, as he might on any day

- But how would he know which woman to select for Isaac?
 - The servant's faith in God was also strong, so strong that he prayed for the Lord to direct him specifically
 - His prayer was for God to show lovingkindness to Abraham by granting the servant the opportunity to find the right woman
- So the servant devises a simple but certain test
 - He asked God to bring about a certain circumstance
 - The woman who was appointed to marry Isaac would be kind enough not only to give the servant water upon request
 - But she would also voluntarily water all his camels
 - The servant designed this to be a test
 - If the circumstances unfolded in the way the servant prescribed, then he would interpret them as a sign from God
 - The Bible records tests in numerous places, and Christians can sometimes become confused over if and when tests are appropriate
 - As when Moses taught the Israelites in the desert

Deut. 6:16 “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.

- So did the servant do the wrong thing when he tested the Lord?
- No, because there are two different kinds of tests in Scripture
 - There are times when we test God's patience
 - We are knowingly disobedient and continue in sin daring God to take action to stop us
 - If we dare to test the Lord too often, He will eventually respond to bring discipline
 - This is the kind of test Scripture prohibits, because it's another word for sin
 - Then there are times we ask God for a test so we may discern His will
 - This is a very different meaning of the word test
 - Gideon is well known for seeking a sign from God as a test of God's will
 - And that's what the servant is doing here
 - This second type of test is done in faith by a heart that desires to obey and simply isn't sure of the proper course to take
 - God delights to answer the questions of an obedient heart
- There is nothing wrong with using tests to discern God's will
 - When we are given direction from the Lord and we sense Him communicating to us through prayer, circumstance, or His word, we may lack clarity

- In those circumstances, it's perfectly acceptable to construct a test to discern God's will
- But if we are to apply this principle properly, there are some clear guidelines we must follow if we are to be sure we hear God properly
- First, we should only request a test from God when considering matters placed before us by God Himself
 - God is not a genie that we can conjure up at our whim
 - He will not communicate to us except on His terms as He pleases
 - If simply want to know the winning lottery numbers, don't place a test before God expecting an answer
 - But if you hear God telling you to sell all your possessions and you want to be sure you heard correctly, proposing a test might be the right thing to do
 - Here the servant was engaged in a matter given him by God through Abraham
 - So he sought the Lord's guidance
- Secondly, the test should be specific and unmistakable
 - We narrow our concerns to the issue on our heart and ask God to give us specific direction on that issue
 - For the servant, the question was which woman to select for Isaac
 - For Gideon, it was whether to go ahead with the attack against the much more powerful forces aligned against Israel
 - We can't use tests for fishing expeditions
- Finally, they must be constructed in such a way they will lead us to the clarity we seek
 - There can't be a chance of ambiguity in the final result
 - In this case the servant wanted to be sure that he could know that it would be God speaking in the test
 - So he contrived a situation that was as improbable as any
 - A thirsty camel could drink 25 gallons of water in one sitting
 - So ten camels would require 250 gallons of water – a significant amount of work for any woman to complete
 - It would be unthinkable that any woman would agree to undertake such a task for a stranger
 - And it would be even less likely that she would volunteer to do so without even being asked
 - The nature of the servant's request precluded any chance that he might misinterpret the outcome
 - Or that he might miss it when God speaks
- Why don't Christians rely on tests like this more often?

- Asking the Lord for a test is a Biblically legitimate way to gain clarity in following God
 - Yet many Christians walk through their spiritual life unsure of what God is asking of them
 - God can speak to us in many ways and does
 - But we are poor listeners
 - What a shame that we aren't willing to seek the Lord in this honest and faithful way, confident that the Lord will answer
- Could it be that we don't seek a test from God because we're afraid of the answer?
 - It's relatively easy to ask a question, even a question to God
 - The hard part is accepting the answer when it comes
 - Gideon asked God to confirm that he should enter battle with only 300 men against a huge opposing force
 - He asked once and got his answer
 - He asked again to double-check and got the same answer
 - Then the issue became, would he obey?
- Next week we'll see if the servant finds a woman willing to do the unlikely and improbable task
 - Then we'll see what he does in response
 - And we'll also start to break down the picture of Christ that's in this story

- As a father, Abraham is taking seriously his responsibility to find a wife for his son, Isaac
 - A lot is riding on this union, since Isaac will be the one to continue the seed line of God's promise
 - From Isaac's family eventually the Messiah will come into the world
 - And Isaac's wife must be as acceptable to God as Isaac Himself
 - And equally important, Abraham's own testimony demands that he seek a daughter-in-law in keeping with his faith in God's word
 - So Abraham enlists his servant to find the perfect wife for his son
 - Abraham refuses to leave the land God has given him, as a sign of his faith in God's word
 - And he also refuses to let his son leave either
 - So the marriage will be an arranged marriage
 - Like the young boy who said to his father: Dad I hear in some countries, the man doesn't know his wife until after he marries her
 - And the dad answered, "Son that happens in every country."
- The servant entered the town of Abraham's family and waited by the well with no idea of how to find the right woman according to God's desire
 - So he does the only thing he can do...he appeals to God for direction
 - The servant sets up a test that he hopes will give him clarity concerning God's will

Gen. 24:12 He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.

Gen. 24:13 "Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;

Gen. 24:14 now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' — may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

Gen. 24:15 Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.

Gen. 24:16 The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.

Gen. 24:17 Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar."

Gen. 24:18 She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.

Gen. 24:19 Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking."

Gen. 24:20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.

- The servant's test is guaranteed to leave no possibility of a mistake
 - He asks God to send a woman who is willing not only to offer a strange man a drink of water, but she will also water 10 thirsty camels
 - This means spending considerable time drawing and carrying water to the tune of 250 or more gallons of water
 - The odds of finding such a woman were minuscule
 - And if you did find such a woman, you should marry her!
 - Then notice the grace of God at work
 - Even before he finished speaking, Rebecca was walking toward the servant
 - Isn't God's faithfulness and love for his children wonderful?
 - The servant was still in the midst of making his appeal to God
 - I wonder if he was focused on how to form his words, to ensure that God was listening
 - Maybe he was closing his eyes extra tight as he prayed
 - Perhaps he was suppressing doubts over whether God would honor his request – or even if God was listening at all
 - And Rebekah was already walking toward the well even as the servant was speaking
 - When did Rebekah start walking to that well I wonder?
 - She might have been on the road for the better part of an hour
 - And even before that, Rebekah was destined to be born on a certain day in a certain place so that she would be here on the day appointed
 - Moreover, she is the one Abraham desired, the granddaughter of his brother
 - So God had been at work bringing her to the servant before the servant even thought to propose his test
 - Let this story be an encouragement to you in your prayer life
 - While we are working hard to find the right words to speak in making our requests before God, He is already at work
 - And as Jesus taught in the Gospels, the Father knows what we need even before we ask
 - So as we get up off our knees, have confidence that God is already at work answering
 - Whether we see that answer in the moment or perhaps in a future day, God is in control
- As the servant looked up he saw Rebekah approaching the well

- She was beautiful, and Moses tells us that she had never been with a man
 - This made her the perfect candidate for Isaac
 - Of course, the servant knew nothing more than what his eyes could behold
 - But he didn't need to know anything about the woman
 - He had prayed to the Lord with a test that would remove any doubt in the process
- So the servant ran to her to put his test into action
 - He asks her for a drink of water from her jar, as his test required
 - Rebekah then proceeds to grant his request, followed by an offer to water all the camels
 - And the text describes how Rebekah moved with speed and haste, drawing water and rushing to fill the trough of the camels
 - The servant had asked that the right woman be the one willing to do the work of watering 10 camels
 - But as God answered this prayer, He added speed to the picture
 - The text says she ran back and forth from the well and quickly emptied her jar
 - The Hebrew verbs communicate haste in every step
 - It's as if God went well beyond the requirement to make sure the servant understood the message
 - It reminds me of what Paul said in describing the God we serve

Eph. 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,
Eph. 3:21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

- So what do you suppose the servant expects to happen next?
 - I'm guessing he expected to see many young women walk away without saying a word or just politely refuse
 - Maybe a few would agree to give him water but no more
 - He probably expects to get his fill of water before hoping to find that one woman God has appointed
 - Whatever the servant was expecting, I can tell you what he wasn't expecting
 - He wasn't expecting the very first woman he selected to be the one who passed his test
 - Why do I know this? Well, look at his reaction

Gen. 24:21 Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the

LORD had made his journey successful or not.

- The servant just stood there mesmerized by what he saw
 - The Hebrew word for gaze appears only here in the Bible
 - It means to stare in wonder
 - And the servant says nothing
 - And he watches, wondering if the Lord has indeed made his journey a success
- I think it's safe to say that this servant is surprised to see his search come to an end so quickly
 - And it's obvious God didn't want him to miss the sign
 - This is the God we serve...a God Who makes sure we know His will, One Who delights to answer prayers of an obedient heart
 - And we will often be caught off guard at how powerfully God will respond to confirm His will
- If we dig a little deeper, we'll also find a beautiful picture developing in this story, and it's time we began to uncover it
 - Remember back in Chapter 22 we saw how the Bible established Isaac as a picture of Christ, and with him Abraham became a picture of God the Father
 - The son of Abraham has become a picture of the Son of God in the story of Genesis
 - The writer of Hebrews confirmed this picture for us
 - And now in this story, the picture is being built further, and new signs are being incorporated
 - So to apply those pictures to this story, we've been watching the Father seeking a Bride for His Son
 - And working for the Father we have a servant, seeking the Bride on behalf of the Son
 - Now as the servant comes upon a prospective bride, notice how the relationship develops
 - The servant is bringing an offer to the woman
 - She could have responded positively to the opportunity
 - Or she could have responded negatively
 - The servant waits to learn by her response what the Lord had decided
 - If the Lord decided to make his journey a success
 - Or would this invitation fall on deaf ears
 - When the servant sees her response, the servant knows the Lord has brought him success

Gen. 24:22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold,

Gen. 24:23 and said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father’s house?”

Gen. 24:24 She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.”

Gen. 24:25 Again she said to him, “We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.”

Gen. 24:26 Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD.

Gen. 24:27 He said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”

- His first response may seem a bit unusual to us, but it was in keeping with custom
 - The servant produces a gold ring and two gold bracelets and gives these gifts to Rebekah
 - At this moment, he has betrothed her in marriage
 - These gifts are symbols of a marriage proposal
 - The servant makes the proposal on behalf of Isaac even before he knows whether Rebekah is related to Abraham
 - Effectively, the woman is married, though there is still the matter of the bride price
 - If the price wasn’t acceptable to the family, then the proposal would be null and void
 - But at this point, the woman is spoken for and it’s only a matter of a little negotiation to bring about the final result
 - Obviously, the servant is operating entirely on faith based on God’s powerful answer to his test
 - This woman did everything he asked in his prayer, so the servant knows she is the right wife
 - He never even asks her name, because her identity is irrelevant
 - In fact, her identity is about to change anyway
 - She is about to become known as Isaac’s wife
 - But there is still the matter of negotiating a marriage price with her family
 - So the servant asks for her name and family identification
 - And he inquires about whether there would be room for him to stay in their home during the negotiations
- Rebekah responds saying she is the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham’s brother and she

welcomes the servant into her home

- At the news, the servant is overwhelmed by God's grace and power
 - He immediately bows and worships the Lord
 - And he declares his amazement that God directed him to the exact person – the one person in all the world – that Abraham had wanted the servant to find
- Do you know this feeling? I do!
 - Those moments when we see the handwriting of God in some circumstance in our lives
 - When we come to that instant recognition that while we were oblivious to God's work, nevertheless He was working all the while
 - I've seen so many of those moments in my life, but they never cease to amaze
 - But when we have one of those ah-ha moments watching God at work, do we remember to stop in our tracks and bow and worship Him?
 - Isn't that the point whenever God reveals Himself to us? That we acknowledge His work in our life and thank Him for His grace and mercy?
 - If we don't do it in the moment, we're unlikely to do it enough
- So how does this moment fit into our picture of Christ and the Father?
 - Scripture tells us that when the Father in Heaven desires to find a Bride for His Son, He likewise went into the world
 - But notice that the Son is at home with His Father in the Heavenly Throne Room
 - And the Father has determined that His Son will not travel to the Bride's home to make the proposal in person
 - Instead, the Father relies on His Servant to search and find the Bride
 - The Bride of Christ is the Church of believers living in the world
 - The Father's Servant travels to the world bringing the offer of a marriage proposal to all who have ears to hear
 - We're given the opportunity to respond to the invitation
 - And the Servant is watching to see how we'll respond
 - When a favorable response comes, the Servant interprets our response as an indication that God the Father has appointed us to be the Bride
 - And the Servant then confirms our response by bestowing upon us gifts from the Father as a downpayment on our marriage
 - These gifts ensure we are set apart from any other relationships and reserved for our Groom
 - The gifts are also a small down payment on the great inheritance we will receive in the new family we're joining
 - Scripture assures us of all these things

2Cor. 1:21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,
2Cor. 1:22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Eph. 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Rom. 12:6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

- All this happens without the Son's direct involvement or presence
 - His Bride is prepared in advance and readied for Him on a future day when they will meet
- Can you see the picture developing in all its detail and glory?
 - And can you tell who the servant pictures in this story?
 - Interestingly, Abraham's servant is never named in this story
 - That's unusual since the servant's role is so central to this long, detailed story
 - Furthermore, we know his name from an earlier chapter: Eliezer
 - So why didn't Moses use his name here, at least once?
 - We're left to conclude that the servant is remaining unnamed purposely
 - And the absence of a name serves to confirm the Person the servant represents in the story
 - The Servant represents the Spirit of God in His role to bring the message of the Gospel to the hearts of men
 - And as men respond, the Spirit bestows gifts to establish a covenant between His Master and the prospective Bride of Christ
 - Whenever the Spirit is pictured in the Bible, the character is never named
 - We can find a similar pattern in another story that pictures Christ and the Spirit working together
 - When Boaz is introduced to his future wife in the story of Ruth, the introductions are made by a nameless servant of Boaz
 - By keeping the Spirit nameless, His proper place is preserved
 - The Bible describes the Spirit as an Actor behind the scenes, invisible but active

John 3:8 “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

- As believers, we’ve never seen the face of Christ nor have we encountered the Spirit in a form we can see or touch
 - Nevertheless, we know we have been wedded to our future husband
 - And by grace we were found when we weren’t looking for a Savior
 - The Spirit asked us a question and we agreed before we even knew what we were getting into
 - Because our response came as a result of the Father’s gracious work to bring us into this relationship
 - And we’ve received gifts that we show to each other and to the world that identify us with our future groom
 - And we anxiously await the day we will meet Him face to face

- Today we continue one of the most remarkable chapters in all of the Bible
 - The story of how Isaac obtains his wife is a beautiful story all its own
 - The challenge of finding a bride in a far away land
 - The wonder of how God lead the servant to exactly the right woman
 - Can you image in later years Rebekah telling this story to her children or her neighbors and friends
 - Wouldn't everyone marvel at the details
 - But what makes this account truly remarkable is the story beneath the story
 - The picture God creates out of the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah and the servant
 - Each person stands for another character in a much larger and more important story
 - Like our first story, this second story is true, told prophetically
 - We learned last week that Isaac is a picture of the Son, Christ
 - He is away from the world, living with His Father
 - Waiting for His Bride to be found in the world and made ready for Him
 - Abraham is a picture of the Father
 - He sends His Servant into the world to find the appointed one to be wedded to the Master's Son
 - And the Bride of the Son is Rebekah, who pictures the Gentile Church
 - Taken from the world and selected to wed the Son even before she has the chance to meet Him
 - The Servant makes the proposal and betroths her when she wasn't looking for a husband
 - And finally, the Servant of the Father becomes a picture of the final member of the Godhead, the Spirit
 - He goes into the world searching the hearts to find those who are appointed to receive the proposal
 - When He finds that one, He brings gifts to bind the relationship
- As we pick up again in Chapter 24 at v.28, we're going to see even more connections between this story and the larger story of salvation

Gen. 24:28 Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things.

Gen. 24:29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring.

Gen. 24:30 When he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, "This is what the man said to me," he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the

spring.

Gen. 24:31 And he said, “Come in, blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?”

Gen. 24:32 So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

- Immediately after the servant made his proposal and placed the expensive jewelry on the young girl, she runs back home to tell mom
 - I think this is the standard response for any woman once she gets engaged
 - Pick up the phone and call a parent
 - Or in this case, run back to the house
 - When Rebekah enters her house, it isn't her parents who take the most interest in the situation...it's her brother, Laban
 - Most likely, Laban was the eldest son of Bethuel and took a paternal role among his siblings
 - As we see here, Laban immediately notices the bracelets and the ring in her nose (which was the custom of the time)
 - We don't have to read between the lines to understand Laban's true interest in his sister's suitor
 - Those trinkets on her wrists were quite valuable
 - Imagine if your daughter or sister came home wearing Tiffany diamond-studded bracelets from some young man you've never met
 - You would be interested in meeting him, but it would be hard to ignore his obvious wealth
 - That was the point of Abraham's gift...to impress the bride's family
 - In passing, let's note that wealth has its place in our world
 - All we have comes from the Lord, and to a certain extent we are all wealthy
 - Wealth is truly relative, and there's always someone less wealthy than us
 - So we can all find ways to impress someone with our wealth
 - Like Abraham, some believers are blessed financially beyond the average and with that wealth comes great responsibility
 - And like Abraham our wealth should be understood as a tool, an opportunity to influence the world for the sake of God's glory and the Gospel
 - But how we use our resources should be Spirit-led, as we see here in this story
 - Giving to Christian charities or the church is one option, but it's not the only way to give God glory

- Here we see Abraham using his God-given wealth to impress a family so that his son will have the wife God intended
 - Is it reasonable to assume that God gave Abraham these resources so that he could obtain Rebekah for Isaac?
 - And so that he could purchase that cave for Sarah's burial?
- After Rebekah returned home and Laban saw the gifts, he understood immediately what was afoot
 - His sister was engaged to a wealthy man
 - So Laban runs to find this man
 - They come upon him where Rebekah left him...standing at the well with the camels
 - And immediately Laban pours on the charm
 - He asks the servant, why are you standing here?
 - So the group moves to Laban's home
 - And Laban puts out the red carpet
 - We notice that the servant didn't travel alone
 - He has others with him
 - And all of them are treated with equal respect
 - This reception isn't altogether unusual for this day, but it's also clear that Laban is impressed by this visitor and his entourage
- The groups sits down for a celebratory meal, which was custom in the day, but the servant wants to stay focused on the business of his business
 - So he launches into an interesting retelling of the story

Gen. 24:33 But when food was set before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business." And he said, "Speak on."

Gen. 24:34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant.

Gen. 24:35 "The LORD has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys.

Gen. 24:36 "Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has.

Gen. 24:37 "My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live;

Gen. 24:38 but you shall go to my father's house and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.'

Gen. 24:39 "I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman does not follow me.'

Gen. 24:40 "He said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my

son from my relatives and from my father's house;

Gen. 24:41 then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my relatives; and if they do not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

Gen. 24:42 "So I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now You will make my journey on which I go successful; **Gen. 24:43** behold, I am standing by the spring, and may it be that the maiden who comes out to draw, and to whom I say, " Please let me drink a little water from your jar";

Gen. 24:44 and she will say to me, "You drink, and I will draw for your camels also"; let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.'

Gen. 24:45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew, and I said to her, 'Please let me drink.'

Gen. 24:46 "She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder, and said, ' Drink, and I will water your camels also'; so I drank, and she watered the camels also.

Gen. 24:47 "Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him'; and I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

Gen. 24:48 "And I bowed low and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

Gen. 24:49 "So now if you are going to deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left."

- The servant retells his meeting with Rebekah, and he covers every detail
 - In Scripture, a retelling of a story is intended to emphasize the accuracy of the details and to highlight God's work
 - This retelling shows that the servant wanted to demonstrate the work of God in his circumstances
 - He wanted to impress upon Laban that this wasn't an ordinary proposal
 - He was God-sent and Rebekah was God's answer to his prayer
 - Secondly, he wanted Laban to make his decision with a full knowledge of the situation
 - Notice in v.49 that the servant says, tell me what you intend to do so I can know what I should do
- Here we see a couple of connections between these events and the second story of the Holy Spirit and the Bride of Christ
 - First, notice in v.36 the servant says that the father, Abraham, has given everything to the son, Isaac
 - This is a picture of how the Father in Heaven has given all things to the Son

John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,

Eph. 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Eph. 1:19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

Eph. 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Eph. 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Eph. 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

- Secondly, the servant's testimony offers another beautiful picture of our first response to the Gospel: we give our confession or testimony
 - We tell the world of how we met Christ, our confession is our statement of faith
 - In the story, the testimony is actually delivered by the servant, not Rebekah
 - But it works this way for us too
- When we testify to our encounter with Christ and give our confession, we aren't speaking alone or in our own power
 - We speak with the words and the power of the Spirit in us
 - Like Christ told the disciples concerning their own testimonies

Matt. 10:19 "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

Matt. 10:20 "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

- So here the Bride has received the invitation and has received the Gospel
- And through the servant's testimony, the Bride's family – the world from where she comes – gets its first exposure to this new relationship
 - And the Servant, the Spirit of God, gives a testimony of how the relationship was established
 - In many ways, this is our first mission field: to those who know us best and can best appreciate the before-and-after change brought by the power of the Gospel
- After the Spirit has stepped into our lives and introduced us to our groom, Christ, everything is different

- And inevitably, we will have opportunity to testify to the world about what God has done in our lives
- As the entire encounter is retold, there is a beautiful picture of how we are called to testify of our experience in coming to faith
- In this retelling, we find a model for our confession or testimony, in three parts
 - First, tell the story boldly
 - The servant didn't let the festivities overshadow the eternal purposes of his trip
 - He interrupted the meal to insist on telling the story of God's work
 - Neither should we let the everyday events of our lives overshadow the importance of our testimony
 - Our testimony isn't merely a part of our life
 - It's the purpose of our life
 - Next, tell the story in detail
 - The servant made sure he retold every part of the encounter
 - Every detail of our personal salvation matters because every part testifies to the sovereignty and majesty of the God Who saves
 - Who are we to know what part of the story will resonate with our audience?
 - Perhaps God will use a certain part to convict another person and convince of the truth of the Gospel
 - Finally, give a testimony that glorifies the Lord
 - The servant made sure to emphasize the Lord's power and involvement in bringing about his encounter with Rebekah
 - Likewise, there are always two ways we can give our testimony
 - We can glorify ourselves
 - Or we can glorify the Lord
 - Be sure we don't turn our testimony into a story of us...it's a story of God and His Spirit
- Having given his testimony, the Spirit awaits the brother's response

Gen. 24:50 Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The matter comes from the LORD; so we cannot speak to you bad or good.

Gen. 24:51 “Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken.”

Gen. 24:52 When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD.

Gen. 24:53 The servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.

- Laban is struck by the servant's testimony, and he responds with a full acceptance of the offer...Rebekah will be married to Isaac
 - Notice that at this point both the father and the son agree to the union
 - In particular, notice that they acknowledge it is a work of God
 - The servant's testimony has produced the desired effect: glory for God
 - The servant is moved again to giving the Lord thanks for His grace
 - And the servant produces a bounty of many precious gifts, both for the bride and for the bride's family
 - This was a formal payment for the bride
 - In this day, it was expected that the bride's family would receive a suitable payment for removing her from the family
 - Sons were valued for their ability to continue the family name and to produce income for the family through their labor
 - And conversely, a daughter's value was in the amount she could command from a prospective groom
 - The better the catch, the higher the price
 - Similarly, the higher the price offered, the more the groom was showing his love and admiration for the bride and her family
 - To offer too little was an insult to the bride and her family
 - To overpay was foolish
 - The servant gave a valuable bounty to the family, in keeping with Abraham's wealth
 - And so the price was paid for Rebekah
 - Here again the story produces a picture for us of our own salvation
 - When we were betrothed to our groom, Christ, someone had to pay the price for our new relationship with the Lord
 - And the price was paid by Christ Himself
 - And the delivery of that payment comes to our heart by way of Spirit baptism
 - The sin debt we carried before we knew Christ could only be paid by death, and by the Spirit, we have been joined to Christ in death

Col. 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

2Tim. 2:11 It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

1Pet. 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that

He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

- Through the power of Spirit baptism, we are counted as having died with Christ and having been risen with Him in newest of life
- And all of this was made possible because a price was paid for our sins
 - We were bought by Christ's blood as Paul taught

1Cor. 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- The Bible gives us these intricate patterns and pictures so we can have an even better understanding of God's ways and His purposes
 - As we continue in this study next week and conclude the story of Isaac's wife, be sure to reflect on the greater meaning found in the picture
 - We were God's appointed Bride for our Groom
 - We weren't looking for Him, but He found us
 - We received His gifts, a measure of His wealth and His love for us
 - We were bought for a price that He paid in His own body
 - And we have the blessed opportunity to testify to Him by way of our confession
 - One day we will meet Him face to face, and the next phase of our life in Christ will begin
 - And the conclusion of our story next week tells the story of how we move forward as His Bride and ready ourselves for the day we meet Him

- Today we finish the story of Isaac and his bride to be, Rebekah
 - As we left off, the servant sent to find Rebekah for Abraham had confirmed the marriage with Rebekah's family
 - The servant explained his story of how he was sent to find a bride for Isaac and how the Lord brought him to Rebekah
 - And his story convinced the family that this was a marriage ordained by God
 - So the servant paid the bride price to the family and bestowed gifts to Rebekah
 - And soon they will return to Canaan to meet Isaac
- And of course, God has fashioned these events so that this beautiful story forms a picture of an even more important relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church
 - As we studied last week, the picture mirrors the events of the story
 - The Servant, the Spirit, goes out into the world to find those who will receive the Lord's proposal
 - And the Father directs the Spirit to those who will respond and causes the Spirit's search to be fruitful
 - And as a person responds to the Gospel, the Spirit responds by betrothing the person to Christ
 - The betrothal includes gifts that seal the relationship and bless the prospective bride in the meantime
 - Then as a result of this new relationship, the Bride has opportunity to give a testimony to her world and family regarding this new relationship
 - And when she testifies by the Spirit, the Lord is glorified
 - And the best testimony comes as a result of the Spirit speaking through us, both in our words and actions
- Rebekah has yet to meet her new husband face to face, so naturally this becomes the next step in the relationship
 - But at this point, she's a world away from Isaac and she has a long walk to return to him
 - But she has the company of Abraham's servant to guide her back to her husband
 - Before she can leave, however, there is a small matter of her family and their attachment to Rebekah

Gen. 24:54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master."

Gen. 24:55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go."

- Following the official agreement for Rebekah's marriage and the payment of the bride

price, the celebration ensues

- This is the usual tradition in Eastern marriage practices
 - The representatives of the groom and bride will enjoy a brief celebration at the bride's home
 - Usually this celebration was brief because the bride's family expected a chance to enjoy a larger celebration at a later time
- The normal tradition for arranged marriages was for the betrothal to be a brief affair
 - Then the bride would remain with her family while the son prepared a home for his bride back at his father's house
 - When the home was ready for the bride, the groom would return to the bride's home to claim his bride
 - When they returned to the father's home, the couple would consummate the marriage
 - And the father's family would celebrate with a seven day feast
 - Once that celebration was completed, the couple returned to the bride's home to continue the celebration at her family's home
- But in this case, the family knows that Rebekah will be traveling a very long way and will not likely return
 - So whatever celebration they will enjoy must happen now
- When the servant arose in the morning, he is intent on making a quick departure, as would be the custom, and getting started on the long journey back to Abraham
 - It probably took over a month or two of daily walking to make the trip back to Canaan
 - And now that the marriage had been approved, there was no reason to delay any longer
 - But her brother, Laban, and her mother insist that they stay a total of ten days
 - It's interesting to note that the father, Bethuel, plays such a minor role in the entire story
 - Apparently, the household isn't run by the father
 - Instead, he leaves the decisions to his children and his wife
 - This seems to be an intentional contrast in the narrative, between Abraham's leadership in his godly family and the absence of patriarchal leadership in his pagan family
 - The family's request for the deal was understandable, perhaps, but it was also quite excessive
 - Under the circumstances, there was no reason to celebrate for so long, and it was uncustomary to expect such a long delay
- And the servant has no interest in honoring such a request
 - He came here on a mission

- In fact, his master Abraham is expecting him to return as quickly as possible
- One of the concerns the servant expressed to Abraham even before he left was that the girl wouldn't want to leave
- Which is why Abraham released the servant from his oath should the girl not be willing to return
- And this place isn't his home and these people aren't his people
 - So the servant isn't going to be persuaded by their requests and he is going to continue to push for a rapid return
- Before we move on, it's time we considered what the Lord is teaching us in His word concerning the second story, the picture of Christ and the Church
 - As we come to know the Lord and enter into salvation by faith, we enter into the company of the Spirit, just as Rebekah accompanied Abraham's servant

**2Cor. 1:21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,
2Cor. 1:22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**

- The Spirit is our life-long companion provided as a pledge, Paul says
- The pledge is a downpayment on our eternal inheritance and an assurance we will meet our Groom in the future
 - Just as Rebekah received her bracelets and ring
- And from the moment we receive the Spirit and enter into this relationship, we are awaiting the day when we will finally meet our Groom in person
 - For Rebekah, the delay was created by the distance required to travel to meet Isaac...at least a few weeks or months
 - In our case, the delay is a result of waiting for our death and resurrection
- But in both cases, the delay brings a dilemma...what to do in the meantime?
 - For Rebekah, the challenge was in recognizing the importance of starting her walk back to Isaac without delay
 - The walk was going to be long and arduous and would require some sacrifice
 - By comparison, staying in her family's home was a more comfortable option
 - Plus, her family was pleading for her to stay and they welcomed both Rebekah and the servant to remain as long as possible
- And as the picture suggests, we face a very similar challenge in our new relationship to Christ
 - The day we are saved and enter into the relationship, the Spirit has come upon us in our world of relationships and comforts
 - We will have all our old habits and lifestyles and friends
 - We may have family members who haven't entered into this relationship and don't understand the attraction

- But we will also have the company of God's Spirit, His Servant to bring us back to Him
 - And the Spirit will immediately begin a process of persuading us to move away from the world we know and into a walk with Him
 - A walk that leads us closer to Christ
 - His call in our life will be to holiness and to separating ourselves from the world we once knew
- The Scripture calls our departure from the world and our moving toward Christ in the Spirit our sanctification
 - The word literally means to be set apart, to be made more holy, more pleasing to God
 - It's the name we give for the process of yielding to the Spirit's convicting and guiding influence in our lives
 - And to following the Spirit as He accompanies us in life, leading us into a life that is Christ-like
 - This is our upward call of Christ as Paul calls it
 - And that life-long walk of sanctification is pictured here by the servant leading Rebekah back to Isaac
- But that walk will have its challenges, not least of all the attracting influence offered by the world we're leaving behind
 - First, we may find the thought of leaving everything behind too much to accept
 - The world of sin and selfishness is designed by the enemy to appeal to our flesh, and it works
 - But when the Spirit calls us to move away from what we know and toward the unknown of a life with Christ, we may pause
 - That upward call of Christ is going to rip us away from the lifestyles, and habits, and various choices that defined our life before Christ
 - And the Spirit may also call us away from relationships, friends and even family, that stand in the way of our relationship with our new groom
 - As Christ Himself said

Matt. 10:32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

Matt. 10:33 "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

Matt. 10:34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matt. 10:35 "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;

Matt. 10:36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

Matt. 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Matt. 10:38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me."

- Just as with Rebekah leaving her family for the last time, these separations will be painful
 - We should expect a fight within us as we try to leave them behind
 - That's why we have the Spirit with us
- The Spirit Who dwells inside us is like that servant accompanying Rebekah
 - He's on a mission
 - The Father sent Him to find us and to escort us back to the Son
- And God's Spirit is singleminded in His task
 - He has no interest in the things of our world
 - He has no affinity for our prior way of life, our ungodly relationships, our various goals
 - So He will consistently call upon us to get moving and walk in the right direction, spiritually and physically
- And the Spirit in us has the power to strengthen our will in the face of these fights
 - But according to God's design, the Spirit's role is to persuade
 - But it remains our decision to obey
- Consider Rebekah as our example again

Gen. 24:56 He said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master."

Gen. 24:57 And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes."

Gen. 24:58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

- One day she was living her life ignorant of this possibility
 - Until the servant of Abraham introduced himself
 - And then her entire life was changed in an instant
 - And now she's being called to leave everything she knows behind in exchange for a relationship with her husband
 - Her family is pressing her to remain at home, for as long as possible
- But the servant will not be persuaded by her family, so he presses again for the chance to leave immediately

- And then the family decides to appeal to Rebekah to make the final decision
 - Although in Middle Eastern tradition it was not usual to ask the bride for her opinion, it was common in the Hurrian culture from where Rebekah came
 - So Rebekah has the right to say whether they will leave or stay ten days
- And to the question of whether to follow the servant or listen to the voice of the world, Rebekah says plainly, “I will go”
- The Spirit and God’s word calls us to make exactly the same kind of decision
 - While the Spirit calls us to move forward in sanctification, our flesh, world and our ungodly relationships will continue to pull us backward
 - Ultimately, the decision of which way will go falls to us
 - We can say I will stay or I will go
 - I will stay as I am, I will stay where I am, I will stay who I am
 - Or I will go
 - I will follow the Lord’s will
 - I will leave behind my sin and sinful choices
 - I will submit to the authority of Christ and His word
 - I will break away from the ungodly influences in my life
 - And make no mistake, there is no in between, neither for Rebekah nor for us
 - Rebekah was married and her groom awaited to meet her
 - She was in control of how quickly she moved in Isaac’s direction
 - But she was either moving toward him or moving away
 - She either made progress or she didn’t
 - The servant didn’t give her multiple options on when or where they traveled
 - He said we’re leaving now and we’re going to Isaac...are you coming with me?
 - And the Spirit asks us only one question, fundamentally
 - Are you following me or not? Will you go wherever I ask, do whatever I require, knowing that I lead you to Christ?
 - And when the world tugs at us to make the wrong choice, remember Paul’s words

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2Cor. 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

**“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

2Cor. 6:17 “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

**“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will welcome you.**

2Cor. 6:18 “And I will be a father to you,
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”
Says the Lord Almighty.

- So the time to depart comes

Gen. 24:59 Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham’s servant and his men.

Gen. 24:60 They blessed Rebekah and said to her,
“May you, our sister,
Become thousands of ten thousands,
And may your descendants possess
The gate of those who hate them.”

Gen. 24:61 Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

Gen. 24:62 Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev.

Gen. 24:63 Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.

Gen. 24:64 Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel.

Gen. 24:65 She said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself.

Gen. 24:66 The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

Gen. 24:67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

- As they depart, the family pronounces a blessing on Rebekah
 - This would have been a bittersweet departing for the family, knowing they won’t see their daughter again
- And so Rebekah mounts one of the camels and is joined by her maids
 - And the entourage is led by the servant back to Isaac
- Now Isaac was living in the Negev, in Beer-lahai-roi

- This is the place where Hagar encountered the Angel of the Lord and this is land that Isaac now owns because of His father's treaty with Abimelech
 - This is Isaac's home, essentially
 - The home he had prepared for his bride when she arrives
- On one particular evening, Isaac was out in the field, away from his tent, when he saw his servant and the bride coming from a distance
 - Rebekah herself noticed Isaac coming out into the desert to meet her on his camel
 - So she asked the servant who was coming to greet her
 - And the servant responded that this is his master, the one to marry the bride
- In response, Rebekah places a veil over her face
 - This was a customary way for a bride to meet her husband for the first time
 - Typically, the veil was worn until the marriage night and the consummation of the marriage
 - Only then would the veil be lifted
 - And it was the husband's privilege to remove the veil and behold the face of his bride for the first time
- Finally, Isaac learns the story of how his bride was found and delivered
 - And they entered Isaac's tent together and were married fully
 - And Isaac loved Rebekah and was comforted by her
- Can we see one last important connection between this story and our relationship to Christ?
 - First, we know that right now our Husband Christ is living in His Father's home awaiting our meeting
 - And Christ told us that this time away would be a time of preparation for us and for Him

John 14:2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

- Christ has promised that He is engaged in preparing a place for us, and then when the place is ready, He will come for us
 - Just as Isaac has prepared a house for Rebekah and was awaiting her arrival
- And when the moment for their meeting comes, it is not the Bride who finds her way to Isaac, though she has been moving closer steadily
 - Instead, the groom comes out to meet his bride

- Notice that Isaac left his home and began to ride out to meet his bride
- Rebekah required the servant make the introduction
 - And she prepared herself to meet her husband
- So will it be with us as well
 - The Lord will come out of His home just long enough to collect His Bride
 - And when we see Him coming for us, it will take us by surprise and we may not recognize Him at first
 - But the Spirit will have prepared us for that moment and we will have become a spotless Bride, readied for Her Husband
 - And how does Scripture say we will meet our Lord for the first time?

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th. 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1Th. 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- We call this moment “the rapture”, from a teaching Paul gave in 1 Corinthians 15
 - This is the moment of our resurrection
 - When the Lord will descend to the air and call all Church saints, those who make up the Bride of Christ, to rise in the resurrection
 - Both those who have died in the body and those who remain alive will rise
 - And we will be like Rebekah, seeing our Groom coming for us
 - And we will rejoice at the union and enter into the Father’s glory to remain with him forever
- This is the promise we all have in Christ through faith
 - And we eagerly look forward to that moment, even as we walk with the Spirit every day between now and then

- As we start Chapter 25, we officially reach the halfway point in the study of Genesis
 - That's halfway in terms of chapters, but I think we'll find that in terms of time, we're actually closer to two thirds done
 - Our study will pick up from this point, since the narrative revolves around two patriarchs and their children
 - Like any good drama, the pace quickens
 - We've already studied the life of Abraham, and in today's chapter we learn of Abraham's death
 - We've already begun our study of Isaac, the child of promise
 - He's married and living in the land
 - And in this chapter, he has his first children, twin boys
 - And before the chapter is over, questions of the promised child will become an even greater focus in the story
- But first, Moses ties up some loose ends in the life of Abraham

Gen. 25:1 Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.

Gen. 25:2 She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.

Gen. 25:3 Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim.

Gen. 25:4 The sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoah and Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah.

Gen. 25:5 Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac;

Gen. 25:6 but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

- Sometime after Sarah's death, Abraham has found a second wife, named Keturah
 - Abraham lived 38 years after Sarah died, which was plenty of time to marry and father six more sons, plus an unknown number of daughters
 - He marries Keturah, which means perfume or incense
 - She is a concubine (see v. 6) as was Hagar
 - Concubines are slave women who have married their master
 - She does not cease being a slave nor does she share in the Master's inheritance
 - Similarly, the children remain slaves in the home and do not have the same inheritance rights
 - Their plight is similar to that of Ishmael earlier
 - But remember, God's promises to Abraham were unconditional

- No matter who Abraham married and no matter how many children he fathered, they were all assured to be blessed
 - Abraham would be a father of many nations
 - But the blessing to Abraham extended only to his first generation except for the seed promise
- The child with the seed promise would see all the blessing continue through to later generations
 - Isaac was this seed promise child, the one God chose
 - And as with Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham understands that this promise was solemn and couldn't be transferred
 - God chooses who receives His grace and His promises, and God designated that Isaac would be the child of promise
- So Moses lists the sons of Abraham from Keturah to ensure we see God's faithfulness in this relationship
 - Of the six names listed, we can trace six Arabian nations
 - Like Ishmael, these children became forerunners of Arabs
 - Most notably, the land of Midian came from Abraham's son of the same name
 - This was the land in southern Arabia where Moses lived for 40 years after before returning to lead the Israelites to freedom
 - References to Midianites are found throughout the OT, and often they are seen intermarried with Ishmaelites
 - Eventually they are assimilated into the Ishmaelites
- Whatever we might make of Abraham's decision to marry Keturah, the key verse to remember is v.5
 - Everything God gave Abraham was transferred to Isaac
 - Before Abraham died, he assigned his wealth to Isaac
 - For Isaac was Abraham's only heir, according to the Lord
 - Remember, Isaac has been assigned as a picture of Christ, while Abraham is a picture of the Father
 - And just as the Father in Heaven has only one begotten Son, similarly Abraham will have only one son and one heir
 - So Abraham arranged for the concubine and her sons to be sent away with gifts prior to Abraham's death
 - This is similar to what Abraham did for Hagar and Ismael
 - Perhaps God appeared to Abraham to instruct him of the need to do so, but I doubt it
 - I'm sure Abraham was already clear on God's desires
- Notice in v.6 that the concubine children receive their gifts while Abraham was still living, and then they were sent away

- Abraham wanted to be sure they were gone before his death to avoid any possibility that they might fight with Isaac over the inheritance
 - So Abraham required that his concubine and her children leave the household
 - He gave them parting gifts as a sign that they were to receive no inheritance
- But Isaac, the child of promise, would receive all that was Abraham's
 - Yet Isaac didn't receive his inheritance at that time
 - He couldn't receive the birthright and the inheritance until after the death of his father
 - That's how an inheritance works...you cannot receive an inheritance until the one who grants it has died
 - Therefore, the grants Abraham gave to Keturah's children were not an inheritance, they were merely gifts
- The inheritance given to Isaac included Abraham's vast wealth, but even more importantly, Isaac was to receive the birthright to God's promises
 - God gave Abraham a special set of promises found in the Abrahamic Covenant, called the birthright
 - God made these promises to Abraham and to his descendants, but it would only transfer to the descendants that God chose
 - Just as God chose Abraham in the first place, God would continue to designate who may receive His grace in the form of the birthright
 - As we studied earlier in Genesis, God has made clear that Isaac would be the child of promise, that is the child to receive the birthright
 - By that birthright, Isaac would carry the promise of God forward after Abraham
 - We know another son, Ishmael, had been born before Isaac, and according to wisdom and customs of men, Ishmael should receive the birthright
 - But God would never permit such a result
 - The promises of God are a testimony to His grace and mercy and sovereignty to carry out His plan of redemption
 - As such, God's promises will rest on only those He chooses
 - And in the first three generations after Abraham, God is careful to demonstrate over and over again that He is the One Who chooses the recipients of grace
 - And the clearest way God can demonstrate this truth is to go against man's ways and man's expectations, by assigning the birthright to an unexpected child
 - For Abraham, the surprise was to father a child in his old age and then to see God assign the birthright to the second born son rather than to Ishmael
 - But Ishmael was a child of flesh, a child born by the work of human sin
 - God's mercy doesn't come to those who work, but to those who have faith in God's work
 - So the promised child who received the Abrahamic covenant was Isaac and

Isaac alone, according to God's will

- God is still moving His promises of blessing from generation to generation in this same fashion
 - Hebrews explains it this way

Heb. 9:15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Heb. 9:16 For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.

Heb. 9:17 For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

- The writer says that those who have been called by God are to receive the promise of eternal inheritance
 - This is the same promise that Abraham received
 - The basis for that promise was a covenant God made with Abraham
 - And the fulfillment of that covenant is found in the blood of Christ
 - The word the writer uses for covenant is *diatheke*, which means will or testament
 - The covenant made with Abraham was a testament or will
- When we make a will we are making a determination, in advance of our death, of who will receive our inheritance
 - The person who receives it does nothing to earn it
 - They don't even have to ask for it
 - We designated them to receive the blessing
- But the blessing of that inheritance can only come after we have died
 - The writer in Hebrews says where there is a covenant (or a will), there must be a death of the one who made it
 - For that covenant or will is only valid when men are dead
 - For it is never in force when the one who made it is still alive
- So the covenant made with Abraham was the last will and testament of Jesus Christ
 - It was a grant to Abraham and to certain descendants of Abraham whom God selected
 - That grant included the promise of eternal life and an inheritance in the kingdom to come
 - But those promises found in that testament can only come true after the death of

the one who made the testament, that is Christ

- When Christ died, His will went into effect and the inheritance for those He invited into the covenant was made sure
 - As Paul described:

Eph. 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

Eph. 1:10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

Eph. 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

Eph. 1:12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Eph. 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

- Not only are we like Isaac in that we are the recipients of God's mercy according to His gracious choice, but we are also to receive an inheritance
 - In fact, we've already received a downpayment on that inheritance, in the form of the pledge of the Holy Spirit in our hearts
 - This is a valuable deposit, to be sure
 - Having access to the wisdom and power of God within us is no small matter
 - And if this is a downpayment on what God is prepared to give us in the eternal realm, how much greater will that inheritance be?
- But have you noticed that not everyone who receives a great inheritance knows how to make use of it responsibly?
 - With all the recent hoopla over the huge lottery jackpot, I found several interesting stories online about what's happened to people who've won huge lotteries
 - One man won well over \$100M and a few years later he was serving time in prison for writing bounced checks
 - Another man committed suicide
 - Others have fallen into addictions, been embroiled in endless court battles with spouses or family members
 - Many have been defrauded by con men
- Likewise, not every Christian who receives the grace of God and enters into Christ's

inheritance will handle these riches with wisdom

- Some will abuse the grace of God, using it as license to go on sinning
- Others may choose to ignore it or even doubt its existence
- God's promises and our inheritance are not in doubt
 - It's not like winning the lottery where the chances of being struck by lightning are greater than receiving the prize
 - The news reported this story

A Kansas man was struck by lightning hours after buying three Mega Millions lottery tickets, proving in real life the old saying that a gambler is more likely to be struck down from the sky than win the jackpot.

Bill Isles, 48, bought three tickets in the record \$656 million lottery Thursday at a Wichita, Kan., grocery store.

On the way to his car, Isles said he commented to a friend: "I've got a better chance of getting struck by lightning" than winning the lottery.

Later at about 9:30 p.m., Isles was standing in the back yard of his Wichita duplex, when he saw a flash and heard a boom -- lightning.

"It threw me to the ground quivering," Isles said in a telephone interview on Saturday. "It kind of scrambled my brain and gave me an irregular heartbeat."

- And no, he didn't win the lottery
- While we wait to receive the inheritance we know is assured, let's do our best to honor it by our obedience to the Father and to recognize the responsibility that comes with it
 - Scripture teaches that we may see our eternal reward diminished or increased according to how we serve the Lord here and now

Luke 16:10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."

Matt. 25:29 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."

- These are references to God's system of accounting for determining eternal reward
 - We shouldn't be ignorant of these truths, but let them have their intended effect in influencing how we live our lives
 - As we make decisions and take actions to serve Christ or avoid that service, remember you're not working for the praise of men or the comforts of this life
 - You're working for the praise of your Lord in Heaven and the reward of an eternal inheritance that cannot perish

- We'll study much more about the importance of the birthright and inheritance in coming weeks, especially in the lives of Isaac's children
 - But for now, let's conclude the story of Abraham and his descendants

Gen. 25:7 These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years.

Gen. 25:8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.

Gen. 25:9 Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,

Gen. 25:10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.

Gen. 25:11 It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

Gen. 25:12 Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;

Gen. 25:13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam

Gen. 25:14 and Mishma and Dumah and Massa,

Gen. 25:15 Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah.

Gen. 25:16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes.

Gen. 25:17 These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

Gen. 25:18 They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

- Abraham lived 175 years before he died
 - As we discussed during the flood, this is a literal description of his age
 - He lived about 100 years longer than the normal life expectancy of men today for reasons we learned back in our study of Noah
 - More importantly, Abraham died satisfied with life
 - We know he was a very rich man, but do you think that was what made him satisfied?
 - Contrast Abraham's situation in his last days with those of another very rich man in the Bible, King Solomon

1Kings 11:1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite

women,

1Kings 11:2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love.

1Kings 11:3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

1Kings 11:4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

1Kings 11:5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

1Kings 11:6 Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

- I think it's safe to say that Abraham's contentment wasn't created by earthly riches
 - Instead, he was content with knowing that God's promises were everlasting and His faithfulness was without limits
 - And so as Abraham approached the end of his life, he could truly be satisfied with life because it had met its purpose in preparing him for his eternal existence
 - First and foremost, Abraham was righteous before God by faith in God's promises
 - Secondly, Abraham's life was a testimony to that faith
 - And by that testimony, Abraham died confident that he would receive an inheritance
- Abraham's buried in the cave he bought for Sarah, and so they rest together
 - And his spirit, which lives on eternally, is gathered to his father's
 - Meaning, Abraham's spirit went into the care of the Father in eternity waiting for the day of resurrection when Abraham would receive his new body
- And then notice in v.11 that following Abraham's death, God's blessing transferred to Isaac
 - The testament of Abraham became effective upon his death and the birthright and blessing transferred to the son of promise
 - But what of the other son, Ishmael?
 - Moses gives us the accounting for Ishmael so that we can put an end to Ishmael's line and focus squarely on Isaac
 - The 12 sons of Ishmael are listed here, and each will be the father of a different Arab tribe and nation
 - Among Ishmael's descendants are men who began many of the Arab nations who persecuted Israel in centuries to come

- Notice they all settled in the east, a clear sign that they were not recipients of God's grace, but instead were enemies of God and God's people
- Just as God said, they lived in defiance to their relatives, that is Israel
- None of these sons are under the seed promise
 - They are not a part of Israel and therefore until the promise was made available to Gentiles following Christ's death, they and the rest of the Gentile world were outside God's grace
 - But in this time of mercy, the Gospel has been extended to the world by virtue of the Church
 - We have that opportunity to know the truth and receive the Lord's mercy and have salvation by faith in God's promises
 - The promise that Christ died for our sake and paid our price for sin
 - Don't let that promise pass by and don't forfeit your eternal life and inheritance

- It's been some time since we left Chapter 25, so a short review is in order
 - Abraham's story in the book of Genesis has come to an end, as he died and was buried with his wife Sarai
 - Abraham carried the promises of God and received His blessings
 - The true fulfillment of God's promises won't come for Abraham until he is resurrected and enters the Kingdom of Christ on earth
 - Abraham's death introduces a new and important question, which Moses addresses in the second half of the chapter
 - The question is, what becomes of the promises God spoke to Abraham?
 - Remember, God extended His promises both to Abraham and his descendants
 - But the promises were – by their very nature – limited to a single individual
 - Two children couldn't inherit the promise of God's blessing given the way God expressed it
 - The promise included the prospect of being in the line of the Messiah
 - Only one child could inherit such a promise
 - As Moses begins to trace the movement of the blessing from generation to generation, he uses a common term to describe the inheritance of God's promises
 - Moses refers time and again to the "birthright"
 - The birthright is a position of honor among those who stand to inherit from the father
 - The birthright entitled a person to receive a double portion of the father's inheritance
 - So if there were six children, the estate is divided seven ways, and the oldest received two portions
 - Ordinarily, the first born male held the birthright automatically
 - Only if the first was disqualified by the father for some reason could the birthright transfer to another
 - Finally, in that culture the father held the power to decide who would receive the birthright
 - But in the case of God's promises, God Himself determined where His promises and blessing would rest
 - Not even the patriarch himself could override the Lord's choice
 - Remember that Abraham earlier tried to persuade God to select Ishmael as Abraham's descendant
 - But God flatly told Abraham no, it must be Isaac instead
- So now following Abraham's death, Moses makes clear that God's choice for the birthright is Isaac

Gen. 25:16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes.

Gen. 25:17 These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

Gen. 25:18 They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

- We read these verses in our previous study, but let's briefly consider Ishmael's mention here
 - Moses inserts the description of Ishmael's end between Abraham's death and the story of Isaac's family
 - The point is clear: let's get Ishmael's story out of the way so we can move on to the important story of Isaac
 - Once we address Ishmael's end, we can see clearly that God's work continues through the line of Isaac alone
 - Moses gives us a footnote for Ishmael's life
 - We're told he settled in the east, an ominous sign
 - And he lived in defiance of all his relatives
 - For many of us, we know relatives who live like this

A couple drove down a country road for several miles, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument and, stubbornly neither of them wanted to concede their position.

**As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats, and pigs, the husband asked sarcastically,
"Relatives of yours?"**

"Yep," the wife replied, "in-laws."

- But in Ishmael's case, the statement is a fulfillment of God's statement to Hagar at the well years earlier when the boy was young
 - God said that Ishmael would be a wild ass of a man, as he would be inclined against Isaac's family as a perpetual adversary
 - God intends to use this adversarial relationship to His own good purposes over the history of Israel
- Then Moses moves his focus to Isaac

Gen. 25:19 Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son:

Abraham became the father of Isaac;

Gen. 25:20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.

Gen. 25:21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

- Obviously, we know the details of how Isaac came to be married to Rebekah
 - But now we learn something surprising about their marriage
 - Isaac and Rebekah are unable to have children
 - Like father, like son
 - Or more accurately, like mother, like wife
 - Because Sarah was the one who couldn't bear children
 - And we're told here that Rebekah was barren as well
 - This situation seems like too much coincidence
 - And as Christians who read our Bible, we know that there's no such thing as coincidence
 - For everything happens according to God's plan
 - Furthermore, we know God intends to bring the seed promise through the line of Isaac
 - God has already pronounced in Genesis 17:19 that Isaac will have descendants
 - So why bring Isaac a wife who was barren?
- We get the answer in the rest of the verse
 - After twenty years of childless marriage (v.26), Isaac decided his wife's barrenness required the Lord's intervention
 - So Isaac prays for the Lord to solve the problem
 - Isaac's response to his situation was a far cry from the one Abraham pursued
 - When Abraham faced the same issue, he listened to the voice of his wife and took a concubine
 - And the result was Ishmael, a son who will produce a legacy of pain for Israel
 - Isaac took the right approach and appealed to the Lord
 - And Isaac's response was exactly what the Lord was seeking and it explains why Rebecca was made barren
 - As Rebecca conceived, the Lord is clearly seen to be the author of this birth
 - Just as God wanted Isaac's birth to be an undisputed miracle, this pregnancy will carry a similar significance

- Thinking about Isaac's situation, we must consider that God will work at times in our life in similar ways
 - When we lack what we desire or even the basics of what we need, God may be withholding these things simply to encourage us to ask Him
 - And the reason He desires our prayers is so that we can grow in spiritual discipline and strength by giving Him the opportunity to answer prayer
 - Furthermore, the Lord receives all the more glory when we witness Him working through our prayer life
- This principle is reflected throughout Scripture

Matt. 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Matt. 7:8 “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Matt. 7:9 “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

Matt. 7:10 “Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

Matt. 7:11 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

- The Lord isn't promising to give us everything we want, since this wouldn't be the good and proper thing for a father to do for a child
- But Jesus is stating that those who are inclined to ask and to seek God's answer will receive
 - As compared to those who are not so inclined and therefore will not find God responding
 - God's solution will be far better than our own

Gen. 25:22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is so, why then am I this way?” So she went to inquire of the LORD.

- As we examine Rebekah's situation, give a moment's thought to the prospect that Isaac and Rebekah are to have twins, the first mention of twins in the Bible
 - When Abraham went outside God's counsel, he and Sarah produced an “extra” child, Ishmael
 - This extra child was not the promised child, and his arrival complicated life for Abraham and will trouble Israel for centuries
 - But we understood this consequence was the result of Abraham's sin
 - And we assumed that if Abraham hadn't taken this sinful step, then Ishmael

wouldn't have been born

- But now we have Isaac and Rebekah with twins
 - Isaac did the correct thing praying to God
 - He waited on the Lord to answer
 - So naturally, we expect the Lord will grant Isaac the one, true appointed child to carry the promise forward in the family
 - But now we hear the Lord caused Rebekah to conceive twins
- And as with Ishmael and Isaac, only one of these boys can carry the promises of God forward
 - Only one will receive the birthright
 - And this fact will lead to a struggle for the patriarch and his sons
- A theme is emerging in Moses' narrative concerning God's choice
 - The number two in Scripture signifies God's choice and here we see it clearly at work
 - God has produced these two sons so that His choice is clearly seen by the outcome of their lives
 - No one will be able to look at Abraham, Isaac and later Jacob without recognizing the Lord's sovereignty and His choosing
- We see this plainly even in the words the Lord uses in speaking with Rebekah
- Turning to the question, Rebekah encounters a strange situation
 - The children are struggling within her womb
 - Most brothers wait until they are outside the womb to fight, but these two got a head start
 - She asks "if it is so, why then am I this way?"
 - In Hebrew, the question is a little more nuanced
 - She asks what is this struggle about, and why do I live?
 - The struggle inside her womb is so striking, she is asking why her womb is alive, as in alive with activity
 - Now notice where Rebekah brings her question?
 - She brings it to the Lord
 - Doesn't it make sense for her to go back to the Lord if the Lord was the One responsible for bringing the children in the first place?
 - Naturally, and it's encouraging to see that both Isaac and Rebekah have become accustomed to seeking their answers from the Lord
 - This moment further confirms how the Lord's purposes are being fulfilled in this situation
 - First, God waited for Isaac's intervention before producing the pregnancy so that we might know that this birth is something God is at work to create

- Secondly, He creates twins and then brings them to a struggle in the womb precisely so that Rebekah would petition Him with this question
- And by these maneuvers, God has gained an opportunity to make clear His purposes in advance of their births
 - Without Isaac's prayer and Rebekah's question, we would never have gained the background story on what God was at work doing here
 - And in God's answer, He makes clear why there are twins in her womb warring

**Gen. 25:23 The LORD said to her,
"Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples will be separated from your body;
And one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger."**

- God delivers Rebekah a surprising answer and each line of the answer carries significance
 - First, God has placed two nations in her womb
 - Each son will become the father of a nation
 - One will become the father who gives birth to the nation of Israel
 - The other will become the father of the Edomites
 - God has purposes for these two boys that go far beyond merely expanding Isaac's household
 - God is at work in eternal ways to produce these two lines of men who will ultimately serve eternal purposes
 - Secondly, He says these two people groups will be separated from your body
 - God is saying that He will have separated them into their respective identities and futures from the moment they leave her body
 - God's assignment will take place right from the start
 - Third, the nations will not have equal strength or equal prospect in the future
 - In fact, one of the nations will be much stronger than the other
 - Historically, there have been times when Israel was more powerful than the Edomites and times when the opposite was true
 - But God has always shown that Israel would dominate Edom
 - In fact, today Edomites are extinct having been assumed into other Arab peoples
 - God promises Rebekah that He will ensure this outcome to suit His purposes
 - Finally, and most importantly, God sets forth a simple and utterly profound stipulation to ensure God's role in all this isn't overlooked
 - The older shall serve the younger

- The phrase is a reference to the birthright
 - In normal cultural practice, the first born child is always the one to receive the birthright and the greater blessing
 - So in this case, whichever son is born first will be granted by custom the benefits of the birthright including the Lord's promises
- But when the Lord says the older shall serve the younger, man's rules are being ignored
 - No man would choose nor expect this outcome
 - But remember that God has orchestrated this conversation so that He can bring these things to light before the births take place
- Taken in context, God is saying that all that He has presented above concerning these sons is His choice
 - That there are two nations, that they are to be separated from birth, that one will have greater power...these are God's choices
 - And God is making these decisions in advance and sharing this prophecy with Rebekah so that God rightly receives the credit for the outcomes
 - If the older child had been God's choice, then men would have naturally missed the point, because we would have assumed that God was merely giving the first born what he deserved
 - So God is going to take the least worthy and assign that child the blessings of the covenant
 - And the child with the natural right to obtain the blessing will be set aside
 - This is evidence of the theme I mentioned earlier
 - The stark dichotomy of God's choice; a choice of two
 - The natural child vs. the child of promise
 - The child of flesh vs. the child of Grace
- Remember that Abraham also saw God at work to produce a choice between two children
 - But in Abraham's case, the reality of God's choice is potentially obscured by Abraham's sin
 - We may be tempted to explain God's preference for Isaac over Ishmael as a result of Abraham's sin
 - If our only story of choice was in Abraham's story, God's sovereignty would be lost
 - But now, God creates a perfect circumstance to make His sovereign choice clear
 - The pregnancy is not the product of sin
 - It came only after Isaac prayed and God answered
 - The twins prompted Rebekah's questions and God's answer
 - Which demonstrated that God had already made determinations

concerning the children

- Finally, the counter-intuitive nature of the outcome will drive us to the conclusion that this is God's work, not a product of chance or human will
- Therefore, as these prophecies come true, we are left with only one interpretation: God choose the younger over the older
 - Moreover, God created twins and placed the older child in the womb so that His choice could not be dismissed as God reacting to man
 - Rather, God is acting apart from man
- Paul gives us this same truth in his well-known commentary on the story of Rebekah's twins

Rom. 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

Rom. 9:9 For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

Rom. 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;

Rom. 9:11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

Rom. 9:12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

Rom. 9:13 Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

- Paul begins speaking of who are the children of God
 - The children of God are those who come under the promised blessing of God
 - They are not the children of flesh, that is the children created in the flesh of men
 - Abraham and Hagar produced a child of flesh, in that Ishmael was a product of their sin and of their sin natures
 - But Isaac was a child made possible by the word of God, by the promises of God
 - These are the children of God, because they are chosen by God and made a child by the faith that comes from God's promises
 - And then Paul goes forward to our example of Rebekah
 - She had conceived twins by Isaac, and then the Lord appeared to her with His statement concerning these children
- Paul says that the twins were in a state where neither could be said to have earned God's favor or to have sinned and lost the opportunity to receive the blessing
 - Yet it was at this time, God declared that the older will serve the younger
 - In v.11 Paul gives us the reason God made this decision
 - So that God's purpose would stand

- The word stand could be translated abide or remain
- The point is so that we would see and understand that entrance into the promises of God comes only by God's gracious choice and not by anything men can do
- The younger son of Isaac will enter into the promises of God while the older will be excluded by God's choice
- As Paul states, so that this choice could be understood not by because of works but because of who God calls
- The reality of God's sovereignty in the lives of men is a deep and important truth, one that often requires a lifetime of study and great humility to accept, but it is the testimony of Scripture
 - We will see this truth emerge over and over again in the course of our study, and it appears on virtually every page of Scripture
 - If you feel God calling you to explore a full study of this truth, the Lord provided us with a thorough examination of the truth in Romans
 - And I highly recommend our Romans study to every Christian interested in examining the Scriptures' testimony of grace
- Next week, we see these boys born and the prophecy God made coming true

- We are beginning to focus on the question of who will inherit the promises and blessing that God spoke to Abraham
 - Collectively, these promises from God constitute the birthright in the family of Abraham
 - Every family in ancient times honored and respected the birthright
 - The birthright was the privilege of the first born male, to receive a greater inheritance than any other son
 - Specifically, the oldest son inherited a double portion of the father's estate
 - More importantly, the oldest son would become the authority figure in the clan after the father's death
 - Now in the family of Abraham, the birthright has taken on special significance
 - God granted Abraham unparalleled blessings and promises
 - Moreover, God declared that His promises to Abraham would be inherited
 - They would not die with Abraham's body, but rather the blessings would move from generation to generation
 - So by His promises God created an unprecedented inheritance, one that was far more valuable than anything the world has to offer
- But God's promises come with two important caveats
 - The first caveat is the inheritance God gave Abraham is largely a future inheritance
 - While there will be some earthly blessings included for Abraham and his children in the present time, most of the inheritance does not materialize until they enter the eternal kingdom
 - Abraham and his descendants receive the full measure of their inheritance on the future day when they have been resurrected and join Christ in His kingdom on Earth
 - This fact creates an interesting and important issue in the story of Genesis
 - Only those who believe in the promises of God will find value in this birthright
 - Without faith in God's word and a trust that God will bring about all that He promises, the inheritance God has granted Abraham and his family is worthless
 - The second caveat to God's promises is that God Himself decides who receives His promises among Abraham's descendants
 - We remember that God chose Isaac rather than Ishmael
 - But as we noted last week, God's choice was overshadowed by Abraham sin in the way he fathered Ishmael
 - We might be tempted to assume God chose Isaac because he merited God's choice
 - Or we might explain Ismael's rejection as a result of Abraham's sin
 - So as we moved into studying the life of Isaac and his children, we watched God go out of His way to emphasize His sovereignty in the assignment of this birthright

- He began by withholding Rebekah's ability to conceive for 20 years until Isaac prayed for relief
 - Then when God responded to the prayer and allowed Rebekah to conceive, He communicated clearly that His hand was directing the events in her body
- Then God created twins when we know He only intended to grant His birthright to one of the children
 - Then God caused the twins to fight in the womb so as to catch Rebekah's attention
 - This led Rebekah to pray for an answer, giving God the opportunity to explain His purposes further
- And we ended last week with God's striking answer and Paul's challenging explanation
- So let's return to the chapter in v.23 looking at the two caveats that Moses makes the centerpiece of his narrative

**Gen. 25:23 The LORD said to her,
"Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples will be separated from your body;
And one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger."**

- The Lord's answer to Rebekah was worded and timed to present a simple and undeniable statement of His sovereignty concerning the birthright
 - He created two boys so they could give birth to two nations
 - These two nations would be separated from birth
 - The boys' destinies were set and established by God from before they were born
 - One would be stronger than the other and God has determined which would be which
 - In case the world wasn't willing to recognize God's handiwork and acknowledge His power to control these things, God does two things
 - First, He assigns the birthright to the younger, skipping over the older
 - Ordinarily, the older would receive the birthright
 - But God purposely reverses this pattern to ensure His choice is visible and undeniable
 - Secondly, God makes this announcement to Rebekah prior to the birth of the boys
 - In fact, He caused them to struggle in the womb
 - This caused Rebekah to inquire of the Lord at that time

- Which gave God the opportunity He desired to explain His purposes before the birth took place
- By presenting His choice of the younger over the older before the twins were born, God prevents us from falling back on any excuses for how the younger ends up with the birthright
 - Paul says God declared this truth before either had done anything good or bad so that it would be understood as God's choice that determined their outcome
- Now let's see how God's choice plays out in their lives

Gen. 25:24 When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

Gen. 25:25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.

Gen. 25:26 Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

- Isaac was 60 years old when Rebekah gave birth, 20 years after they were married...a sign that God was at work in this pregnancy
 - And on the day Rebekah delivered, Moses says there were twins in her womb, just as God promised
 - And the first to come forth from her was red all over like a hairy garment
 - The Hebrew word here means literally ruddy or reddish
 - His hair was red, and since he was covered in hair at birth, it made him appear reddish
 - So they name him Esau
 - The word means red, so he is named after his appearance
 - Later, the nation Esau founds is called Edom, which also means red
 - Following Esau, the second born emerges
 - He emerges literally clutching the heel of Esau
 - The Hebrew word for heel is *akeiv*
 - And based on the curious way the child left the womb, Isaac and Rebekah assign the name Yaakov (which we pronounce Jacob)
 - The Hebrew word for Yaakov shares the same root as *akeiv*, heel
 - So Jacob's name is a play on words
 - His name is an invented Hebrew word
 - It has been assigned the meaning heel-catcher
 - Later, based on events in Jacob's life, it came to mean supplanter

- It's important to note that neither of these names carries a negative connotation
 - Some interpreters take the name too far and assign meanings like "thief" or deceiver
 - These interpretations are simply not accurate
 - His name is simply a playful reminder of how he was born
 - Though it does assume additional meaning over the course of his life
 - As we go further in the story of Jacob, we will need to challenge many of the popular notions concerning his personality and his behavior
 - It's safe to say that if you've studied Jacob's story in the past, you've been exposed to many of these notions
 - "Jacob the sneaky thief who tricks his brother and his father"
 - "The selfish, scheming kid who broke up his family"
 - If you've heard any of these stories, then I ask you to set those notions aside for the duration of time studying the man Jacob
 - Let the text of Scripture speak to you and see if you don't come to a very different perspective of this man
 - The man whom God names Israel and uses to bring forth a nation

Gen. 25:27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.

Gen. 25:28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

- Moses' storytelling of the lives of Esau and Jacob progresses quickly to adulthood
 - Esau is a skillful hunter and a man of the field, while Jacob is described as a peaceful man living in tents
 - Immediately, we have our first opportunity to dispel one of the more common misconceptions concerning Jacob
 - When we hear that Esau was a skillful hunter and out in the field while Jacob stayed in the tents, we may be tempted to imagine a scene from a Disney cartoon
 - On the one hand, we have rugged outdoorsman Esau
 - He has a size 46 chest and 30 inch waist
 - The square jaw, tanned skin and chiseled good looks
 - Reminds you of me, right?
 - On the other hand, we have Jacob, the momma's boy living in tents
 - Pasty, weak, with a mousey voice and weak constitution
 - Spends his days sewing, planting flowers and cooking with the women
 - Contributing to the stereotype, v.28 tells us that Esau was Isaac's favorite while

Jacob was Rebekah's favorite

- So Esau was a man's man and Jacob was a momma's boy
- Based on all these assumptions, we're prepared to accept a false storyline reinforced by lazy preaching that simply repeats the stereotypes and never bothers to revisit the text of Scripture
- Let's take a second look at what we're learning here, and we're going to find the truth is actually opposite
 - First, Esau is a skillful hunter
 - While hunting isn't a negative pursuit, the Bible typically uses this description as a negative description
 - You remember the evil, rebellious Nimrod was described this way in Genesis 10

Gen. 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD."

- The purpose of this description is to paint a picture of a man who relies on his own strength while lacking humility
- Just as the direction "east" takes on a negative meaning in scripture by association, likewise the description of skilled hunter has a negative sense in Scripture
- But we don't have to rely on supposition and association to understand Esau's heart
 - Hebrews 12:16 calls Esau a godless person
 - And in the context of that chapter, the writer of Hebrews uses Esau as someone who was close to the truth but never embraced it personally
- Then we have Jacob
 - Take a second look at the text in v.27
 - Jacob is described as a peaceful man
 - The Hebrew word for peaceful is *tam*, which is actually the word blameless
 - This the same word that was used to describe Noah and Abraham and later Job
 - The word is also used to describe a holy and pleasing man in Psalm 18
 - Does it begin to challenge your assumptions about Jacob when you learn that the Bible describes him as blameless?
 - It should
 - Remember, blameless doesn't mean sinless
 - It means he lives an upright life, endeavoring to please God and maintain a good testimony before men
 - And what about living in the tents?

- Here's another misconception based on an ignorance of the culture
- Living in tents doesn't mean remaining in the tent all day, or being afraid to go outside, etc.
- The term is simply a description of the life of a nomad
 - We could just have easily described Abraham as a man living in tents
 - Likewise, Isaac was a man who lived in tents
 - The term refers to shepherding and wandering from pasture to pasture with the animals
 - Jacob followed in the footsteps of his grandfather and father by remaining a wanderer
 - But Esau rejected his father's life and lifestyle, preferring to rely on farming and hunting
 - These professions necessarily required Esau to remain in one place and put down roots
 - Esau claimed some plot of land and made it his home
- Remember why Abraham and Isaac have refused to make this same decision
 - The Scripture told us that they remained wanderers and never took ownership of any significant part of the land as a show of faith in God's promises
 - They understood that the inheritance God promised wouldn't become reality until they enjoyed it in their resurrected life
 - They resisted any opportunity to put down roots because they didn't want to make a claim in this world and forfeit their claims to the greater world to come
 - And now we find Jacob continuing in this way while his brother Esau has forsaken the pattern
 - So if remaining a wanderer is a sign of faith in God's promises, what does it say about Esau if he chooses not to wander? Then we have the issue of Isaac and Rebekah and their favoritism of the different boys
 - Isaac is clearly enamored by Esau's strength and his ability to put meat on the table
 - We can understand this, since Isaac has only known shepherding and living off the land
 - Now along comes a son who spices up life
 - He brings back game, an exciting taste for Isaac
 - Notice in v.28 we're told that Isaac's interest in Esau stems from that enjoyment of wild game
 - Isn't it fair to say that Isaac's favoritism for Esau was driven by the flesh?
 - There is no good reason to show favoritism among your children
 - But Isaac's choice of Esau was made worse because it came as a result of his fleshly desire for exciting food
 - Rebekah on the other hand favors Jacob

- What might explain her preference for Jacob?
- Remember that the Lord spoke to Rebekah with a word concerning the two children and God's plan for Jacob
 - Rebekah is holding Jacob dear in her heart because of God's promise
 - She knows Jacob will be the son God will give the birthright
- But there's a deeper issue in this family, one that will become even clearer in the next chapter but which we can already see here
 - Notice in v.23 that the Lord speaks to Rebekah only in revealing the future for these children
 - There is no record that Isaac heard these words
 - He doesn't know that there will be twins and that the older shall serve the younger
 - We see confirmation of this in v.24 when the text says behold, Rebekah gives birth to twins
 - The word behold conveys a sense of surprise
 - Who would be surprised by twins? Certainly not Rebekah, only Isaac
 - Why didn't Rebekah reveal these words to Isaac?
 - We can imagine many reasons, perhaps, but one thing seems obvious
 - Rebekah and Isaac weren't working together in this marriage
 - We see this clearly in the way Moses describes each one choosing a different son as favorite
 - Rebekah has accepted the Lord's decree concerning Jacob but she hasn't shared that word yet with Isaac, or so it would seem
 - And as Isaac allows his flesh to draw himself to Esau, Rebekah grows more defensive over Jacob, knowing God's promise is to bless Jacob over Esau
 - But remember what we learned last week, that in this culture the patriarch had the right to assign the birthright to whomever he chooses
- So we can detect a tension developing in our story
 - Isaac will one day transfer the birthright to one of his sons
 - While the Lord has declared to Rebekah that the son to receive the Lord's blessing will be Jacob, Rebekah hasn't shared that revelation with Isaac
 - Meanwhile, Isaac is proceeding under the natural assumption that Esau, the oldest, will receive the blessing
 - And Isaac's fleshly attraction to Esau's lifestyle has blinded him to God's work in Jacob's life
 - And Rebekah grows more concerned for how God will bring about His promise to bless Jacob
 - She begins to fear something will have to be done or else Isaac will move against the Lord's wishes and convey the blessing to Esau

- If you can't tell already, Isaac's family is sliding into a dysfunctional, soap opera household
 - And the story lines are multiplying fast
 - Will Rebekah reveal to Isaac that Jacob is God's favored child?
 - Will Isaac go against the Lord's wishes and grant the birthright to Esau anyway?
 - How will the Lord ensure His preference for Jacob will be honored?
 - Join us next week for our next episode...

- Who will inherit the promises and blessing contained in the birthright of Isaac?
 - Will it be the older, Esau?
 - The natural choice according to the world's expectations
 - He's the skilled hunter whom his father prefers because of his desire for wild game
 - Or will it be the younger, Jacob?
 - The one God has said will receive the birthright
 - The peaceful, blameless child that Rebekah loves
 - Since the father has the right to choose who receives the birthright, it would seem that God's preference doesn't stand a fighting chance
 - Isaac is likely to choose Esau for the birthright in keeping with custom and his preference for Esau
 - But God told Rebekah that the birthright shall be Jacob's, and she knows her husband isn't inclined to follow this command
- So today we witness the first step of how God resolves this dilemma

Gen. 25:29 When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished;

Gen. 25:30 and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom.

- Jacob was in the tent, cooking a stew, when Esau came in from the field
 - Here again our stereotypes are working against us
 - Do you imagine Jacob wearing an apron?
 - Do you assume Esau is taller?
 - In your mind's eye you see start to assign subtle meaning to each person's actions and words
 - But let's stick to the text
 - Esau comes into the tent with great hunger
 - The Hebrew word for famished means "faint" as in weak
 - His hunger is so great that he has reached a point of being faint
 - No surprise there...working in the field will produce that kind of result
 - In fact, you might remember God's curse on the ground
 - God told Adam that you will toil all the days of your life in working the ground
 - By the sweat of your face you will eat bread
 - Our physical labor and difficulty in sustaining ourselves by working the

land is a result of God's curse

- So Esau has entered the tent suffering from the physical consequences of the curse of Adam's sin
- And Jacob has the potential to solve Esau's physical problem
 - Jacob has been cooking a meal, probably for himself
 - The stew is called "red stuff" in our English text, because the literal Hebrew is simply "red red"
 - The term is literally *adom edom*, which explains how the name Edom came from Esau
 - But that connection becomes a point of shame for Esau and his descendants
 - Esau didn't even know what kind of food it was...he was simply hungry and he knew his body needed food
- On one level, this moment resembles normal, daily life in every family
 - And if the situation had gone no farther, we wouldn't even be talking about it
 - It wouldn't be recorded in Scripture
 - But of course that's not where it ended
 - Before we look at what follows, consider the circumstances of nomadic life in that day
 - Isaac inherited all the wealth of Abraham, so he would have had a large family settlement
 - He had herds, servants, maids, and other possessions
 - He would have had many tents in an encampment
 - Part of that encampment included maids and servants responsible for cooking and washing and attending to the basic needs of Isaac and his family and his working men
 - So as Esau comes in from the field, he could have expected a meal to be served at the end of that day
 - Esau wasn't required to find his own meal or go hungry
 - He only had to wait for the normal meal time, when the entire encampment would have been fed
 - Why was Jacob cooking then?
 - One explanation is simply that Jacob was assisting in the preparation of food as a part of his working in the camp
 - Or perhaps he had decided to prepare his own meal apart from the normal meal service
 - In either case, Jacob's stew was not the only source of food in the camp
 - Esau doesn't want to wait for his meal

- Esau doesn't have a pantry of ready-made food for snacking
- And the process of food preparation takes time and effort, much more so than we know today
- So Jacob's food provides a quicker solution
- When Esau requests the food, he asks in a very unique way
 - The Hebrew word for swallow is an uncommon word
 - It means a greedy gulp, and the Hebrew word never appears again in Scripture
 - It conveys a sense that Esau was so driven by his flesh, so greedy that it had reached the point he was willing to stuff the food down his throat in a grotesque way
 - So Jacob senses that Esau is completely consumed by the needs of his flesh, and so he suggests that they should enter into a bargain over the food

Gen. 25:31 But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."

Gen. 25:32 Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?"

- Jacob makes an offer: I will give you what you want if you give me what I want
 - Esau can have the stew if he sells Jacob his birthright
 - This is a bizarre deal of course
 - Who would sell their birthright for anything so worthless?
 - Let's be clear on what Jacob is suggesting
 - Esau is the firstborn, and therefore he held the birthright
 - Later in the Law, God codified the eastern tradition

Deut. 21:17 "But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn."

- So, the birthright entitled Esau to a double portion of the father's inheritance
 - He had a double portion of the father's inheritance, the land, the servants, the livestock, etc.
 - In Isaac's case the birthright also entitled the son to inherit God's covenant blessings and promises
 - These promises were all-or-nothing
 - They could not be divided between sons, at least not at this point
 - Finally, by tradition the oldest also became the patriarch in the family and all other family members in the clan must serve him and answer to his authority

- So Jacob is suggesting that Esau trade all of that for a bowl of stew
 - If Esau agrees, he will no longer receive the double portion of the land
 - He will no longer be the leader of the clan
 - He will not receive God's promises in the covenant
- So, naturally Esau laughs at Jacob's suggestion and turns it down instantly
 - Amazingly, Esau responds by saying "I am about to die, so what good is my birthright"
 - Taken one way, Esau's comments are literally true
 - If the oldest son dies prior to the father's transfer of the inheritance, then he gains nothing from his birthright
 - The birthright would have transferred to Jacob anyway
 - Nevertheless, Esau's response is bizarre because he wasn't in danger of dying
 - We need to read his response with a sarcastic tone
 - We've all heard something similar in our family lives
 - Children who complain that they are going to "die" unless they eat something immediately
 - Esau's suggestion is something of the same...I'm "dying" of hunger
 - So Esau's response indicates he's willing to agree to Jacob's terms
 - What caused Jacob to even think that Esau would have made such a trade?
 - Would you even consider walking next door to your neighbor's house carrying a bowl of Texas chili and suggesting that they sell their house to you in exchange for a bowl of chili?
 - Even if you make the best Texas chili, it's still not something you're likely to do because you wouldn't expect someone to actually agree to those terms
 - The only way you might try something so ridiculous is if you had some reason to suspect the person might make such a deal
 - So apparently, Jacob knew something about his brother's view of the birthright
- So let's see how this deal goes down

Gen. 25:33 And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Gen. 25:34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

- Jacob says swear to me first
 - The literal Hebrew reads swear to me today
 - We start to form a picture in our mind of how the scene played out

- After Jacob suggested the deal, Esau made his flippant, exaggerated comment and then he probably reached for the stew
 - Maybe Jacob pulled the bowl back just out of reach
 - And then he said swear this to me today
- Jacob knew that words are cheap
 - If Esau was even willing to consider this offer, Jacob needed to make it official now
 - In that culture, swearing an oath was a solemn, serious commitment
 - To swear an oath and then go back on your word was punishable by death
 - And people didn't lie over making such agreements either
 - Jacob's testimony concerning Esau's oath would have been enough to make the deal binding
 - So the text confirms that Esau took the oath and the birthright became Jacob's
- In the ancient eastern culture, a son could sell his birthright to another son
 - So this was a legitimate transaction, and the patriarch would have been bound to respect the transaction
- In v.24 we see the transaction completed
 - Esau gained what he wanted and rose up and went his way
 - He gives not a second thought for the birthright and what he traded for the meal
 - How can we explain Esau's behavior?
 - Let's assume for the moment he's not mentally ill or a complete idiot, since Scripture doesn't suggest this is the issue
 - So what would cause Esau to make such a deal?
 - There are two possible explanations
 - First, we might assume that Esau didn't think this arrangement would be binding
 - Perhaps he thought that this deal wouldn't hold in the end and their father Isaac would still give him the birthright in the end
 - Therefore, Esau was playing along here to get the stew without a real expectation the birthright would be transferred
 - There is a problem with this view
 - First, scripture testified that the birthright was transferred at this moment by means of an oath
 - When Jacob insisted on an oath, Esau knew this was binding
 - Both parties understood that a real deal was done
 - Secondly, we get confirmation from Esau himself that the birthright was transferred in this moment

Gen. 27:36 Then he said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.”

- We’ll study this moment in a week to come, but Esau’s statement makes clear that he knew that in this moment, he traded his birthright to Jacob
- So if Esau knew this was a binding transfer, why did he do it?
 - Logically, the only answer we have left is that Esau considered the stew more valuable than the birthright
 - How little regard would Esau have for his birthright if he felt it was less valuable than a bowl of stew?
 - We get our answer in v.34 when we’re told that Esau despised his birthright
 - The word for despised is to have contempt or disdain for it
 - We have a phrase in English that says much the same thing
 - We say “I couldn’t care less”
- Why did Esau despise something so valuable?
 - Let’s consider what he understood he would inherit
 - The birthright gave him a double portion of his father’s property
 - But Isaac owned very little in the land
 - He had tents, servants and herds
 - But Esau was a man of the field
 - What was he going to do with tents, sheep and the like?
 - He wanted land and Dad owned none
 - A double portion of his father’s estate was of no greater value than a regular portion
 - Remember we asked how Jacob might have expected Esau to agree to such a dumb deal
 - And now we see why: Jacob knew his brother held his father’s inheritance in low regard
 - But there is the matter of the right to rule over the clan and assume the role of patriarch
 - In traditional terms, the right to rule over the clan was transferred by the patriarch in the form of a blessing upon the patriarch’s deathbed
 - When the patriarch was nearing the end of his life, he would pronounce a blessing on each child
 - The blessing included the pronouncement of who would take his place as the pre-eminent member of the family and the leader of the clan
 - This blessing had the force of law, and not even the patriarch could change it

once it was pronounced

- Think of it like the resignation of President Nixon and the the transition of power to President Ford
 - Even if Nixon had desired to change his mind and return to the Oval Office, he couldn't have done
 - The power had been transferred and he was no longer able to claim the office
- So Esau probably assumed that Isaac would still assign him the chief blessing of the family, even though the double portion of the inheritance had been sold to Jacob
- Finally, what about Esau's loss of God's promises
 - Isaac has certainly communicated to his sons that his inheritance includes the promises of God
 - These promises are the real treasure of Isaac's inheritance
 - In fact, the reason Isaac has no land or worthwhile inheritance to offer Esau is precisely because Isaac has placed all his trust and expectation in the future inheritance God has promised
 - Esau had no regard for the covenant, because he didn't believe in God's promises
 - Esau couldn't accept that Abraham and Isaac had trusted in the right thing
 - He was so flesh-driven, the thought of a good meal mattered more to him than the word of God
 - In a word, Esau had no faith in God's promises, and it meant he despised – couldn't care less about – that inheritance
 - And since even the earthly inheritance was meaningless to him, he willingly traded it away
- What would you say if I walked up to you and suggested we make a bargain similar to the one Jacob and Esau made
 - I will give you a nice meal or perhaps a nice watch or even a nice car or beautiful house
 - In fact, I will give you all these things
 - But in exchange, I want the future inheritance you stand to receive upon the day Christ enters into His earthly kingdom
 - Would you make that deal?
 - Wouldn't your answer depend on what you believed about the Bible's teaching concerning eternal inheritance?
 - Wouldn't it depend on your faith in God's promises when He says

1Cor. 2:6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

1Cor. 2:7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

1Cor. 2:8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

1Cor. 2:9 but just as it is written,

**“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”**

- If you are saved by grace, a child of God, a believer in Jesus Christ and the promises God has made to you by His Son, then you wouldn't trade that inheritance for the world
 - But if you view the promises in God's word as meaningless words in a worthless book
 - If you cannot trust in God and do not see Him as faithful, then you have nothing to lose by making that trade
- You would repeat the words of Esau, when he said what good are these things if I die
 - The unbeliever's heart only knows this world, the here-and-now, the things they see and touch
 - And death brings an end to all these things, and they have no hope for anything more to come
 - So all their trust remains in this world
 - There are no plans for eternity, no investment to be made in that future life, no hope for something better
 - So they take all that they can now in trade for that future, because when I die, there will be nothing left for me
- The believer is called to think and act in opposite ways
 - We are reminded that nothing in this life is worth trading for the inheritance to come
 - In fact, we do the opposite
 - We willingly trade everything in this life – like Abraham and Isaac did – to ensure our inheritance in the world to come
 - We believe in God's promises, we trust in God's faithfulness
 - We live by faith

Matt. 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

- Next week, we'll move on in the story, but we'll come back to this story in Chapter 27, to consider where God's purposes fit into these events

- We've been watching several generations growing up under God's hand
 - Abraham was the first, and now that he's gone the promises and blessing of God move on down the line
 - We know the son of God's choosing, Isaac, has received those promises
 - But last week Moses had already skipped past Isaac and begun to talk about his twin boys
 - We're already looking at how God is working to deliver His promises to that next generation
 - But wait a minute...we've hardly learned anything about Isaac
 - He's still the holder of the promises of God and he is still the patriarch
 - The narrative seems to be getting ahead of itself a little
 - And so it was, because in Chapter 26 Moses presents us with a few key moments from the life of Isaac
 - Truly, this chapter gives us just about all we might know about Isaac as the patriarch
 - Frankly, there isn't much here, especially compared to Abraham and Jacob
 - Abraham has about 13 chapters while Jacob receives at least as many
 - For Isaac, it comes down to a single chapter
- So we have to see this chapter in a certain light
 - Isaac lives longer than his father Abraham, so his life was long and full
 - It didn't see the same ups and downs as Abraham, nevertheless there are a few important moments
 - And Moses chooses to highlight three experiences in Isaac's life to teach us three important points concerning his life

Gen. 26:1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

Gen. 26:2 The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you.

Gen. 26:3 "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.

Gen. 26:4 "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

Gen. 26:5 because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

Gen. 26:6 So Isaac lived in Gerar.

- If we wanted to give Chapter 26 a title, it might be ‘back to the future’
 - The little we’re going to learn about Isaac follows a very familiar storyline
 - For example, Isaac lived in the land during a time of famine
 - Moses clarifies that this is not the same famine that Abraham knew
 - This one has come many decades later
 - During that earlier famine, Abraham fled to Egypt to find food
 - As we studied back then, this was not the step of faith God wanted
 - Here again, God is bringing a famine upon the land
- This time, Isaac begins to move away from the famine
 - We were told in Chapter 25 that Isaac settled in Beer-lahai-roi
 - Now he moves northwest to Gerar
 - Gerar was the land of Abimelech, king of the people who would later become the Philistines
 - Notice that Isaac doesn’t move south to the Egyptian border like Abraham did in his day
 - Instead, he moves away from the high desert mountain ranges to the valleys near the Mediterranean Sea coast
 - This move makes sense since it places his flocks in a better grazing environment
 - But any time a famine comes to a desert land, the situation becomes desperate very quickly
 - So even after this move, Isaac doesn’t have enough to feed himself and his flocks
- This famine gives the Lord an occasion to appear to Isaac for the first time
 - This is a significant moment in the story of the patriarchs
 - Up to this moment, only Abraham had received a vision from the Lord
 - All that Isaac knew concerning the Lord came from Abraham’s testimony and reports
 - Isaac himself had never seen or heard anything to validate Abraham’s claims concerning a covenant
 - We know that Isaac had already demonstrated faith in God and was expecting to receive the covenant promises
 - But now he receives that assurance in person
- God repeats all the major elements of the promise that we’ve already seen Abraham receive
 - God admonishes Isaac to stay in the land; don’t go to Egypt
 - God will be with Isaac and bless Isaac
 - And Isaac will receive these lands

- These lands refers to the entire land promised in the blessing given to Abraham in Genesis 15
 - The land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River in Iraq
- Isaac's descendants will be innumerable and will inherit these lands as well
 - And through them, all the nations of the Earth will be blessed too
- We noted back in Chapter 12 that the promises God made to Abraham were unconditional
 - God's promises weren't dependent on anything that Abraham did
 - So why does God say in v.5 that this covenant is coming to Isaac because Abraham obeyed God?
 - The answer is that the English text doesn't capture the meaning properly
 - The Hebrew word for obey is *shama*, which is the word for hear
 - Abraham heard God and kept or guarded God's commandments
 - Isaac has the benefit of these blessings because Abraham heard from God and then believed what he was told
 - Belief in God's word makes everything happen

John 6:28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

- Abraham didn't earn the blessings of the covenant; He heard God's word and He believed it
 - And Abraham's belief produced a change in his behavior
 - It didn't make Abraham sinless...Moses' account makes that clear
 - But his faith did grow him into a man who trusted in God and in His word
 - This is the normal, expected transformation that Scripture calls all believers to expect and pursue
 - Our faith changes us spiritually, and that change is expected to produce outward changes of behavior

1John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

1John 2:4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

1John 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

1John 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same

manner as He walked.

1John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

- John warns that someone who claims to know Jesus should show evidence of that knowledge in their life
 - John's test isn't that we lead perfect lives or even necessarily that we have a mature walk
 - But the central truth is in v.6
 - The one who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same manner
 - Ought means we should
 - We should expect it in ourselves and in others
 - But ought also gives room for the possibility that a few Christians might do otherwise
 - The flesh is so powerful, and it will trap some Christians in a life of disobedience
 - For a few, the ought means they aren't there yet
 - They aren't willing to acknowledge the power of sin repent and make the hard choices that will lead to putting sin aside and moving forward
- But for the majority of Christians, the ought means we – like Abraham – will show progress in our lives
 - And notice that John says in v.7 that this commandment to walk in obedience to God's word is not a new commandment
 - It's an old commandment, from the beginning
 - And the beginning refers to the word Adam received in the garden
 - All mankind has been called from the beginning to walk according to the word of God
- What effect did God's word have on Isaac?
 - We see in v.6
 - Isaac remained in Gerar
 - While he might have been contemplating moving to Egypt, as his father had done, now he decided to stay where he was
 - In fact, Isaac is the only patriarch who never left the land in his entire lifetime
 - And he did so because the Lord had directed Isaac to do so
 - So the first thing Moses wanted to teach us about Isaac was he was a man who obeyed God's word
 - Perhaps even more so than Abraham – and certainly more than Jacob – Isaac

was content to hear the word of the Lord and do it

- If Abraham was the father of faith, then perhaps Isaac was the father of obedience

Gen. 26:7 When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say, “my wife,” thinking, “the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.”

Gen. 26:8 It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah.

Gen. 26:9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, ‘She is my sister?’” And Isaac said to him, “Because I said, ‘I might die on account of her.’”

Gen. 26:10 Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

Gen. 26:11 So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, “He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

- Once more, it’s back to the past
 - Isaac is living in a foreign land, though ironically this is the land he will receive as an inheritance
 - This land is owned by the forerunners of the Philistines
 - And Isaac’s fear of the Philistines was understandable
 - They were a particularly brutal and pagan people
 - A sea people that migrated from Crete primarily in the 12th century BC, but some appeared earlier like those in Isaac’s day
 - Universally hated (e.g., Egyptians thought of them as pirates)
 - Others from Crete were often called cretins as a demeaning term
 - So, Isaac pulls a page from Dad’s play book and calls Rebekah his sister
 - The men from the region inquire about Rebekah
 - There is only one reason to inquire about a woman
 - You are interested in marrying her
 - Issac should have simply said she is my wife, but he feared he was vulnerable and weak and could be killed easily
 - So he tells the men that Rebekah is his sister
 - Once again, a man puts his wife at great risk to save his own neck
 - At least this time there is no indication that Rebekah is asked to lie with him as Sarah was told

- Isaac's opportunity to make this claim would have depended on being childless
 - So these events must have occurred before Jacob's and Esau's birth in Chapter 25
 - Where before Abraham and Sarah were in fact half siblings, now Isaac and Rebekah are cousins
 - But of course, that relationship doesn't change the fact that both Abraham and now Isaac are lying
 - Rebekah is his wife
- Like his father before him, Isaac is displaying a belief that the ends justify the means
 - We said before that any form of deception reflects a lack of trust in the Lord
 - When we go against the Lord's commands to suit our own purposes, we declare by our actions that we don't place our trust in God's plan
 - If it were God's intention that Isaac die at the hands of the Philistines or the famine, then death would have been the best thing
 - Isaac's deception is soon discovered
 - Abimelech, king of the Philistine people, looks out a window to see Isaac caressing Rebekah
 - This is probably the son of the king who met Abraham in Chapter 20
 - The term Abimelech is a title given to the king of the Philistines
 - Still, it could be the same king since we're less than 100 years since the previous encounter and men are still living 175 years in this day
 - The word for caressing is actually the word for laugh, which if you remember is the root word for Isaac
 - So, the text actually says something like Isaac was isaac-ing with Rebecca
 - By the context, we get the point
 - Isaac was engaged in behavior with Rebekah that brothers don't normally do with sisters
 - It was something that husbands do with wives
 - And Abimelech immediately gets the point
 - Isn't it interesting that this was enough to tell Abimelech that this visitor was lying
 - Isaac's behavior gave a more accurate testimony concerning the truth than did Isaac's words
 - This is so ironic given we just saw how Isaac's behavior was cause for commendation a moment earlier
 - He stayed in the land to obey the voice of the Lord
 - But now Isaac's behavior becomes a witness against his own word
 - Once again the principle of 1 John 2 is proved true

- What we do tells us more about our hearts than what we say
- What led Abimelech to see Isaac's behavior?
 - Wouldn't we credit God with this discovery?
 - Back when Abraham went into Egypt, God revealed that Sarah was Abraham's wife by bringing plagues
 - Later when Abraham did the same thing to Abimelech, God revealed the truth through a dream
 - Now God has simply given Abimelech the opportunity to see the truth in a natural moment
 - God is capable of revealing our sins in countless ways, but we should expect Him to do so sooner or later
 - Exposing our sin is the first step to ending it in our lives
 - Don't expect it to remain hidden forever
 - If not in this life, certainly in the next life

Luke 8:17 "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

- As with Pharaoh and the earlier Abimelech, this king is livid at discovering the deception
 - Once again, a foreigner has stepped into the land and lied about his wife
 - And by that lie, Isaac brought the possibility that another man – perhaps even the king – might be guilty of adultery
 - Wouldn't it be nice to live in a day and culture where people worried this much about violating marriage?
 - Where even the leader of a nation was threatened by the prospect of committing adultery?
 - In this day, this problem was serious
 - Remember that Isaac is a wealthy man, and his wealth poses a threat to Abimelech
 - So Abimelech has his own reasons to avoid a conflict
 - So the king admonished Isaac and declares that no one may touch Rebekah
 - His declaration is assurance to Isaac that he had nothing to fear in the first place
 - And so Moses teaches us a second important fact concerning Isaac
 - He wasn't sinless, no more than his father
 - But God continues to bless and protect Isaac nonetheless
- In fact, look at the result of Isaac's remaining in the land as God directed

Gen. 26:12 Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him,
Gen. 26:13 and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy;
Gen. 26:14 for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.

- Isaac grew strong and soon was a real threat to this king, just as his father had been in the earlier generation
 - The people in the land become increasingly jealous of Isaac
 - Remember this harvest comes during the years of a famine
 - It's likely that Isaac alone is seeing this increase since the famine has probably decimated the herds and crops of all those around him
 - It must have been a remarkable testimony for Isaac to be rich in the midst of a famine
 - Isaac's life has resumed being a witness to God's power and mercy and grace
 - He lived in the land, he depended upon the Lord, he stopped lying to protect himself
 - And so God's presence in Isaac's life shines through
 - But does His presence cause the Philistines to respond in kindness and understanding?
 - Not at all...the world will respond as enemies of God and God's people

A young man saw an elderly couple sitting down to lunch at Burger King. He notices that they ordered one meal, and an extra drink cup. As he watched, the gentleman carefully divided the hamburger in half, then counted out the fries. One for him, one for her, until each had half of them. Then he poured half of the soft drink into the extra cup, and set it in front of his wife. The old man began to eat, and his wife sat watching, with her hands folded in her lap.

The young man decided to ask if they would allow him to purchase another meal for them so that they didn't have to split theirs.

The old gentleman said, "Oh, no. We've been married 50 years, and everything has always been and will always be shared, 50/50."

The young man then asked the wife if she was going to eat, and she replied, "Not yet. It's his turn to use the teeth."

- Let's dive back into the short chapter that gives us all we have on the long life of Isaac
 - In the first part of the chapter we noted that Moses is highlighting three thoughts about Isaac the man
 - Each point is made by retelling a particular event in the life of Isaac
 - These events were selected because they illustrate the point Moses believes we need to know
 - The first point Moses taught us was that Isaac was a man who heard and obeyed God
 - He remained in the land according to God's instructions even though the famine was severe
 - Moses' second point fills out the man by showing he wasn't perfect
 - Moses told of the time when Isaac lied about his wife, just as Abraham had done twice before
 - Besides confirming that Isaac is his father's son, this account told us that Isaac was a sinner like the rest of us
 - He had faults, worries, fears, temptations
 - He lacked trust in God at times, relying on his own devices instead of relying on God
 - But then we watched as God came to his aid nonetheless
 - God is remaining faithful to His promises despite Isaac's sin
 - Just as He did with Abraham
 - The more things change, the more they stay the same
 - It's back to the future, as we said
 - So now we move to the third event in Isaac's brief story

Gen. 26:12 Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him,

Gen. 26:13 and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy;

Gen. 26:14 for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.

Gen. 26:15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth.

Gen. 26:16 Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us."

Gen. 26:17 And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there.

- As we begin reading today, remember these events are set in a time of drought...in a

desert region no less

- Isaac was told by God to remain in this land despite the drought, which Isaac has done
 - But the question remains, how will God provide for Isaac?
 - In a drought, the land will not have pasture land for the herds
 - So how will Isaac find food for himself, his family and his flocks?
- In v.12 we're told that he plants crops
 - When we discussed Esau and Jacob we noted that Esau's choice to become a farmer and hunter was a sign he rejected shepherding
 - So does this mean Isaac is doing the same thing?
- In the context of Chapter 26, it will quickly become apparent that the answer is no
 - Isaac's isn't planting crops as a new way of life...he's trying to stay alive
 - And when the fields aren't growing grass for the flocks, you have to take other steps
- But the last thing someone should undertake during a drought is to plant new crops
 - But that's exactly what Isaac does, under God's direction
 - This is the Lord taking care of Isaac as He promised
 - Notice it says Isaac planted and reaped in the same year
 - This is a drought harvest, so these crops grew miraculously
 - And this was no ordinary harvest
 - Isaac reaped one hundred fold
 - Again, a miraculous bounty proving to Isaac and everyone who witnessed this event that God was truly keeping His promise to Isaac
 - In v.13 Moses uses a series of Hebrew words to emphasize the magnitude of Isaac's wealth resulting from this harvest
 - He became rich, then richer, and then wealthy
 - He has food, and his flocks multiplied as did his entire household
 - In Hebrew, the progression is of rich, richer, richest
 - Bottom line: Isaac couldn't be more wealthy and powerful
 - And this happened in a drought
 - Now we know for certain that Abraham didn't need to go to Egypt to escape the famine in his day
 - He could have remained in the land and the Lord would have cared for him just fine
- I wonder what Isaac expected when he planted that crop?
 - Did he expect the crop to survive at all?

- Did he say to himself, “Hopefully we’ll get enough to make it through the winter”
- So then God brings a windfall so amazing that it stuns everyone in Gerar
- Remember this next time you stand in Isaac’s place, wondering how you’ll make it through a time of need or desperation
 - As Paul said...God is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us
- Then in v.14 the people of Gerar became envious of Isaac because of this blessing
 - They knew something was up with Isaac
 - The only explanation for such a harvest in a time of drought was that Isaac had a powerful God on his side
 - In a drought, food was power, and Isaac has suddenly become very powerful in this land of Abimelech
 - So Abimelech responds the way every threatened sovereign would: he tries to put space between himself and the new power on the block
 - But since Isaac has all the power, Abimelech has to force Isaac out using subversive tactics
- Abimelech commands his men to fill up all the wells that Abraham dug in the land of Gerar
 - Remember that these wells are the keys to life in the desert
 - They are hard to dig, being so deep, and if they are gone, then life can’t exist in the region, especially in a drought
 - Abraham dug them originally, and he entered into a covenant with Abimelech
 - But since Abraham has died, that covenant is no longer in effect
 - And the present-day Abimelech decides to play tough rather than sue for peace like the earlier Abimelech did
 - So by filling them up, Abimelech hopes to drive Isaac further away
 - Sure enough, Isaac decides to give way and put some distance between himself and the king
 - He travels from the city of Gerar to the valley of Gerar, which is southeast of the city in the direction of Beersheba
 - Beersheba is only fifteen miles away, and it’s the closest thing Abraham’s family has to a home in the land
 - So it makes sense for Isaac to head in that direction
 - Here’s our proof that Isaac hasn’t forsaken his lifestyle of wandering in the land
 - Although he planted a wildly successive crop, he abandoned it easily
 - This wasn’t his land
 - The land belonged to the Philistines

- God promised the land to Isaac, but not this land, not now
- So Isaac recognizes he's an interloper and moves on

Gen. 26:18 Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.

Gen. 26:19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water,

Gen. 26:20 the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him.

Gen. 26:21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah.

Gen. 26:22 He moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land."

- As Isaac moves, he must find water, so he locates the wells his father dug in past years
 - These wells had been filled by the Philistines after Abraham died, because the covenant had expired at Abraham's death
 - But Isaac knew there would be water there so they dug them again
 - Sure enough, when Isaac's servants dug, they found flowing water again
 - And sure enough, the discovery of water in a drought brings more unwanted attention
 - The Philistines in this area hear that Isaac's men find water, and of course they want it for themselves
 - Digging a well was an intensive undertaking of manpower
 - Therefore, only the wealthiest people could manage to dig a well
 - This explains why the Philistines weren't able to dig themselves, but now they want it
 - Isaac's men name this well *Esek*, which means contention
 - The name memorializes the circumstances under which the well was dug
 - In the face of more resistance, Isaac decides that it's better to keep moving
 - Once again, Isaac knows he has no claim to the land
- After moving a little farther, Isaac digs again
 - And once again the locals demand that Isaac surrender the well, since this land wasn't his land
 - This time Isaac names the well *Sintah*, which means adversary or hostility

- The word comes from the same Hebrew root for Satan
 - Isaac is suggesting that these confrontations are really the result of Satan trying to drive Isaac out of the promised land
 - In each case, Isaac is holding firm in the promises of God, yet he is suffering in this desert and has no hope as yet to receive what the Lord has promised him
 - He must continue to wander hoping to eventually find somewhere he can stay
- Some of the details of this story might begin to sound familiar to you
 - To recognize the pattern, you need to remember that Isaac is a picture of Christ at many points and here it is again
 - There is a time when Jesus goes into the desert in preparation to receive the inheritance the Father has prepared for Him
 - If Jesus is to receive that inheritance, He must remain obedient to the Father's commands
 - So to prove His obedience, Jesus goes into the wilderness without food and water for over 40 days
 - In that time, He's tormented and tempted by Satan
 - At times Satan tries to drive Jesus to disobedience
 - But all through the trials, Jesus remains true to the Word of God
 - Similarly, we have a picture of Jesus' persistence in faith in Isaac's responses to these quarrels
 - He doesn't fight back in his own power, though he had mighty power
 - He remains trusting in God's power and in God's faithfulness to His promises
- Finally, Isaac tries a third time and now the locals refrain from quarreling with him
 - Now Isaac can rest for a while, having a source of water that no one seems to care to challenge
 - This well is called *Rehoboth*, which means broad place or open room
 - Now Isaac has moved himself far enough from Abimelech to give them both room to live in peace
 - And with that Isaac concludes that the Lord has made room for Isaac in the land
 - This is the key point for Isaac: having room to dwell in this land that will one day be his but for now belongs to someone else
 - So Isaac rejoices at this prospect of living out his days in peace
 - This is the perfect picture of how all believers are to live in this life
 - Today, we find ourselves the recipients of covenant promises from the Lord
 - Those promises guarantee that one day we will have a wonderful

inheritance in the world

- That inheritance will come after the resurrection and Jesus' return
- And even though today we are living on the very same planet that will host Jesus' return and serve as our home with Him, we are not going to receive that inheritance this side of the resurrection
 - We are simply borrowing someone else's land and wealth at this point
 - We aren't supposed to get comfortable
 - We aren't supposed to object when God asks us to leave our wells behind and move on
 - They don't belong to us anyway
 - We've been promised better things
- So in faith, we'll be content for the Lord to give us room, space to live in this world in some measure of peace
 - Isaac's life was blessed immensely because God made that promise to Abraham and his descendants
 - But the true measure of Isaac's blessing wasn't seen in what he received in the land in this day
 - The true measure will be seen in eternity
 - And whether God determines we should have a lot or a little in this world, what does it matter?
 - It's passing...it's not ours to keep anyway

Gen. 26:23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba.

Gen. 26:24 The LORD appeared to him the same night and said,

"I am the God of your father Abraham;

Do not fear, for I am with you.

I will bless you, and multiply your descendants,

For the sake of My servant Abraham."

Gen. 26:25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

- Finally Isaac reaches Beersheba
 - Beersheba was the place Isaac left when the famine began
 - He had ventured to Gerar to find better pasture
 - This prompted the Lord to appear to Isaac and tell him not to leave the land
 - If Isaac remained in the land, the Lord would care for Isaac, and in faith Isaac obeyed
 - But nevertheless, Isaac remained in Gerar

- But as quarrel after quarrel took place, they had the effect of pushing Isaac steadily back toward Beersheba
- Could it be that the Lord was using these conflicts to move Isaac back to this area where Abraham had sojourned?
- This seems to be the case, because as Isaac returns, the Lord appears to him for the second time and reaffirms His promises
 - These two visits form bookends to the story of Isaac
 - The first appearance halted Isaac's departure from Beersheba and the second appearance commemorates Isaac's return to Beersheba
- At the appearance of the Lord, Isaac's men dig one more well intending to stay here for the duration
 - The story seems to have ended, except that Abimelech returns unexpectedly

Gen. 26:26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and Phicol the commander of his army.

Gen. 26:27 Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?"

Gen. 26:28 They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you,

Gen. 26:29 that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.'"

Gen. 26:30 Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.

Gen. 26:31 In the morning they arose early and exchanged oaths; then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace.

Gen. 26:32 Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac's servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water."

Gen. 26:33 So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

- Once again, back to the future
 - In an earlier day, Abraham was approached by Abimelech suing for peace
 - And now again, this Abimelech has come to ask for a covenant with Isaac
 - The reasons are largely the same
 - Like Abraham, Isaac is sojourning in this king's land
 - But Isaac has grown so powerful he actually poses a threat to the king's authority
 - If Isaac had wanted to use his power, he could have potentially dethroned

- the king and taken control of the land
- This was Abimelech's fear, but this was not Isaac's intent
 - No more than Jesus in His day would have tried to take the throne of Israel by force by conquering Rome would Isaac expect to conquer this land
 - Isaac was content to wait for the Lord to give it to him in a future day
- But since Abimelech doesn't know Isaac's intentions, he asks for a covenant
 - This was a risky step for Abimelech, which is why he brought his army commander with him
 - He is hoping to intimidate Isaac to enter into this agreement
 - Isaac is only too happy to do so, since he has no intentions to attack the king anyway
 - So the two enter into a life-long agreement to live in harmony
 - Wells won't be filled in any longer
 - Isaac won't have to keep moving away from Gerar
 - In fact, on the day of the covenant, Isaac's men discovered water in that well they were digging in Beersheba
- What a good day for Isaac
 - He has found a peaceful existence in the land and the assurance it will continue throughout his earthly life
 - And he has found the water he needs to remain in this place
 - They named it the Hebrew word for oath, to remember the day that Abimelech made his covenant
 - God has kept His promises to Isaac
 - Isaac has received a blessing in the land even as he waits for ownership in a future day
 - As far as we know, Isaac never leaves the Negev again
 - The last place we see him is in Hebron, which is only about 20 miles north of Beersheba
- So the third and final thing we learn about Isaac is he was a man who waited on the Lord, satisfied with the Lord's promises
 - Can you be an "Isaac" in your walk with Christ?
 - Can you rest in whatever space God gives you here while you wait for an inheritance in the world to come?

- Chapter 26 taught us about Isaac
 - He was a man of faults, but he was also a man in covenant with the living God
 - And because of that covenant, God continues to bless Isaac to ensure God's plan is accomplished through this man
 - And Isaac is a man who heard God's voice, obeyed and waited patiently for those blessings
 - Meanwhile, Isaac and Rebecca are raising two sons, Esau and Jacob
 - These boys each have their own issues, and as we've seen already, the boys' issues reflect the parenting mistakes of Isaac and Rebecca
 - Isaac has long favored Esau simply for Esau's ability to bring Isaac the kind of food he likes
 - And Isaac gives every indication he intends to transfer the birthright to his eldest son
 - Rebecca prefers Jacob, probably in response to her husband's misplaced favoritism
 - And perhaps she is following the Lord's revelation that the younger son will be more honored than the older
 - It might be tempting for us to conclude that both sides were equally wrong, and neither side can claim the high ground
 - Isaac and Rebecca are both acting selfishly and deceptively
 - And before it's all over, there will be plenty of guilt to go around
 - Nevertheless, the Bible isn't silent on the issue, and as we'll see today, there is one side that deserves the blame

**Gen. 26:34 When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite;
Gen. 26:35 and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.**

- The end of Chapter 26 introduces us to Esau's wives
 - The fact of Esau's marriages isn't remarkable, except for two details
 - First, Esau takes multiple wives without cause
 - Multiple marriages have always been outside God's desire, and the entire testimony of Scripture makes that clear
 - The practice of taking multiple wives has either been associated with ungodly, carnal men like Lamech
 - Or it has been shown as a consequence of sin among God's people, as with Abraham
 - Throughout the history in the Bible, we see this pattern repeated, and in every case where multiple wives exist, trouble follows

- Esau's father has not taken multiple wives, and even his grandfather Abraham's decision to take multiple wives was a sinful act born out of frustration
 - Abraham and Sarah were trying to solve the problem of childlessness
 - Obviously, taking multiple wives was not the right thing for Abraham to do, and it created new difficulties without solving the original problem
- Now for the first time, we see the son of a patriarch willfully and without cause take multiple wives
 - This is the pattern of the unbelieving world in the day, and it reinforces what we know about Esau already
 - He is a godless man, as Hebrews says
 - He is living in his flesh
- Furthermore, we learn that Esau has chosen Canaanite women for his wives
 - This is further proof of Esau's rebellion against God and against the ways of the patriarchs
 - We remember that Abraham told his servant that Isaac was not to wed a woman from among the people in the land
 - God had revealed to Abraham that he was not to intermarry with Canaanites, because they would corrupt Abraham's family
 - Abraham must have known about the curse God spoke against these people to Noah in Genesis 9:25
 - Yet here is Esau the oldest son of Isaac purposely going against the patriarchs and against God by choosing to marry not one, but two Canaanite women
 - The women are called Judith, which means praise, and Basemath, which means perfume
 - Their names suggest the appearance of beautiful women, perhaps even gracious and kind women
- But where there is sin, we will find consequences too
 - Verse 35 tells us that these women brought grief to Isaac and Rebecca
 - The word for grief in Hebrew is actually a compound word made up of two words
 - In Hebrew it is the words bitterness and spirit
 - These women brought a spirit of bitterness to Isaac and Rebecca
 - We're given no more information than this...no details, no explanation
 - Did the women themselves bring bitterness to the parents?
 - Perhaps, but their names suggest otherwise
 - More likely, it was Esau's actions, his decision to marry multiple wives and to take wives from the Canaanite people that brought the bitterness
 - For by these actions, Esau was showing himself to be a rebel willing to disobey God's will

- As a result, Esau's parents experienced the bitterness of watching their eldest son reject and repudiate the call and commandments of God
- So many Christian families have experienced this same kind of disappointment
 - Even in the best of Christian homes, the sin of the flesh is strong and the enemy is active
 - Leading some children to rebel, to make sinful choices, to ignore godly counsel and disregard commandments of God
 - And when they do, we will suffer along with them
 - In the worst cases, our children may reveal themselves to be like Esau
 - An ungodly person whose life is marked by rebellion and sin reflecting an unbelieving heart
 - When a child rebels in this way against the family and against God, it brings a unique kind of pain to a Christian parent
 - Though the manner and timing of each person's rebellion will be different from another's, the effect on the parent is always the same
 - Grief, bitterness, disappointment, anger, sorrow
 - And there are no easy answers
- The Bible doesn't give parents a guarantee that the Lord will bring faith to every member of our household
 - Obviously, even Isaac didn't raise two godly children
 - Nevertheless, the Bible does command us to raise our children in the ways of the Lord, as part of a promise that He will guard their hearts along the way

**Prov. 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.**

- And remember God's charge to Abraham:

Gen. 18:19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

- Training your children in the righteousness of the Lord is not a guarantee of a believing household, but it does offer the hope that God may bless our obedience through the lives of our children
 - But raising children in the righteousness of the Lord is a far more demanding requirement than I suspect most Christians realize
 - It is more than dragging our kids to church on Sunday, reading bedtime Bible

stories, or praying before meals

- It's about how we make our family decisions, how we answer life's toughest questions, how we discipline and how we respond to sin
 - Is God's word the lamp to our feet?
 - Is His love and grace evident in our treatment of others?
 - When our children seek our counsel, do we take them to the answer from Scripture
 - Especially when they bring us tough questions on dating, sex, money, integrity, career, peer pressure, culture and politics?
 - Do they learn Biblical principles by watching how we live our lives, by the choices we make and attitudes we carry?
 - Do they see the Lord's influence in our thinking and actions even as we instruct our children to seek after the Lord?
- When the Bible commands parents to raise their children in the fear and admonishment of the Lord, this is what it is talking about
 - We are to impress upon our children the importance of following God through our words and our actions
 - And this process is built upon teaching our children God's word
- Obviously, this process is not easy, and it needs two parents, working in harmony
 - In my experience, when one parent is carrying the lion's share of this responsibility (especially when that one parent is the mother rather than the father), success is far from certain
 - The father needs to lead
 - But if the parents are working against each other in an effort to raise godly children, no house can stand divided against itself
- So what happened in Isaac's home?
 - Esau is a godless man who has sold his birthright to his brother
 - He has gone against God and his fathers by taking multiple wives from among the Canaanite women
 - He is a source of bitterness to his parents
 - Clearly he is not a man of God and not a proper heir to the promises of God
 - And God said it would be this way even before he was born
 - Meanwhile, they also have a godly son, Jacob, whom God has chosen to receive His promises
 - That son lives in their home, respects their authority and seeks to please them
 - How should Isaac and Rebecca respond to this situation?
 - Isaac and Rebecca must acknowledge the reality of what God has done, and not done

- They must recognize that Esau is a man determined to live without God and opposed to God's word
 - They still love him, and they will still welcome him in the family
 - But Isaac must shield his godly son from the influences of his godless brother
 - In fact, Isaac would have been right to send Esau and his godless wives away, just as Abraham did
- Meanwhile, Isaac should cultivate Jacob's faith and trust in the Lord
 - He should help Jacob grow in his walk with the Lord, acknowledging the Lord's call upon Jacob's life
 - They are obligated to honor God and His choices
- Had Isaac been thinking with his head and with his heart rather than with his stomach, he would have taken these steps
 - Instead, Isaac makes a bad situation even worse
 - He plays favorites for the ungodly son while giving little regard for the son whom God has chosen
 - Not only is he trying to put lipstick on the pig that is Esau, he's undermining the relationship he has with the one son who does share his love for the Lord

Gen. 27:1 Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am."

Gen. 27:2 Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death.

Gen. 27:3 "Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me;

Gen. 27:4 and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

- Isaac is reaching the end of his life, or so he believes
 - The text says he is losing his eyesight, which is probably what caused Isaac to suspect that he was nearing death
 - As a result, Isaac decides he needs to convey his blessing upon his eldest son at this time
 - Both Jacob and Esau are 77 years old by now
 - Isaac's older half brother Ishmael had died 14 years earlier, and since the two brothers were only separated by about 14 years, Isaac may have assumed he was running out of time
 - The phrase Isaac uses in v.2 is very important, because in ancient east legal practices, the language of this phrase had special meaning

- It was a statement that meant Isaac was about to write his will
- Since written documents were rare in this day, oral statements constituted binding documentation
 - And the language used in those oral agreements followed specific rules much like legal documents of today
- So when Isaac uses the words “I am old and do not know the day of my death...” he is using legal language indicating he is about to award the inheritance
- So Isaac calls for Esau
 - Notice he doesn’t call for Jacob nor for Rebecca nor for any servants or witnesses
 - Isaac wants this moment to be a private moment for only himself and Esau, which would have been most unusual
 - As we’ll see later in the life of Jacob, the patriarch always calls his entire family to be present when he gives his blessing
 - And Esau for his part is complicit with his father’s conspiracy, hoping to regain the birthright that he sold to Jacob
 - Esau still cares nothing for the promises of God, but perhaps he’s reconsidered losing the double portion
 - What are we to conclude by looking at the way Isaac is behaving?
 - We can safely assume that Isaac knows about God’s word concerning Jacob ruling over Esau
 - Furthermore, he would have known Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob
 - Yet here’s Isaac still trying to give his blessing to Esau, despite God’s word and the lawful sale of the birthright
 - Isaac is revealing himself to be a stubborn man determined to have his way
 - Even the timing of this event is suspect
 - By a careful examination of the genealogies given in the stories of Isaac and Jacob, we can determine that Isaac was only 137 years old at this moment
 - Isaac will eventually live to the age of 180, meaning he lived another 43 years after this moment!
 - He wasn’t near death
 - Isaac likely wanted to convey the blessing before Rebecca or Jacob suspected, thereby transferring it to Esau against their wishes
- If you want further evidence that Isaac was motivated by his flesh rather than by the Spirit of God, look at Isaac’s request
 - Isaac insists that Esau go out to the field, hunt some game and make a feast for Isaac
 - There’s probably a couple reasons Isaac wanted Esau to do this
 - First, the obvious reason is Isaac truly loved Esau’s ability to reward him

- with the taste of wild meat
 - Secondly, with Isaac's dim eyesight, he needed a way to be sure he was blessing the right son
 - The blessing was an all-important moment
 - Isaac didn't want to be wrong when he pronounced his blessing and transferred the birthright
 - So Isaac awaits Esau's return
- We need to take a good long hard look at Isaac here
 - As the patriarch and father of these boys, he's about to set into motion a series of circumstances that will rip his family apart
 - This is sin, pure and simple, and sin has consequences
 - Later as we will study Jacob's life, we need to remember something of how his father treated him
- At this point we might be wondering how God will keep His word to grant the birthright to Jacob, since apparently Isaac is prepared to give it to Esau
 - Remember, the birthright is God's to grant in this family, because His promises are being inherited too
 - God determines who receives His promises, not men
 - So how will God prevent Isaac from succeeding?
 - God is capable of getting his way, as we will see next week
 - Rebecca will learn of Isaac's plan and will intervene to prevent it from succeeding
- But what a sad state of affairs
 - Here is a father with two sons
 - One who is godless, rebellious, and willing to cheat his brother out of the sale of the birthright
 - A son who rejected the family lifestyle and rejected God's commands to not take Canaanite wives, and yet is being rewarded for his choices by his father
 - And a second son who is godly, living the life of a shepherd like his father
 - The man God has selected and who has a heart for God
 - And the father is spending all his energy and time devising deceptive schemes so that he can award the birthright to the rebellious son rather than to the godly son
 - Why? Because the culture insisted that the oldest prevail
 - And because Isaac's stomach preferred the taste of wild meat
 - Both of these reasons come down to a single word: flesh
 - Isaac's flesh led him to these conclusions
 - If as fathers and mothers we allow our flesh to rule their lives, then we stand a good chance of destroying the good work God may be doing in our family's life

- Isaac began his life in great obedience to God, but he ended it as a man at odds with his wife and bereaved of his children
- Let's be sure we are listening to God and not to our stomachs

- Let's jump back into our story, as Isaac conspires to award his inheritance to his eldest son, Esau

Gen. 27:5 Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home,

Gen. 27:6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying,

Gen. 27:7 'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

Gen. 27:8 "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you.

Gen. 27:9 "Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves.

Gen. 27:10 "Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

Gen. 27:11 Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man.

Gen. 27:12 "Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."

Gen. 27:13 But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me."

Gen. 27:14 So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved.

Gen. 27:15 Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.

Gen. 27:16 And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

Gen. 27:17 She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

- As Isaac was planning to give his blessing to his eldest son, Rebekah was listening nearby
 - She hears Isaac's plan, and immediately she recognizes what her husband is doing
 - Isaac is working in secret to accomplish his own desires rather than honor the Lord's desires
 - He is going to award the blessing to Esau, which would transfer the patriarchal authority and the covenant promises of the Lord
 - At this point we need to remember what we mean when speaking of the birthright
 - The birthright gave the oldest son the right to a double portion of the inheritance, patriarchal authority and the chief blessing of the father
 - The blessing of the father was the means of conferring these other

- privileges
 - Even though all children would receive a blessing, the oldest received the greatest blessing from the father
- We know that the Lord has declared that the younger would receive this greater blessing
 - And then we saw Jacob purchase from Esau the right to receive this greater blessing
 - Esau cared nothing for the promises of God, of course
 - And he was shortsighted to think little of his father's wealth
 - It was through this purchase that the Lord brought about His will for Jacob to receive the birthright
- But there is still the matter of Isaac's role in transferring the birthright
 - Isaac wants his oldest son to receive the blessing, just as Abraham had wanted Ishmael to receive his blessing
- So Isaac is knowingly and intentionally working to thwart both God and men
 - He is working against the pronouncement of God because he doesn't agree with it
 - And he's working against the laws of the day by cheating Jacob out of the birthright he lawfully purchased
- Rebekah, having heard the plan, jumps into action to stop it
 - She is going to prepare her son to play the part of Esau to fool her husband
 - Rebekah knows that she has a window of opportunity
 - It will take Esau some hours to find game, clean it and cook it
 - She must act faster, which she can do because she doesn't hunt to find her meat
 - She tells Jacob to take two goats and kill them so Rebekah can prepare them as a savory stew for Isaac
 - Now at this point Jacob raises the obvious concern
 - Dad may be fooled by the food, but he won't be fooled by the differences between Esau and me
 - Esau is a hairy man, and Jacob had smooth skin
 - Literally, Jacob is concerned that Isaac will reach out at a point and place his hand on Jacob's arm
 - When he does, the ruse will be exposed
 - Jacob says he would receive a curse rather than a blessing because he would be seen as a deceiver
 - The Hebrew word for deceive in v.12 is actually the word for mock
 - Jacob is saying he will be seen as mocking his father's blindness, and such

disrespect could be fatal for Jacob

- In response, Rebekah says that whatever curse comes upon Jacob for his part in this deception, she will bear it
 - What she's saying is that whatever guilt and consequences would fall on Jacob she will bear instead
 - Can she make such a bargain?
 - No, she can't, because she will bear her own guilt in this deception
 - A guilty person can't remove the sin of another person
 - In theory, if she had no guilt of her own, she might be able to bear Jacob's sin and take his consequences
 - This is precisely the role Christ plays for each of us by our faith in His sinless life and sacrificial death
 - He is without guilt and shame so He can stand in our place to bear our sin and shame dying in our place on the cross
 - In reality, Rebekah is just saying whatever she must to convince her son to go along with this plan
- So Jacob follows Rebekah's instructions
 - He finds two goats and butchers the animals
 - In the Hebrew text the description of the goats is important
 - Rebekah says bring two choice goats, but the Hebrew word is actually good or pure or right
 - Rebekah prepares the meal, places Esau's clothes on Jacob and attaches small patches of young goat hair to Jacob's arms and neck
 - Jacob must have been a comical sight in this garb as he entered Isaac's tent, but it is absolutely necessary
 - Isaac's eyesight is poor, so he won't be able to see who is speaking to him
 - But Rebekah knows Isaac will use his other senses to ensure he is blessing Esau
 - This action of this scene is driven by human senses
 - Taste, feel, smell, sound and the lack of eyesight
 - Isaac is shown relying on his flesh to discern truth and make decisions
 - And noticeably missing is any effort to rely on the Spirit, to hear from the Lord and put aside the flesh
- We could ask why Rebekah doesn't just confront her husband at this moment instead of engaging in this elaborate scheme?
 - First, Rebekah can't tell her husband she was eavesdropping on him
 - That would have been a disrespectful, disgraceful act that would have shifted blame and negated her protests
 - Secondly, as the patriarch Isaac could do what he pleased, so even if Rebekah

- confronted him, he could dismiss her concerns
- So her only choice is to work a plan behind his back
 - Now we should also ask why if Isaac is the patriarch does he feel the need to operate in secret in the first place?
 - Because Isaac knows that Jacob has purchased the birthright
 - If he were to conduct this process in the open, he would have had no choice but to honor the agreement between Esau and Jacob
 - Honor was no small matter in that day, and so Isaac wouldn't have been able to go against the legal sale of the birthright
 - Later, when the truth finally emerged, Isaac would likely be dead or could simply deny knowing about the sale of the birthright
 - This brings us right back to where we began
 - A father with a preference for an ungodly son, in defiance of God and his wife
 - A wife forced to counter with a scheming defense of the godly son, hoping to ensure God's preference is honored
 - Look at vs.5-6 again paying attention to the pronouns
 - Isaac spoke his son, Esau; Rebekah spoke to her son, Jacob
 - Isaac is working to obtain a meal with Esau
 - Rebekah is working with Jacob to make that same meal
 - It's like two families at war with one another
 - The saddest thing was that Isaac didn't need to set himself against his wife nor his sons against one another
 - Last week we said that Isaac is the one primarily responsible for the breakdown in his family and we see it here again
 - As father of one godless son and one godly son, Isaac should have invested his time and attention accordingly
 - To the godless son, Isaac should have acknowledged God's choices and mitigated against further damage in the household
 - To the godly son, Isaac should have acknowledged God's presence and shielded him from the influence of the ungodly brother
 - And Isaac is also responsible for the deteriorating relationship with his wife
 - Isaac was blessed with a woman who hears from God
 - Rebekah is one of the few women in the Old Testament who is shown to receive a word directly from the Lord
 - And yet Isaac shows no regard for Rebekah's revelation or counsel
 - Moreover, Isaac's reason for overriding Rebekah and the Lord was because he favored the taste of the game Esau cooked
 - But as this scene shows, Rebekah knew how to create a convincing

substitute using goat

- So even Isaac's pathetic reason for favoring Esau was pointless
- Isaac doesn't seem to recognize that the woman God has selected for him is a woman capable of meeting his every need
 - When we fail to see our wife (or spouse) as our ally in our spiritual walk, they might start to look like our enemy
 - They are the one standing in the way of what we want
 - They are the one reminding us inconveniently of God's word and God's will
 - Ultimately, they may feel forced to actively work against us, which only increases the problems
 - Isaac and Rebekah are at that point, each parent taking sides, working against one another rather than working together to honor God
 - That's the point of every marriage, ultimately
 - A Christian marriage is a $1 + 1 = 3$ equation
 - A man and a wife united in Christ become a stronger vehicle for glorifying God than either could be alone
 - This spiritual multiplication is only true when both the man and the woman are united in a common mission to follow and serve Christ
 - We won't always agree, but at the end of every decision is commitment to move as one to the glory of God
 - Isaac and Rebekah are like two horses in a tug of war pulling at opposite ends of the same rope
 - There's a lot of tension but they're going nowhere spiritually
 - In the end the stronger horse may win, but at the expense of the weaker one being dragged behind defeated and discouraged
 - In this case, both want an opposite outcome, and only one can win
 - Yet it didn't have to be this way
 - God revealed His purposes clearly and when Esau sold his birthright, the matter was settled in accordance with the affairs of men
 - Isaac and Rebekah needed only to acknowledge the obvious and unite in God's will
- Speaking of God, where is God in all this?
 - Is this the way God intended to bring about His will?
 - Is Rebekah's deception God's way of bringing about the prophecy He delivered?
 - Or was the sale of the birthright God's plan?
 - Or would He have done it some other way?
 - The answer to all these questions is yes
 - The story of Isaac and his two sons is ultimately a story of God's sovereignty

- It began with God choosing the younger son, Jacob, to receive His covenant promises
- In his choice of Jacob, God left Esau to be the godless man he was, which lead him to despise his birthright and sell it
- And God was working to ensure that Rebekah would hear Isaac's sinful plan and thwart it through her own sinful deception
 - Did God need their help? No
 - But God is working through their sinful choices to produce His desired outcome
 - God works with sinful men and women because that's all He has
- And yet God is powerful enough to ensure that all that sin ultimately arrives at the right place, according to God's plan
 - God's ability to work through our sin as He does here never becomes an excuse for our sin
 - As if God's ability to make something good out of our sin could somehow lead us to think our sin doesn't offend God
 - And remember, sin still carries consequences that will follow us even as God uses our sin for His purposes
 - He is powerful enough to both turn our sin to good while still disciplining us through sin's consequences
- In this case, God is working through Isaac's stubbornness and Rebekah's deceptiveness to create a good and necessary outcome
 - We remember that this story began with a short mention of Esau's wives
 - He had taken Canaanite wives, which would be a devastating result for God's people should Jacob repeat this mistake
 - If we jump ahead for a moment to the end of this story, look at v.46

Gen. 27:46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

- Rebekah's statement reminds me of a cute story...

One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?"

Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, "Momma, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?"

- Rebekah laments Esau's wives and their negative influence in the family
 - Now we see that these women were the problem, and the entire arrangement was a great disappointment to the family
 - How will God ensure that Jacob will find a wife from among Abraham's family, just as Isaac did?
 - As it turns out, God will use this family dispute to force Jacob to leave the land and find his wife from among Abraham's family
- This is a clear example of God's sovereignty at work in the lives of sinful people
 - While Isaac and Rebekah were struggling in their little family war, God was at work to produce the circumstances to ensure that Jacob finds the right wife
 - And even Jacob's own sin will play a role in that process, but still according to God's desires
 - But because Isaac and Rebekah were absorbed in their own sinful purposes, they missed the chance to see God at work
 - And they each suffered great consequences in the process
 - As I mentioned last week, Rebekah will lose her favored son and Isaac will see his family broken up
- God's sovereignty goes even further in this case
 - Remember in v.9 that Rebecca asked for two choice goats to be killed
 - Why two goats for one simple meal?
 - It seems like overkill, pardon the pun
 - The answer is that in this scene God is at work presenting a picture of Christ
 - In the Law (which arrived many centuries after this moment), the Lord gave Israel instructions for how to conduct the Day of Atonement
 - This is the day each year when the entire nation of Israel received forgiveness for their sins against God
 - This is a moment of national atonement, when a nation is forgiven according to the Law
 - Individuals within the nation didn't receive their personal saving atonement at this moment
 - Personal atonement and imputed righteousness only comes by faith in the manner of Abraham
 - But the entire nation was bound by the covenant at Sinai and once a year that nation received atonement according to the prescribed manner
 - The Lord commands Israel to take two good goats and sacrifice one while laying hands on the other

- The sacrificed goat was an atonement for uncleanness of Israel while the second goat received the sins of Israel through the laying on of hands and was sent outside the city never to return
 - God calls that second goat the scapegoat, since this is the goat that would bear the sins of the nation and take them away
- Both these goats are intended to picture the Messiah
 - Christ is both our atoning sacrifice and the One who takes our sins away
 - God used two goats to picture both sides of Christ's redeeming work
- Now in this scene, God uses Isaac as a picture of Christ – not by Isaac's sinful actions but merely his role as the authority figure in the family
 - And Jacob is the embodiment of Israel
 - So according to the Law, Israel could only approach the Lord in the tent of meeting after two goats were taken on the day of atonement
 - And in this moment, before young Jacob could successfully approach his father Isaac, two goats had to make the way possible
 - One became the sacrifice for the meal while the second becomes the covering to make Jacob acceptable to his father
 - Why did Rebekah call for two goats to be killed for the meal? Did she understand the picture she was creating? How could she?
- What a wonderful display of God's sovereignty
 - Everyone involved – Isaac, Esau, Rebekah and Jacob – were operating in sin, trying to scheme their way to a preferred outcome
 - Meanwhile, God was at work in their sin to produce exactly the outcome He desired
 - And even in the smallest details of their sinful choices and decisions, God was at work to make clear He was in charge and He was at work
 - He is sending Jacob out of the land to find the right wife
 - And He's creating a picture of the coming Savior
 - And in the end, He will bring about just consequences for all involved.
- We serve a mighty God
 - Since He gets His way every time anyway, let's resolve to serve Him in obedience instead of testing Him by our sin

- Chapter 27 is an awesome display of God's sovereignty working through the sin of men
 - Four actors, each absorbed in their own desires and motivations
 - All guilty of sin to some degree
 - But each moving in relationship to one another, with the sin of the father Isaac at the center of it all
 - And above it all, the Lord God working to bring about His desires in keeping with His promises and eternal purposes
 - Everyone will pay a price for their sin
 - Yet no one's sin will stand in the way of God and His plan
- Last week we saw the conspiracy between Rebekah and Jacob as they try to stop Isaac from giving the birthright blessing to the wrong son
 - But their solution is a classic example of two wrongs don't make a right
 - Esau hasn't returned to the tent yet, so the time has come for Jacob to make his move

Gen. 27:18 Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"

Gen. 27:19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me."

Gen. 27:20 Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me."

Gen. 27:21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."

Gen. 27:22 So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

Gen. 27:23 He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.

Gen. 27:24 And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am."

Gen. 27:25 So he said, "Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank.

Gen. 27:26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son."

Gen. 27:27 So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said,
"See, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed;

- At the moment the meal is ready and Jacob is wearing the goat skins and Esau's clothing, Rebecca sends him into the tent to his father Isaac

- As we watch this scene play out, let's remember that Jacob is the rightful owner of this birthright
 - He is acting in desperation out of a need to protect what is rightly his
 - But Isaac's refusal to listen to his wife or the Lord or even to honor the lawful sale leaves Jacob with few options, or so it seems
- So Jacob enters the tent
 - Jacob initiates the conversation calling to Isaac
 - Isaac replies by asking which son was approaching
 - Isaac's question confirms that Isaac is essentially blind at this point
 - He may detect light and dark but he can't identify a person
 - Jacob responds with his first lie
 - He declares that he is Esau, the firstborn, and he has done as Isaac instructed
 - Jacob's phrase reminds us of why this moment has even been made necessary
 - Isaac has stubbornly determined to show a preference to the firstborn son, against God's desires
- Isaac immediately shows some suspicion because Jacob couldn't muster a convincing imitation of Esau's voice
 - Plus, I think Isaac had a guilty conscience knowing he was doing the wrong thing in his conspiracy with Esau
 - His first question is how did you get here so quickly?
 - Jacob lies a second time, saying the Lord caused it to happen
 - This is certainly a lie, but it is also a true statement
 - Jacob was standing in this moment because the Lord had given Rebekah the insight to know about Isaac's plan
 - Therefore, it is true to say that the Lord God had caused this to happen to Jacob
 - But the Lord is not causing Jacob to lie, and the sin he and Rebekah are perpetrating are not according to God's heart
 - Even worse, Jacob is invoking the Lord's name in this lie
- At this point, Isaac is confused by what's happening
 - As far as Isaac knew, only Esau knew to meet him here with a bowl of stew
 - Yet the voice of this son was Jacob
 - Perhaps under other circumstances Isaac would have simply concluded that his ears were playing tricks on him and never thought more about it
 - But this was no ordinary moment
 - Isaac was engaged in an underhanded sidestepping of one son in favor of another, and Isaac knew that Jacob would try to stop him

- Since he hears Jacob's voice, he's cautious and wants more proof
- He calls Jacob over and asks to touch him
 - Notice in v.21 Isaac calls Jacob over so he can see if this is really Esau
 - Isaac is stating plainly that he suspects a trick
 - You can't have a better measure of Isaac's guilty conscience than his caution in this moment
 - He reacts like someone who is scheming and doesn't want someone to double-cross him
- After taking hold of Jacob, Isaac concludes that the voice sounds like Jacob but the hands feel like Esau
 - If goat skin felt like Esau, then Esau must have been one hairy guy
- In v.23, it says that after Isaac felt Jacob's hairy hands, he blessed him
 - This reference to the blessing is not the moment when the blessing is pronounced
 - The statement is proleptic, which means a statement of what will happen before it actually takes place
 - Like saying "he was a dead man the moment he entered the room"
 - Moses is pointing out that these deceptions were working to eventually cause Isaac to pronounce the blessing
 - But even though Isaac is moving toward the blessing, he isn't fully convinced as yet
 - Isaac asks again, are you really Esau?
 - Obviously, Isaac had enough reason to doubt that he felt the need to continue seeking proof
 - In response, we have Jacob's third lie, when he says "I am"
 - At this point, Isaac decides he might as well try the stew
 - Isaac enjoys not only the stew but also wine
- Finally, Isaac asks Jacob to come close for a kiss
 - Isaac's request was actually a cover to gather more proof
 - He wants to smell Jacob
 - Once again, he smells the clothes of Esau, and declares they are like a field blessed by the Lord
 - This is one of my favorite verses for showing God's sovereignty and man's sin working side by side
 - First, we see Isaac's sin in his preference for the smell of Esau
 - Esau is a worldly man, a man who does the exciting things Isaac never thought to do
 - Esau hunted rather than shepherding
 - Esau spent his days in the field rather than remaining in the tent

community like Isaac

- Isaac seemed to live vicariously through this son, and Esau excited Isaac's flesh
 - Just the smell of that field gave Isaac comfort and helped seal the deception
- Isaac's carnal display may seem a bit strange to us, but if so that's only because we live in a different time and culture
 - Isaac's spirit was called to want the things of God
 - God calls us to turn our back on the world and set our hope on Him and His promises
 - While Isaac had certainly done those things, there was still a part of him that felt attracted to the world he was called to leave behind
 - He was called to shepherd and wander, but a part of him loved the thought of hunting game, perhaps living among other men in cities
 - We don't envy the world in the same way Isaac did, but we have our own ways
 - We have "safe" rebellion like Isaac's
 - Mostly living our Christian life with our Christian habits and Christian worldview
 - We understand the call to be in the world but not of the world
 - But the flesh we all carry hasn't given up on the world just yet
 - So we find ways to indulge that flesh without jumping in with both feet
 - I could list a million examples, but we all know the pattern
 - Sometimes, we're like Isaac glorying in the sin of another, so that we might get a taste of it from a distance without feeling too dirty ourselves
 - Other times we mimic the world's sinful pattern but just moderate the dosage, so while the world engages in the x-rated sin, we settle for the R-rated or maybe PG-13 sin
 - Still other times, we simply redefine a sinful behavior or desire, give it a different name, and perhaps even find what seems to be Biblical support for our choice
 - Like the false prosperity gospel which gives some Christians a license to worship money the way the world does, but call it good instead of sin
- We all know what's driving Isaac's behavior here
 - He loves Esau's smell because it's the smell of adventure and human strength and fleshly rebellion
 - And so Isaac loves the son that fills his fleshly void in an otherwise godly life
 - It's a wise and mature Christian who can recognize this same pattern in their own life
 - Take an inventory in your own life...are you indulging in some sin because it satisfies your flesh's desire to rebel, while still feeling safe?
 - The safety is itself a lie, as evidenced by Isaac's situation

- He never considered how his love for Esau's nature was causing him to rebel against God's will and bring near ruin to his family
 - What calamity will our little rebellions bring? Why find out? Let's put them aside
- I said this verse was so powerful because it combined Isaac's sin with God's sovereignty, and since we've seen Isaac's sin clearly, where is God's sovereignty?
 - Notice Isaac's concluding statement in v.27
 - The smell of this son was so pleasing to Isaac, it was the smell of a field that had been blessed by the Lord
 - But remember Isaac is speaking to Jacob, though he doesn't know it
 - And truly, Isaac's words are correct concerning Jacob
 - Jacob was like a field that the Lord had blessed
 - Remember, Jacob is the man who will one day be called Israel
 - Israel is a field or a land that will be blessed
 - In fact, the Hebrew word for field is *sadeh*, which means country or territory
 - The smell of this son, Israel, is in fact the smell of a country, a nation that will be blessed by the Lord
 - This is the sovereign choice of the Lord
 - Jacob was the son to be blessed, as God directed
 - And even as Isaac operated in his sin and in his flesh, he was speaking and acting according to God's holy and eternal decree
 - Isaac would bless Jacob, because Jacob was the son to be blessed
 - I find it helpful to remember Genesis 27:27 whenever I'm confronted with the tragedy and devastation in the world around us
 - There is so much sorrow and sin and evil in the world
 - And everyday, the enemy seems to find a new way to release his depravity among men
 - Yet through it all, we can rest in knowing that God's will is never challenged by any of it
 - Those God has declared will be blessed will indeed be blessed
 - And no amount of man's sin or the enemy's schemes will alter that plan
- Now that Jacob's three lies and deceptions have convinced Isaac that Esau has come into his tent, the time has come to pronounce the blessing

Gen. 27:28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,

And of the fatness of the earth,

And an abundance of grain and new wine;

Gen. 27:29 May peoples serve you,

And nations bow down to you;

**Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you."**

- As we look over this blessing, notice right away that it invokes the name of the Lord
 - This is the main feature of the blessing that tells us it brings prophetic power
 - Isaac was speaking according to whatever thoughts entered his mind, but those thoughts and words were under the direction of the Holy Spirit
 - We see that clearly, because these words were indeed prophetic
 - What they say about Jacob do in fact come true
 - First, in v.28 Jacob is promised that God will give him great blessing in heaven and on earth
 - He will have the dew of Heaven, that is the favor of God
 - And he will have the fatness of the earth, that is the best portion
 - And along the way, Jacob will enjoy great provision
 - These are all accurate statements concerning Israel at various points in history
 - But it is primarily a statement of Israel in the kingdom, which is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - In v.29 we see more of the near-term/far-term prophetic elements
 - People are to serve Jacob and nations will bow to him, and he will master his brothers
 - More specifically, his siblings will bow to him
- Isaac speaks all these statements with the power of God, and all these statements will come true...but they only come true for Jacob
 - And yet Isaac is convinced in this moment that he is speaking them to Esau
 - In fact, take a second look at the blessing from Isaac's point of view
 - He is asking God to ensure that Esau is the most favored son, the one to gain the patriarchal authority in the family
 - Isaac wants God to give Esau all the things that God has already said Jacob will receive
 - But the way in which Isaac says these blessings, it excludes any blessing for Esau
 - When the time finally comes for Esau to come to the tent and reveal the deception, there is nothing left for Isaac to give him
 - No loophole, no wiggle room
- As we end today, let's reflect on how flesh-driven this family has been so far
 - We mentioned last week that the entire narrative is driven by the senses of the flesh, with not a single person appealing to God

- They are all talking about God, but no one takes time to talk to God
- And instead they pay attention only to their human senses
- The story begins with Isaac seeking Esau to feed him his favorite meal
 - Then we have Rebekah's ears hearing the exchange
 - Then she hatches a plan to fool her husband through his limited senses
- Moving to Jacob, he listens to his mother's voice to lie and deceive his father
- Finally, Isaac's own sense become his undoing, as they conspire against him
 - He can't see, but he uses his senses of hearing, and touch, and taste and smell to make his decisions
 - Taken together, he is flesh driven and not listening to the Lord
 - In the end, the Lord gets everything His way anyway
 - But because he follows his flesh, Isaac suffers great loss along the way
 - Just another reminder that sin has consequences
- Next week we finish the chapter

- The conspiracy of Rebekah and Jacob has done its work, and Jacob has received the blessing, which means the birthright has been honored
 - Jacob will receive all of the father's inheritance
 - Not just the double portion
 - Isaac foolishly assigned his entire inheritance to Jacob, thinking he was Esau
 - That fact might not have been clear enough from the blessing we read last week
 - It simply mentioned the dew of heaven and fatness on earth, etc.
 - But the all inclusive nature of the blessing will soon become apparent when the time comes to give Esau his portion
 - We're going to find that there is nothing left
 - Isaac thought he was outsmarting Rebekah and Jacob and even God Himself
 - He reckoned he could allocate everything to his favorite son and settle the matter
 - Instead, he did exactly the opposite of what he wanted, which was exactly what God intended
 - Isaac's attempt to outmaneuver God reminds of a classic exchange between a young boy praying to the Lord

Johnny - God how long is a million years to you?

God - It is but a second Johnny.

Johnny - God how much is a million dollars to you?

God - It is but a penny to me

Johnny - God can I have a penny

God - Just a second

- So now it's time to watch the other shoe drop as Esau returns

Gen. 27:30 Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

Gen. 27:31 Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me."

Gen. 27:32 Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."

Gen. 27:33 Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed."

Gen. 27:34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also,

O my father!”

- Obviously, Isaac never expected a second visitor after giving the first blessing
 - Obviously, he never expected the second son to appear
 - Which means Isaac had no intention of granting a blessing to Rebekah’s son, as Isaac called Jacob
 - Further proof that Isaac was intending to give Esau everything
 - Esau announces himself, but notice his description
 - He answers he is Esau, the firstborn
 - Esau is using that term to emphasize his supposed right to the blessing
 - He might have been the first child born physically, but in terms of the birthright, he was no longer the firstborn
 - He had sold that right
 - So Esau’s description in this context is a lie, in that it implies he has rights to something he sold
 - When Esau announces himself, Isaac trembles in fear
 - The word “tremble” in Hebrew is *charad*, which means shaking with great fear, not in anger
 - Isaac wasn’t furious at the deception, he was exceedingly shaken and frightened by his recognition that God had been working against Isaac’s plan
 - Just the recognition that he had entered into a contest of wills with the Living God brought the fear of God’s wrath and judgment to Isaac’s heart
 - Good King Jehoshaphat said it this way

2Chr. 19:7 “Now then let the [fear of the LORD](#) be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.”

- As the reality of the moment sets in, Isaac is horrified
 - He has just blessed someone with his entire inheritance and patriarchal authority over the entire family
 - As Isaac himself acknowledges, indeed, that person will be blessed
 - Isaac has given away the farm and left him flatfooted
 - When Esau hears this story, he immediately realizes what has happened
 - And different than his father, Esau’s cry is bitter and sorrowful
 - He is suddenly sad at the prospect of having no inheritance whatsoever
 - In desperation, he appeals to his father to give him some kind of blessing

- What he means is give me something for an inheritance
- He was clearly shaken by the prospect of having nothing at all
 - Once again, we see evidence that Isaac's blessing to Jacob was total and complete, leaving nothing behind
- Why was Esau so upset?
 - Didn't Hebrews tell us that Esau despised his birthright?
 - Let's take a second look at that passage

Heb. 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

Heb. 12:16 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

Heb. 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

- First, notice the context of these comments by the writer to the Hebrews
 - The writer is warning about the possibility that someone in our midst may have come short of the grace of God
 - These unbelievers are a source of bitterness and trouble within the body of believers
 - And by their presence they defile the body of Christ
 - This is the context of the author's comments concerning Esau
 - As we've already seen, Esau is an unbeliever, a godless man
 - And now the reader uses Esau as an example of the problem of a bitterness that causes trouble among believers
 - Esau is exactly that kind of person
 - He is the unbeliever in this family of otherwise God-fearing people
 - And because he has come short of the grace of God, he will now be a bitter root causing trouble in this family
 - And he will be the source of much trouble
 - We remember that he has married two ungodly women and they are a source of misery for Isaac and Rebekah
 - And now he will be a source of trouble in the matter of the blessing
- The second thing we notice is that Esau's sale of his birthright was proof, according to this writer, that he was a godless man
 - In fact, Esau despised his birthright, which explains why he sold it for only a bowl of stew

- The birthright was normally just an earthly inheritance
- But in Isaac's family, it gained additional significance because it also included a spiritual promise from God
- At this point in our story, Esau is clearly upset at the prospect of losing the birthright inheritance
 - But based on Hebrews, we conclude that Esau desired the earthly inheritance that he's lost now
 - But he despised the heavenly promises in the birthright, which is why he sold it so casually
 - We must conclude that Esau expected to find a way around the sale when the time came
 - Perhaps he expected Isaac's favor for him to win the day
 - In any case, Esau's willingness to sell proved his lack of faith in God's promises
 - It proved he was a godless man who had come up short of God's grace
 - But now that he is faced with the full reality of what he had done, his attitude changes
- This leads us to the third thing we learn from Hebrews...after Esau realized that the Lord had intervened to hold him to his bargain, he was sorrowful
 - Esau wanted to repent, but there was no place found for repentance
 - It's important to look closely at the sentence structure in v.17 of Hebrews 12
 - First, Esau desired to inherit the blessing
 - Who did he seek the blessing from? Isaac
 - And then it says Esau was rejected in his pursuit for the birthright
 - Who rejected him? Isaac, of course
 - Isaac cannot bless Esau with the birthright because it's already gone
 - Then the writer says Esau found no room for repentance
 - The writer is saying that Esau had no capacity or desire to repent of his unbelief in God's promises
 - His sorrow was strictly a response to losing the material blessing
 - So Esau lacked a repentant heart for his despising of God's promises
 - As a result of his lack of repentance, Esau could not obtain what he desired, that is an inheritance
 - The writer ends the verse by saying that he (Esau) sought "it" with tears
 - What did Esau seek? The birthright inheritance, of course
- So putting it all together, the writer says that Esau was a godless man, an immoral man
 - He became a root of bitterness in a family of God-fearing believers
 - He despised the spiritual blessing that God had poured out on this family

- And as a result of his unbelief, he was willing to part with the spiritual blessings of the birthright for next to nothing
- Yet he still counted on receiving the material inheritance by hook or crook
- When God stepped in and excluded Esau from any inheritance whatsoever, he cried tears of sorrow but not tears of repentance
 - Paul reminds us that not all sorrow is godly sorrow

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- The unbelieving world will experience great sorrow in their lives from time to time
 - This sorrow is the result of sin and it is an experience common to all men, believer and unbeliever
 - But for the unbeliever, it is the only kind of sorrow that is possible, and it ultimately leads nowhere
- Therefore, Esau's lack of repentance and lack of faith prevented him from receiving the thing he sought
 - Because he rejected God's promises of eternal inheritance, he lost both the eternal and the earthly inheritance
 - And because Jacob was blessed with faith, he gladly received the promises of God and therefore he was to receive blessing both then and now
- This pattern is still at work in the world today
 - The world desires to have earthly wealth and they cry tears of sorrow when they lose it
 - But in their desperation to obtain and hold on to something that is destined to fail and burn up, they completely ignore – and even despise – the promises found in the word of God
 - So in the end they will lose both the earthly and the spiritual blessings
 - Because they try to obtain what they cannot keep, they fail to gain what they cannot lose
 - The believer, on the other hand, is called to leave behind the chase for worldly things, and in the process rest in the promises of God
 - As a result of that refocus, the word of God promises that they will gain far more than they lost
 - Several verses come to mind

Luke 18:28 Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You.”

Luke 18:29 And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left

house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

Luke 18:30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Luke 9:24 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

- So what can Isaac do for his bitter and unrepentant son under the circumstances?

Gen. 27:35 And he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.”

Gen. 27:36 Then he said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”

Gen. 27:37 But Isaac replied to Esau, “Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?”

Gen. 27:38 Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

Gen. 27:39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above.

Gen. 27:40 “By your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you will break his yoke from your neck.”

- Isaac begins with a statement that is half truth, half lie
 - Isaac says your brother came deceitfully...this is true
 - Jacob used deception, which is a form of lying, to obtain the birthright
 - But that statement ignores the obvious truth
 - Jacob was led to be deceptive because Isaac and Esau were themselves deceptive in scheming to award the birthright unjustly
 - If anyone should be accused of trickery, it would be these two men
 - And then Isaac speaks a falsehood himself
 - He describes the birthright as belonging to Esau
 - It does not belong to Esau and hasn't since he sold it
 - By using this phrase, Isaac gives birth to the false story that Jacob was a

deceiver who stole the birthright

- He was a deceiver, but he deceived to keep something that God had already given to him
- Do you know the story of the spies and Rahab, the Harlot?
 - Remember that in that story Rahab uses a deception to protect the spies
 - Her deception was a sin, though it was used to further the purposes of God
 - Another example of God working through the sin of men to accomplish His good purposes
 - And the same here
 - Jacob sins – and he pays a price for his sin – but he is working in the will of God
- In v.26 Esau take the accusation a step further
 - He notes the irony in Jacob's name, that he was a supplanter having stepped into Esau's place
 - It's important to note that Esau acknowledges that the birthright had been sold
 - But then he claims it was an unfair sale
 - He is trying to rewrite history to position himself as the victim
 - Again, these are the testimonies that have led so many to think that Jacob was the offender here
 - But should we base our view of Jacob on the testimony of two men who were beaten at their own game of deception?
 - Or do we take the counsel of God's word that tells us that Jacob was the peaceful, God-fearing man who was to be blessed by the Lord?
 - So Esau asks his father if there is anything left to distribute to him?
- Now Isaac breaks the bad news to Esau – there is nothing left
 - Jacob is to be Esau's master and all Jacob's relatives are to be Jacob's servants
 - This was an especially hard declaration, and now Isaac regrets having pronounced it
 - But a moment earlier he was willing to give that kind of preference to Esau
 - I suspect Isaac viewed Esau something like the way Israel later came to view Saul when they chose him to be king
 - Saul looked the part and made the people feel good about themselves, but he was not a man chosen by God
 - That man was David, the shepherd boy
 - Similarly, Esau is a man that Isaac can imagine being a powerful leader over the family, unlike the weaker and timid Jacob
 - So Isaac tries to place Esau in the place of prominence and cuts out Jacob entirely

- Now Isaac has to break the news to Esau that there is nothing left
 - Jacob received the best of heaven and earth that Isaac had to offer
 - And Isaac adds rhetorically what can I give you? Meaning, I have nothing to give you
 - So we see proof that the first blessing was everything Isaac could offer
- Then Esau in desperation asks if you have only one blessing? Can't you pronounce something for my sake?
 - But unlike godless Esau, Isaac is God-fearing, and this experience has awoken Isaac to his sinful blindness, spiritually speaking
 - He realizes that this entire episode has God's fingerprints all over it
 - And if God wanted Jacob to receive everything, then trembling Isaac isn't about to try a second time to challenge God
 - So Isaac resists any attempt to pronounce a blessing on Esau
 - When Esau pushes him, Isaac does the only thing he can do at this point
 - Isaac confirms that Esau has been forsaken by the Lord
 - He declares a blessing that is essentially a series of contrary statements compared to what was given to Jacob
 - While Jacob receives the best of everything, Esau will be far away from Isaac's inheritance
 - He will be separated both from the fertility of the Land of Israel but from the grace and mercy of Heaven
 - Furthermore, Esau will be a people that live by the sword, being the hunter that he is
 - He will serve Jacob except that Esau's people will be in constant rebellion to Jacob's people
 - Thus assuring that the two families never have affinity for one another
- Historically, we see the truth of this blessing
 - The Edomites, who descend from Esau, were always Israel's enemies
 - And any time Israel conquered the Edomites, they inevitably rose up again
 - Eventually, they became known as the Idumeans
 - The Herod dynasty were Idumeans, or Edomites
 - When Jerusalem was destroyed in AD66, they were wiped out along with most of the Jews
 - But there is also a deeper spiritual truth reflected in these blessings
 - We know that Jacob's blessing is a reflection on God's plan for Israel and all believers brought into the New Covenant
 - But this "blessing" on Esau is also a confirmation of God's eternal decree at the fall in the Garden

- God said that the seed of the woman would have enmity with the serpent and her seed would battle with the seed of the serpent
 - The seed of woman is first and foremost Christ, born of a virgin, and He battles with Satan, the serpent
 - But the seed also represents all those who descend from these two persons
 - The seed of the woman are all believers in Christ
 - While the seed of the serpent is a representation of all unbelievers who are sons of disobedience, Paul calls them
 - And God declared in the Garden that there will always be enmity between these two seeds
 - Here we see God ensure that separation on a national basis
 - It starts with these two brothers who will forever be enemies, at least at some level
 - And their respective families will find no common ground over the centuries, since God calls His people to be separate from the world
 - But then God will also use the unbelieving world to chastise the unfaithful Israel, which is how He used Edom
- When Christ comes and the Kingdom is set up on earth, Edom will be an uninhabited land, according to Jeremiah and Isaiah
 - While Israel will be filled with the glory of the Lord and the abundance of His people
 - Then we will see the final and full measure of this promise come to fruition
 - While we wait today, remember that we are called children of the promise because we rest in what will be rather than what is today

- Throughout our study of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob, I've remarked on the way God has maintained His sovereign control over all events
 - But at the same time, each person has made sinful choices that rest entirely on their own shoulders
 - Since sin has consequences, and God will bring those consequences to each person
 - As Chapter 27 ends and we move into Chapter 28, we're watching how those consequences play out
 - But God's sovereignty never ends, so that even in the way the consequences of sin play out, God is still bringing events to an appointed outcome
 - We must remember Jacob has not become the holder of the covenant with God
 - He holds the promises of God and the patriarchal authority
 - How does God remain faithful to His promises even while He holds Jacob accountable for his deception?
 - Chapter 28 gives us those answers
 - More importantly, we begin a new phase in Jacob's life
 - Jacob is a man who has learned to deceive and scheme to get his way
 - He has a lot of spiritual growth ahead of him, a lot to learn about the God of his fathers
 - God is going to use Jacob's sin and the sin of others to mold him into a man who trusts God beyond even his own schemes
- First, we end Chapter 27 witnessing the consequences of Jacob's deception

Gen. 27:41 So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Gen. 27:42 Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you.

Gen. 27:43 "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!

Gen. 27:44 "Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides,

Gen. 27:45 until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

Gen. 27:46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

- Following the deception of Isaac in the tent, Esau bore a grudge against his brother

- The Hebrew word for grudge is a curious one
 - It provides yet another fulfillment of God's eternal decrees
 - The word literally means hostility against someone or to persecute someone
- Remember we said that Esau is a picture of the unbeliever throughout history
 - He represents the natural, sinful man who is born of the seed of the serpent, ungodly and worldly
 - He is excluded from the blessings and promises of God, because he despises the word of God
 - He experiences worldly sorrow, but never knows the repentance that comes from God only
 - And he will persecute the children of God, because there will always be enmity between the seed of woman and the seed of the serpent
- So here we see that enmity and persecution taking hold just as God promised
- Esau says to himself that he will kill Jacob once his father Isaac has died
 - Esau knew better than to kill his brother while Isaac was still alive
 - If he committed murder while Isaac was still the patriarch, he would have been put to death by Isaac's command
 - But if he waited until Isaac had died, then with Jacob dead as well, Esau would become the family patriarch
 - And as the male head of the clan, Esau could avoid death
 - Remember we mentioned a few lessons back that Isaac isn't as close to death as everyone is assuming
 - Isaac himself set that expectation as an excuse to award the birthright secretly
 - But we know that Isaac lives another 43 years after these events, so his death is not imminent at all
 - Esau has a very long time to wait, but neither he nor anyone else is thinking that way at this point
- Rebekah learns of Esau's plan somehow, perhaps through a servant, and once again she jumps into action to protect Jacob
 - Isn't it interesting how Rebekah consistently finds herself privy to helpful information on Jacob's behalf?
 - It sure seems that God is speaking to Rebekah in order to keep Jacob one step ahead of his enemies
 - I think I recognize a pattern here that I've seen in my own life and in the lives of other men
 - When the man in the family isn't listening to God, He speaks to the woman who does hear Him
 - And the woman will find herself in the uncomfortable position of knowing what

- should be done while living with a man who won't do it or ignores it
 - And she then bears the burden of making things right according to God's revelation while contending with a disobedient husband
- Here we see Rebekah standing in Isaac's place time and time again
 - She received God's revelation concerning the twins
 - Then she was given the knowledge of Isaac's secret plans
 - Now she learns of Esau's conspiracy
 - God gives Rebekah these moments of insight because the same revelation in Isaac's hands has lead nowhere, apparently
- Throughout scripture, we will find this pattern repeated
 - It started in the Garden, when Adam failed in the garden while woman did her best to defend God's word
 - It repeats many times in Israel's history, including with Naomi in the story of Ruth, with Deborah in the time of Judges and others
 - In every case, the need for women to take the lead in pursuing righteousness in place of the men is portrayed as shameful and a failure of headship
 - Not that woman can't lead or aren't permitted to pursue righteousness apart from men
 - Obviously women can lead at times and women stand as equals with men in pursuing the righteousness through Christ
 - But when a man and woman of faith are united in marriage, the role for leading spiritually falls to the husband
 - And if the man stumbles in that role, the woman is there to help pick him up and encourage him forward
 - But in times when the man abdicates his leadership role or neglects it, he leaves God no choice sometimes but to speak through his wife
 - The man is still accountable to God, but the Lord may use the wife to reveal the man's sin
 - I've seen this pattern in my own life, and often my wife will hear the Lord's voice clearly when I've stopped listening
 - And the Lord will use my wife to break through my stubbornness
 - Earlier in my marriage, when God would prepare us to move to new places, I often wouldn't be listening
 - So He told my wife to start packing...
 - Now when I see boxes, I start listening more closely
- Rebekah goes to Jacob and warns him of Esau's plans
 - She says that Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you
 - Esau can't act yet, but he feels better contemplating killing Jacob

- And Rebekah doesn't want to take the chance that Esau will get tired of waiting for Isaac to die and attack Jacob
- Her plan is to send Jacob away temporarily
 - But where can she send him?
 - She must send him to a family member, otherwise Jacob would be at risk as a wanderer
 - The nearest relatives are 450 miles away in Haran
 - Rebekah has a brother Laban living in Haran, so she tells Jacob this is far enough away to ensure safety
- Rebekah tells Jacob that the separation will only be a few days, but we need to understand times references from their cultural perspective
 - It would take several weeks just to travel to Haran and then several weeks to return
 - Plus, she couldn't have expected Esau's desire to kill Jacob to disappear in a week or two
 - So when she says Jacob will go there for a "few days," she means months
 - She says she will call for him when Esau's anger blows over
- Rebekah's expectations were decidedly optimistic
 - First, notice how she avoids any reference to her own culpability in this situation
 - She paints the entire episode as Jacob's fault, Jacob's deception
 - And then she suggests that the hole she dug by her scheming can be easily filled in with a little time and distance
 - In reality, Rebekah's suggestion is exactly what God desires for reasons of His own
 - But the plan will also serve to chastise Rebekah for her part in this family tragedy
 - Notice in v.45 Rebekah asks why should she be bereaved of both her sons in a day?
 - She is referring to her fear that Esau would kill Jacob and then Isaac would have Esau put to death for the murder
 - So in her mind, she is saving both boys
 - Then notice in v.46 she plants the idea in Isaac to send Jacob to Laban's to find a wife
 - She expects Isaac to agree and solve her problem
- As it turns out, there is great irony in these statements
 - Rebekah expected her plan would ensure she kept Jacob by her side
 - But by her plan, she loses her favored son, Jacob
 - He won't be in Haran for a few days...he'll be there for 20 years
 - And Rebekah will die while he's gone

- And Rebekah's excuse to send Jacob away actually becomes the real reason God sent Jacob to Haran
 - God uses Jacob's time in Haran to give him a family
 - But God also uses Rebekah's excuse as the mechanism to discipline her for her sin
 - Jacob's pursuit of a wife becomes the reason Jacob can't return in time to see Rebekah again
 - His commitment to his future wife prevents him from leaving

Gen. 28:1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

Gen. 28:2 "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

Gen. 28:3 "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.

Gen. 28:4 "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

Gen. 28:5 Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

- Rebekah's suggestion to Isaac worked as expected, and he commands Jacob to go to Haran
 - Isaac sends Jacob away with a command
 - Like Isaac's father Abraham did before him, Isaac charges Jacob with not taking a wife from among the Canaanites
 - This stipulation comes from God's own command to Abraham originally not to intermarry with the people in the land
 - Abraham and the people under God's covenant were to remain separate from the people of the land
 - And if they intermarried, God said it would result in the corruption of Abraham's people
 - So Jacob is sent back to his mother's family to find a wife
 - And Jacob receives another blessing as well
 - In keeping with the Abrahamic covenant, Isaac blesses Jacob with the fruitfulness that God promised to Abraham and Isaac
 - But now the blessing has changed
 - Jacob was to become a company of peoples

- Abraham and Isaac never receive such a promise
 - They were promised to have many descendants
 - But they themselves had small families with only one son to carry the promise
 - Now Isaac declares that Jacob is blessed to have a large family of his own
- Furthermore, Isaac confirms that Jacob carries the promises of God to inherit this land
 - Not only would Jacob inherit the land personally, but so would his descendants
 - Those who are included in the promise of God will share in these blessings
- Let's reflect a little on Jacob's life for a moment
 - He was appointed by God before his birth to be the child of the promise, the holder of the birthright that contained God's covenant
 - Like Abraham and Isaac before him, Jacob alone would carry this special set of promises from God
 - Jacob would have the blessing of God's protection and promises of eternal inheritance and earthly blessing
 - Through a twisted set of circumstances, the birthright came to Jacob, and now here he stands ready to leave home under difficult circumstances to seek a wife
 - We have no record of Jacob ever encountering God personally
 - We know he has a faithful testimony, but we have to wonder what did Jacob really understand about this special set of promises?
 - In fact, he might conclude that up to this point, they have been nothing but trouble though he had faith in them
 - Jacob is about to start down a path of spiritual maturity, one in which he learns what it means to be in covenant with the living God
 - Yet Jacob will forever be a sinful man with many flaws and weaknesses
- Before we move into that journey of spiritual growth, Moses gives us another glimpse of Esau and his heart
 - Now that Jacob has been sent away, Esau sees another opportunity to gain Dad's favor

Gen. 28:6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,"

Gen. 28:7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram.

Gen. 28:8 So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac;
Gen. 28:9 and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had,

Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

- Esau watched as Isaac gave Jacob yet another blessing as Jacob departed for Haran
 - We remember that Esau's anger at his brother was a result of his frustration over not having an inheritance of his father's blessing
 - Esau witnesses this moment when Isaac blesses Jacob again, and the wheels start to turn in Esau's head
 - Esau knows that mom and dad have never been pleased by his decision to take wives from among the Canaanites
 - And he assumes that Isaac must be blessing Jacob here because Jacob obeyed Isaac's request to seek a wife from Rebekah's family
 - So Esau concludes that if he were to do the same thing, he could impress his father and gain some measure of blessing as well
 - Since Esau didn't want to travel 450 miles to Haran (and Jacob was already working that opportunity anyway), Esau does the next best thing
 - He goes to the only other family he has: Ishmael's relatives
 - At this time, Ishmael lived south of Isaac's family in the Sinai peninsula
 - So Esau travels south and returns with his cousin, Ishmael's daughter
 - The text doesn't tell us what Isaac and Rebekah thought of this tactic, but we can certainly make a safe assumption
 - Esau's misguided plan only amplified the family's misery
 - A relative of Ishmael was no better than a daughter of the Canaanites for all the same reasons
 - These were people forsaken by the Lord and outside His blessings
- We learn something very important from watching Esau striving to obtain the impossible
 - The unbelieving world is forever counterfeiting the relationships that come only by the grace of God
 - Jacob was a man chosen by God, ordained to receive the blessings of God through faith in the promises of God
 - God brought this about by working through a father, Isaac, to deliver those promises to the chosen son
 - And God continued working throughout both their lives to fulfill His promises, including ensuring they obtained the right wives from the right families at the right time
 - The basis for all their blessings was a relationship with God through a covenant received in faith
 - All that followed in Isaac and Jacob's lives was built on that foundation of faith and relationship

- Under the sovereign control of God's hand
- Now Esau envied these blessings and desired them for himself
 - But Esau lacked the foundation, the faith in God and His promises
 - Like all unbelievers, Esau had no ability to understand spiritual truths so he could only make sense of his life circumstances from a fleshly, worldly perspective
- So Esau studied the behaviors of Jacob and the words of Isaac and assumed he could gain the same benefits by mimicking those words and actions
 - But it doesn't work that way
 - The works in Jacob's life and the blessings that followed were the result of a relationship with God formed by and through God's word
 - Jacob's works didn't create the relationship, the relationship created the works
 - Likewise, the works that Esau is now pursuing can't substitute for a relationship with God
 - And they can't produce the blessings that only relationship can produce
- This is the pattern of every unbeliever who seeks for what God offers to His children
 - They mimic words and actions, striving in vain to produce by their works something that only comes by faith in God's promises
 - To be saved is to rest in the promises of God
 - And to have a relationship with the loving God by our faith
 - To hear Him and to follow Him and to see Him working in our lives
 - But unbelievers always assume that we do what we do in order to bring God into our lives
 - And some may try to mimic our relationship like Esau did in the text here
 - When we sense that dynamic at work, we need to interrupt their mimicry and in love explain the Gospel to them

- Jacob is leaving home, headed for Haran
 - It's time for Jacob to grow up spiritually, since he will become the father of a nation of God's people
 - If we knew Jacob personally and we were to list Jacob's shortcomings, we could probably find many faults
 - Scripture records at least a few of Jacob's shortcomings clearly
 - He relies on himself and his intellect rather than relying on God
 - He turns to God only after his schemes have brought him trouble
 - Like his father, he fails at times to assume the leadership role in his family
 - Generally, he tends to fight against God rather than work with God
 - As we'll see through the course of our study, Jacob's personal traits foreshadow the traits of the nation that comes from him and takes his name
- Meanwhile, God begins to instruct Jacob
 - One of the most amazing things about our relationship with the living God is the way He works in our lives to grow us spiritually
 - It's been said that God saves us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way
 - And so it is with Jacob
 - And Jacob's journey to Haran and back is a 20 year boot camp in learning to trust and follow the Lord
 - Jacob's journey begins with a promise
 - And it ends with a test
 - Today we see the promise

Gen. 28:10 Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

Gen. 28:11 He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.

Gen. 28:12 He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Gen. 28:13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

Gen. 28:14 "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Gen. 28:15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will

bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

- Jacob leaves his family’s traditional home in the land and heads northeast to Haran
 - His route took him along a mountain range running north-south along the east side of the Jordan river
 - He would have passed through Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem
 - And after about 50 miles, he reached a place called Luz
 - Luz is near the border of the land of Canaan
 - Jacob is within a day of crossing the Jordan river and walking out of the promised land
 - His father had never left this land
 - Yet here was Jacob preparing to leave it behind, perhaps never to return
- Night is upon him, so he lies down on the ground to sleep
 - We’re told he took a stone and placed it “under his head”
 - There are two things about that description that tell us to take a closer look at the description
 - First, the mere fact that Moses mentions Jacob’s placement of this stone should catch our attention
 - Why would he include such a meaningless detail unless it was, in fact, meaningful?
 - Secondly, who sleeps with a rock as their pillow?
 - That would have been no more comfortable in Jacob’s day than it would be for us today
 - Simply put, it doesn’t make sense, so the description must mean something else
 - And in fact, the description does mean something else
 - The phrase in Hebrew literally says “at his head” not under his head
 - I don’t know why many English translations, including the NASB, missed this translation, but there are numerous English versions that got the verse correct
 - The New English, Holman Christian and New King James versions all translate this verse correctly
 - So Jacob places a stone at his head before he falls asleep
 - This explains why Moses recorded the incident
 - The rock is a weapon in case Jacob should need to defend himself
 - Much like Saul slept with his spear at his head while he was pursuing David
- This also explains why Moses recorded this detail in the first place

- The detail of the rock shows us that Jacob was in fear for his safety and felt vulnerable and alone during his travels
 - Consider his situation:
 - His father has sent him away
 - His brother is seeking to kill him
 - He is wandering through strange land by himself
 - Headed to a place and people he has never met
 - And he can't be sure what will come of him there
 - His fear and uncertainty is completely understandable
- But Jacob is forgetting something very important
 - He is in a covenant with the living God
 - Jacob may not have the support and protection of his family or an army of men, but he has something much more important
 - He has the Lord of Heaven and Earth committed by His own word to protect and bless Jacob
 - And even though that promise was focused on an inheritance of a certain plot of land, God's promises and blessings weren't limited to that place alone
- As the Psalmist wrote

**Psa. 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

- This is the most important earthly consequence of our relationship with the Lord through our faith in the New Covenant
 - We have the Lord on our side wherever we are and no matter what comes
 - We never again experience life alone
 - We are completely in His care
 - We are only as vulnerable as He allows us to be
 - We are only as afflicted as He chooses to permit
 - We only carry those burdens He permits us to carry
 - Therefore, our trials (whether the result of our sin or the sin of others) come according to the will of the Lord and for our benefit
 - When reflecting on the trials and tribulations of life, Paul asks:

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- This is the lesson God wants to bring to Jacob as he prepares to depart the land
 - Though Jacob is leaving behind his family and the land, he isn't leaving behind God and His promises
 - So as Jacob sleeps, God brings him a vision in a dream
 - This is the first recorded vision given to the family of Abraham through a dream
 - Jacob sees a stairway set upon the ground but reaching into heaven
 - My translation use the term "ladder" to describe the structure, which is where we get the term Jacob's ladder
 - But the word in Hebrew (*sullam*) literally means stairwell
 - On this staircase Jacob sees angels moving, ascending and descending
 - Jacob sees angels leaving the heavenly realm and walking down the stairs to earth, while others are leaving earth and walking up the stairs to heaven
 - Then above the staircase, Jacob recognizes the Lord from where He speaks to Jacob in the dream
- Before we look at the Lord's words, let's consider the symbolism in the scene itself
 - First, a stairway into Heaven makes a clear statement by itself that there is a pathway open to reach God
 - In fact, the genesis behind the Tower of Babel, which probably resembled a large pyramid with stairs along each side, was to "reach Heaven"
 - God is communicating that He is accessible to Jacob
 - And that accessibility was made possible by God's covenant promises to Jacob by His word
 - Secondly, the angels ascending and descending the staircase communicate that an exchange is taking place between Heaven and earth
 - The word angel in Hebrew is the word messenger, so for Jacob these angels were messengers between Heaven and Earth
 - The writer to the Hebrews in the New Testament taught the specific function of angels:

**Heb. 1:13 But to which of the angels has He ever said,
 "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES
 A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"?**

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- Angels minister to (or serve) the people of God, and Jacob is seeing a visible reminder that God is working through His angels to bridge the gap between heaven and earth
- It's also important to note two other details in the description of the angels

- First, this is one of only two times that the angelic realm is mentioned in Genesis
 - The second time occurs in Genesis 32 when Jacob is returning to the land after a 20 year absence
- Secondly, it's noteworthy that the angels are described first as ascending and then descending
 - It suggests that the angels are carrying news to Heaven followed by Heaven responding to meet the needs on Earth
- Finally, we see the Lord at the top of this vision
 - Clearly, the messengers are seen providing intercession between Jacob on earth and the Lord in Heaven
- Putting the vision together, Jacob sees a powerful statement in the symbology of the dream
 - Jacob is not alone
 - He has the Lord ministering to Him by the agency of angels
 - And the angels are constantly moving between earth and Heaven, bringing the Lord word of the needs of Jacob
 - And returning to minister with the grace and wisdom and protection and provision of the Lord
 - And if the vision itself were not clear enough, the Lord standing at the top of the staircase speaks reassuring words to Jacob
 - He begins with a restatement of the covenant first given to Abraham and later Isaac
 - Now it is spoken by God to Jacob for the first time
 - Jacob will have the land and descendants and they will become a source of blessing for the Gentiles
 - Reminding Jacob of the covenant is of utmost importance, because the covenant is Jacob's best reason for confidence that he can trust in God
 - God can't do better than to give us His word
 - We remember that God gave Abraham an oath that the Lord bore by Himself so that Abraham would have confidence and hope
 - Remember what the writer of Hebrews told us:

Heb. 6:13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

Heb. 6:14 saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."

Heb. 6:15 And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

Heb. 6:16 For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

Heb. 6:17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the

promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, Heb. 6:18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

- But then in Genesis 28:15 the Lord turns from the promises of the covenant to make a specific application for Jacob's benefit
 - The Lord says I am with you everywhere you go, I will bring you back to this land, and I will accomplish everything I have promised to do for you
 - If the imagery of the dream weren't enough and the reiteration of God's covenant with Jacob didn't suffice, the Lord goes the extra step of personally guaranteeing Jacob's safety as he prepares to leave the land
 - The promises of God are not focused on the land, they are focused on the person of Jacob and his descendants
 - And Jacob will never be out of God's reach or away from God's protection and faithfulness no matter where God takes him
- What a reassuring message, especially in light of Jacob's state of mind
 - Naturally we should expect that Jacob hears and understands this message fully
 - And by that understanding, Jacob rests in God's promises and begins to trust in God instead of in other things
 - Unfortunately, spiritual growth and maturity doesn't come that easily, not for Jacob or for us
 - Hearing God clearly, understanding Him plainly and following Him obediently requires practice, diligence and experience
 - Jacob has none of those qualities at this point, so instead of understanding God's word properly, Jacob runs off to make the wrong conclusion

Gen. 28:16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

Gen. 28:17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Gen. 28:18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.

Gen. 28:19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.

Gen. 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,

Gen. 28:21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.

Gen. 28:22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of

all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

- Upon awakening, Jacob’s first conclusion is, “The Lord is in this place.”
 - Jacob concludes that the Lord has marked this particular spot as important
 - God can be found in Luz
 - He says this is an awesome place, the house of God, the gate to Heaven
 - The place was special because God had appeared to him here
 - Jacob makes an age old mistake that men are still making today: we confuse the spiritual with the physical, and in so doing we limit God
 - Jacob completely misses the main point of God’s message, that God is not limited to the land but will be with Jacob anywhere he goes
 - In its place, Jacob declares that this is the place to find God
 - In fact, Jacob memorializes the place in God’s honor
 - He changes the name to Bethel, which means the house of God
 - Bethel does become an important place in the history of Israel
 - Only Jerusalem is mentioned more in the Old Testament than Bethel
 - Then Jacob makes a vow as a result of what he has seen
 - He begins his vow with “if”
 - If God will be with me while I’m outside the land, then when I return the Lord will be my God
 - And the stone I intended to use in my own defense, I dedicate this stone to God today in this place
 - And should I return, I will give you a tenth
- There is a hint of a Jacob bargaining with God
 - But God has already promised that He will remain with Jacob
 - Jacob doesn’t need to bargain or wonder if God will remain with him
 - Jacob has become excited and encouraged over God’s revelation, yet he is leaving half cocked and uninformed about the nature of that revelation
- It reminds me of the story of the young boy who encounters God for the first time, but doesn’t understand what he’s seen

A ten-year-old boy was failing math. His parents, who were not religious people, tried everything from tutors to hypnosis; but to no avail. Finally, at the suggestion of a family friend, they decided to enroll their son in a private Christian school. They were nervous at the thought of their child being exposed to religion for the first time, but they felt that they had no other alternatives.

After the first day of school, the boy's parents were surprised when their son walked in after school with a stern, focused and very determined expression on his face. He went straight past them, right to his room and quietly closed the door. For nearly two hours he toiled away in his room - with math books strewn about his desk and the surrounding floor. He emerged just long enough to eat, and after quickly cleaning his plate, went straight back to his room, closed the door and worked feverishly at his studies until bedtime.

This pattern of behavior continued until it was time for the first quarter's report card. The boy walked in with it unopened - laid it on the dinner table and went straight to his room. Cautiously, his mother opened it and, to her amazement, she saw a large red 'A' under the subject of Math.

Overjoyed, she and her husband rushed into their son's room, thrilled at his remarkable progress. "Was it the teachers who helped you?" the father asked. The boy shook his head and said "No."

"Was it the strict classroom environment? The high academic standards?"
"No."

"The textbooks? The computers in the classroom? The curriculum?"
"No," said the son.

"On that first day, when I walked in the front door and looked up, I saw that guy nailed to the plus sign, I KNEW they meant business!"

- Like that boy, sometimes we see God's signs clearly, but we completely misunderstand the meaning
- This kind of mistake is a mark of immaturity in our faith and in our walk
 - We get a piece of the message but we miss the main point
 - Jacob thought God was sanctifying the place, but the message was actually the opposite
 - God wanted Jacob to know it wasn't about a place, but a relationship
 - Today Christians commonly think that God meets them in a place on Sunday rather than remembering that He lives in us everywhere we go
 - Or like the person who wrote to our ministry asking about the Rapture
 - They wanted to know what happens if a Christian donates an organ before dying, will that Christian's organ be taken out of the recipient's body at the Rapture
 - Clearly, they are missing some pieces of understanding in their theology

- These moments are not moments of shame for us, but they do highlight our immaturity and our need to continue growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - Jacob is our example of an immature man spiritually, but despite his immaturity, God remained faithful
 - Not only is God faithful to keep His promises, but God is faithful to grow us up in our understanding of Him and His word
 - Praise be to our Lord!

- Jacob has left for Haran, to find Isaac's relatives still living in that land
 - He is alone and he is carrying virtually nothing of significance
 - As he left the land, God appeared to him promising to bring him back into the land of his fathers
 - God's message was intended to give Jacob peace and confidence about this journey
 - But what Jacob lacked in physical baggage, he makes up for in spiritual and emotional baggage
 - He is still showing a stubborn tendency to trust in his own abilities rather than in God's promises
 - He resorts to deception and schemes to get what he wants
 - But in Haran he'll meet his match in Uncle Laban
 - The story of Jacob's time in Haran lasts three chapters or so, but tells us a lot about Jacob and the story of Israel
 - It tells us the story of how Jacob obtains his four wives
 - And it shows us how the people of Jacob, the people God calls Israel, originate

Gen. 29:1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.

Gen. 29:2 He looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large.

Gen. 29:3 When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

Gen. 29:4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran."

Gen. 29:5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him."

Gen. 29:6 And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and here is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep."

- The opening verse of Chapter 29 says plainly that Jacob went on his journey
 - But the Hebrew is more descriptive
 - It literally reads "Jacob picked up his feet"
 - The phrase is similar to the English colloquialism, "a spring in his step"
 - It suggests Jacob was encouraged by God's appearance in Bethel, and so Jacob leaves the land with a measure of confidence
 - He's gonna need that spring in his step because the walk to Haran is 450 miles

- Like walking from Austin, TX to Tulsa, OK
 - And in the summer time
- This is roughly the same trip that Abraham's servant took to find Isaac's wife, Rebekah
- And like the servant before him, Jacob arrives at a well
 - Jacob is in the land of the sons of the east
 - This is a reference to the branch of Abraham's family who remained in the east rather than moving to Canaan
 - Of course we know that any reference to the east is a warning sign that we're dealing with men who do not know the Lord
 - There is a reason why these family members remained in the east while Abraham moved west into the Promised Land
 - God called Abraham – and only Abraham – to enter Canaan, because Abraham alone was selected to receive God's promises
 - The rest of Abraham's family remained as they were: pagan worshippers
- Jacob enters the pastures near Haran, and he comes upon a well in a field
 - The well was literally the local watering whole for shepherds grazing their flocks
 - Three shepherds had assembled their sheep at the well and were waiting to water their flocks
 - We're told the well was covered by a large stone, so the shepherds couldn't water their herds
 - As Jacob approached he wants to know how close he is to his goal, so he inquires about Haran
 - They tell him in vs.5-6 that they know Laban and in fact his daughter is approaching now
 - This is almost exactly like the encounter the servant had at the well in the earlier story
 - But there are differences
 - The servant prayed for God to give him clear direction and signs
 - And when they came, the servant thanked the Lord and gave Him glory
 - Here Jacob never bothers to seek the Lord's help, either taking it for granted or overlooking it entirely
 - And yet God's fingerprints are all over these circumstances
 - God is no less in control; the only thing that's changed is the beneficiary's perspective
 - Unlike the servant, Jacob remains unaware of the Lord working in this moment
 - Because he isn't seeking to know the Lord's will much less how he can join the Lord in the work

- Jacob is a useful illustration for us in the perils of making decisions and working our plans without a solid prayer life and an attitude of seeking the Lord in all we do
 - God is always at work in and around us
 - But if we don't check in with Him, we miss that work
 - It still happens one way or another, but we're oblivious
 - So we can't see the Lord's working, adapt to it, work with it, and glorify Him for it
 - We need to remember that our prayers aren't "for" God
 - They create opportunity for us, blessing for us
 - Our weekly prayer time on Tuesday nights isn't something God needs and it's not a chore
 - It's the privilege reserved for those called the children of God

Prov. 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked,
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

John 9:31 "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.

- We alone have the opportunity to approach God in prayer, so we should take advantage of it
- Jacob continues to move forward in life without considering God's role in his daily life
 - As far as Jacob is concerned, God is back in Bethel sitting on his staircase
 - But no, God said He would be with Jacob wherever he went, and here he is working to bring Jacob to exactly the right place in perfect timing to meet Rachel, Laban's daughter
- As Jacob and the men watch Rachel approach, Jacob asks why they are waiting in the hot midday sun

Gen. 29:7 He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them."

Gen. 29:8 But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

Gen. 29:9 While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

Gen. 29:10 When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

- Jacob is an experienced shepherd, and so he recognizes this is a strange situation
 - Shepherds sitting in the midday heat with the sheep gathered is not normal
 - Normally, animals were gathered in safety at night, then watered in the morning
 - Then they moved out into the pasture to graze in the safety of the daylight
 - As night approached, the herds are regathered, and usually they are watered again at night
 - So Jacob asks why are you still sitting here now?
 - The shepherds say they must wait until all the herds have gathered before they open the well and water the herd
 - Wells were often sealed by rocks to protect them from people or animals falling in or sand storms covering it over, or anything else that might contaminate or ruin it
 - Rachel's herd is the last one of the group to gather, so she is the one everyone has been waiting for
 - From the sound of it, they have been waiting for the entire morning, which is not a productive day for a shepherd
- So why do they have to wait for every flock to gather? Why didn't the shepherds just move the stone, water their flock, and then let the next shepherd do the same? Why must everyone be there together?
 - Perhaps because it took the combined strength of all the shepherds to roll the stone?
 - But that can't be the reason, because in v.10, we see Jacob alone rolled the stone away
 - Obviously one man can manage the task
 - The real reason is Rachel, who was coming with her father's sheep
 - Rachel's name is a play on words in this context, because her name means a ewe lamb
 - So a girl lamb is leading the sheep
 - This well is owned by Laban, and Rachel is his daughter we're told
 - All these shepherds are probably grazing on Laban's land
 - Some of them might have been employed by Laban
 - But in either case, they were obligated to follow Laban's rules if they use his well
 - It's likely that Rachel did not have the strength by herself to roll the stone away
 - So Laban probably required the men to wait for Rachel every day before watering their own flocks
 - This way Rachel could gain access to the water as well
 - But here comes Rachel strolling in at midday while the rest of the shepherds waste

the day waiting for her

- The entire scene paints a picture of a poorly run operation
- Laban's household is in desperate need of someone to step in and get things organized and running properly
- Enter Jacob, the skilled shepherd
 - He's just the guy Laban needs to get this operation into shape
 - And as we'll soon see, Laban is a good judge of talent
 - Jacob is also a take charge guy, which becomes obvious in vs.9-10
 - He immediately gets up, moves the stone and begins to water the sheep
- The text doesn't say what Jacob's thinking was, but his actions intimated a certain mindset
 - He jumps up, moves the stone and waters the woman's flocks – probably an act of chivalry for the one woman shepherd
 - It also suggests he was disgusted with the other shepherders laying around in the middle of the workday doing nothing useful
- God's handiwork just continues to amaze us
 - The Lord guides Jacob across 450 miles of desert in search of the family he's never met
 - And the Lord directs him to exactly the right well at exactly the right time
 - To meet exactly the right woman
 - And then to make sure the family respects and welcomes Jacob, God has prepared a need perfectly suited to Jacob's strengths
 - When the Lord appeared to Jacob He declared He would "keep" Jacob wherever he goes
 - The word keep in Hebrew is *shamar*, which means preserve, defend, guard, take care of
 - God is going to ensure Jacob's success in this time, because God is faithful to His promises
 - The Lord has made similar promises to believers today
 - To meet our needs, to never leave us nor forsake us, to be with us always, even to the end of the age
 - Just because the Lord promises to meet our needs doesn't mean His provision will drop miraculously from Heaven in the form of manna
 - He might do that, of course, but more often He works in natural ways to meet our needs, like He is doing here with Jacob
 - Jacob couldn't have asked for a better opportunity as he arrives in Haran
 - He finds the family with no struggle and they are prepared to receive him warmly, especially when they learn his talents

- God is clearly at work to keep Jacob...but has Jacob taken note of God's work?
Not yet

Gen. 29:11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept.

Gen. 29:12 Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

Gen. 29:13 So when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things.

Gen. 29:14 Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

- There is something quite unusual in v.11
 - A man kissing a woman
 - In all the Bible, there are only 45 mentions of any form of kiss
 - Only two of those are of a man kissing a woman
 - One is here, the other is in the Song of Solomon
 - I don't know what is more surprising...that there is only 1 mention of romantic kissing outside the book of Songs
 - Or that is there is only 1 mention of romantic kissing in the book of Songs
 - Given the full context of the kiss, this isn't a romantic kiss though
 - Jacob's kiss is one of joy as he greets his long lost relative
 - He lifted up his voice and wept
 - It's important to notice the lack of any reference to God in that verse
 - Contrast Jacob's response to his good fortune with that of Abraham's servant

Gen. 24:26 Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD.

Gen. 24:27 He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."

- Jacob is thankful, but he isn't thinking specifically enough
- He lifts his voice up and cries tears of joy, but he doesn't go the final step to acknowledge the Lord's responsibility for these blessings
 - We need to guard against this same tendency
 - In the back of our minds, we know the Lord is at work to bless us in ways big or small
 - But in those moments when things go our way, do we credit Him? Do we say,

whether to ourselves or others, thank the Lord?

- So Jacob tells Rachel that he is the son of her father's sister, he is Rachel's cousin
 - Now when Rachel reaches her father's home, she announces Jacob's arrival
 - And the news spreads fast
 - Laban learns that his sister's boy was in town, so he runs to meet Jacob
 - His willingness to run communicates his sincere excitement to have a distant relative honor him with this visit
 - Since it was such a long distance to travel, it was understood that he would be staying a while
 - This is the same Laban that negotiated for his sister's marriage with Abraham's servant
 - That was 97 years ago, so Laban is an old man
 - But men are still living nearly 200 years in this day, so Laban is only a little past middle age
 - Of course, the first thing that happens with a family reunion, we catch up on all the family news
 - At the end of v.13 it says Jacob related all these things to Laban
 - Meaning, Jacob told Laban about all that had transpired to bring Jacob to his doorstep
 - Laban's response is to acknowledge Jacob is the son of his sister, and welcome him like a son
 - Once again the circumstances with Laban are perfectly set to ensure Jacob gets a warm reception...all God's work
- Jacob stays a month with Laban, we're told
 - In this day, a visiting relative didn't just spend their days lying around on the couch watching the History Channel, raiding the fridge and watching everyone else work
 - Everyone worked every day, regardless of where they laid their head
 - So Jacob would have gone to work immediately in some capacity while he stayed at Laban's
 - Since we know Jacob was a shepherd, we can safely assume he went to work putting Laban's shepherding operation in order
 - And as we'll see in the coming weeks, Jacob quickly becomes a very valuable part of Laban's operation
 - Jacob is a man blessed by God, so it should come as no surprise that Jacob's contribution would bless Laban
 - Remember God's promises in His covenant
 - God will bless others through the covenant he makes with Jacob
 - But Laban is a son of the east, and so he is not a man operating on godly principles

- Which gives God an opportunity to use Laban's sin as an instrument to disciple and teach Jacob
- We'll watch and learn from those lessons ourselves in the coming weeks of study

- When we meet someone, we rely on first impressions to size someone up
 - Is this person a friend or foe?
 - Can we trust them? Do we have an interest in them?
 - Our first impression can be very helpful to understanding how we should relate to that person

There was a young man climbed his way up the corporate ladder very quickly until one day he was promoted to Vice President over a large division in another state. As he arrived on the first day to assume his new position, the young man was nervous. He wanted to make a good first impression to his staff and employees. As the day begins, he settles into his large leather office chair behind his sprawling desk, congratulating himself for having made it to the top.

Suddenly, his secretary opens the door and announces the executive has his first visitor of the day. The young man looks around the office and realizes his desk is completely free of any signs of work. No papers or books. Even his computer is still turned off. The executive becomes concerned that his visitor will have a bad first impression of the new boss. He wants the visitor to be impressed with the importance of his new position, the high demands of the job, the non-stop responsibilities.

So as his visitor walks through the door, the executive quickly picks up his desk phone and pretends to be engaged in an important and heated conversation about some critical issues. The visitor stands patiently waiting for the conversation to end, and when the boss hangs up the phone, he turns to his visitors and says, “As you can see, I’m very busy this morning, so tell me quickly why have you come to see me?”

To which the man replied, “I’m here to connect your phone.”

- That phone repairman certainly gained a useful first impression of the boss
 - But sometimes our first impressions lie to us
 - That’s especially true when people pretend to be something they are not
 - This is the situation Jacob finds himself this morning, as he makes the mistake of relying on his first impressions of Laban

Gen. 29:14 Laban said to him, “Surely you are my bone and my flesh.” And he stayed with him a month.

Gen. 29:15 Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?”

Gen. 29:16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Gen. 29:17 And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.

Gen. 29:18 Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

Gen. 29:19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me."

Gen. 29:20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

- After Jacob had lived and worked with Laban for a month, we see Laban has become impressed with Jacob's skill
 - Laban opens a conversation with Jacob about wages
 - He asked if it is right for Jacob, his flesh and blood, to work for nothing, for free
 - Laban's message is that I care much more for you than I do for my hired workers, so shouldn't I pay you as I pay them?
 - This is a generous offer, because the rules of the day generally worked opposite from what Laban said
 - A man paid his hired workers, not his sons
 - Remember the parable of the prodigal son?
 - The son takes his inheritance and leaves the father, but when he gets desperate, he decides to return
 - But remember what the son says to himself as he rehearsed his speech he planned to deliver to his father

Luke 15:18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

Luke 15:19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

- He said he wasn't "worthy" to be a son, so make me a hired hand
 - To be paid wages was not a sign of privilege, they are a sign of bondage in that day
 - Remember Paul's analogy in Galatians when he compares our coming to faith in Christ to the experience of a child becoming an heir

Gal. 4:1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

Gal. 4:2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

- So in Jacob's day, sons were not paid, servants (slaves) were paid
 - Sons had an expectation of an inheritance to compensate for their labor, so they were essentially working for themselves, building up their own estate
 - But in Jacob's case, he wasn't Laban's son, so he had no expectation of an inheritance
 - He had nothing to gain from the work except to pay for his room and board
- Therefore, Jacob had nothing binding him to Laban's household
 - At any time, Jacob could decide to leave and he would owe Laban nothing
- As we come to learn through this story, that reality is Laban's chief concern, which is why he engages in this conversation
 - Laban is concerned that he will lose Jacob's help
 - We've already seen how dysfunctional Laban's operation is, with shepherds wasting half the day waiting to water their sheep
 - So Laban twists reality making it seem like a good thing for Jacob to become a slave, a hired hand
 - This is a trick worthy of Jacob himself, a page right out of Jacob's playbook
 - This is similar to the way Jacob treated Esau
 - Laban's offer is completely legitimate and fair enough
 - But it's designed to take advantage of another person's weakness
 - Laban isn't trying to be fair in his treatment of Jacob – far from it
 - So what weakness of Jacob is Laban trying to exploit by his offer?
 - The oldest weakness in the book: a man's desire for a woman
 - Laban it turns out is no dummy
 - He has spent a month studying Jacob, recognizing his gift for shepherding, and noticing his interest in one of Laban's daughters
- Laban has two daughters actually: Leah and Rachel
 - And they are something straight out of a Disney story
 - Rachel is beautiful in form and face
 - Form refers to her figure while face refers to...well, the face
 - Rachel's name means ewe lamb, a female lamb
 - Leah, on the other hand, is...how could we put this delicately?
 - Well, her name means cow, which tells us everything we need to know
 - Furthermore, we're told her eyesight is weak, meaning Leah had poor vision
 - In that day, poor eyesight was a real problem, because corrective lenses didn't exist
 - So if you couldn't see well, you were prone to being clumsy, running into things

- So not only is Leah a cow, but she isn't very useful to a man
- Now as the father, Laban has the cultural responsibility to marry these women off
 - Otherwise, he is stuck with them for life
 - Women lived in the house of their father until the day they were married and joined the house of their husband
 - Furthermore, marriages were arranged, and the prospective husband must negotiate with the bride's father to gain the daughter as his bride
 - This is precisely what the servant did with Laban to gain the hand of Rebekah 97 years earlier
- So Laban knows he must find a man willing to marry his daughters and able to pay a price for each
 - Finding a suitor for Rachel won't be difficult, given her fine form and face
 - Finding a suitor for the cow, on the other hand, will be nearly impossible
 - No man would be willing to buy an unattractive and visually impaired wife
 - Laban is likely to be stuck with Leah forever
- Turning to Jacob for a moment, Jacob has taken an interest in Rachel
 - But he came to Laban's house with nothing...no money, no possessions
 - How will he negotiate for the hand of Rachel when he has nothing to offer Laban?
 - Laban has no doubt taken note of Jacob's interest in Rachel
 - And that is precisely why he has offered to pay Jacob wages
 - The prospect of earning wages gives Jacob the opportunity to earn his wife, which Laban knows Jacob will want to do
 - This is why I say Laban is stealing a page from Jacob's playbook
 - When Jacob bought the birthright from Esau, he knew Esau cared little for the birthright
 - He also knew that Esau was ruled by his flesh and prone to making rash decisions
 - Finally, he knew that Esau didn't appreciate that the birthright and the inheritance would go together
 - So Jacob made Esau an offer that was legitimate but also built on deception and scheming
 - Laban now does the same to Jacob in return
- Jacob falls for Laban's trap, and offers to work for seven years for Rachel
 - This is a very generous offer for Rachel
 - He is offering 84 shekels for Rachel's hand, a huge sum of money
 - Consider that later in Genesis Joseph is sold into slavery for only 20 shekels of silver

- And a young male slave was considered similar in value to a young bride
- Jacob's offer was intended to force Laban to say yes
 - Much like if someone were to offer to buy your house for four times its real value
 - You couldn't refuse
- This offer also reflected Jacob's great love for Rachel
 - In fact in v.20 Moses tells us that the seven years Jacob spent serving Laban for Rachel felt like but a few days because of his love for her
 - As this story was retold around the hearth in many Jewish homes over the centuries, I'm sure that as this verse was spoken, all the women in the room would respond, "Awwwww"
 - It's so romantic
 - And as it turns out, it was also foolish

Gen. 29:21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her."

Gen. 29:22 Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast.

Gen. 29:23 Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her.

Gen. 29:24 Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

Gen. 29:25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"

- After the seven years, Jacob declares it is time to receive his wife
 - Laban responds with a wedding feast and the moment arrives to give Jacob his bride for the first evening in the tent
 - The wedding feast itself was a seven day affair
 - During the celebration period, the bride remained completely veiled
 - And the bridal garments were elaborate and flowing
 - They completely covered the face and form of the person
 - So after the wedding ceremony itself on the wedding night, the bride is placed in the marriage tent by herself
 - The new husband celebrates with the men leading up to the wedding night moment, a bachelor party of sorts
 - And finally he is ushered to his waiting bride in the tent
 - It's night, so inside the tent you can't see anything
 - You're also under the influence of wine, so you don't have all your senses

- So Laban pulls off the deception he's so famous for: he gives Jacob the wrong bride
 - He also gives Leah a bridesmaid, her own servant, which was customary
 - These bridesmaids play a larger role later in the story
- By the laws of the day, this wedding was a binding agreement
 - Even though Jacob expected to marry a different woman, by consummating the marriage, Jacob is officially married to this woman
 - And since divorce didn't exist, there was no prospect to end the relationship
 - What was done, was done
 - So the schemer and deceiver, as some call Jacob, is now the recipient of a scheme and a deception
 - He has married a cow (Leah)
- Let's ask the important question at this moment? Where was God during these events?
 - We know God had the power to stop Laban's deception, so self-evidently God permitted it to happen
 - But we remember God promised Jacob He would keep Jacob and bless Jacob everywhere he goes
 - So why did God let this happen to Jacob?
 - This is such a horrible deception
 - Can you image working seven years to obtain the wife of your dreams only to find you married her ugly, clumsy sister?
 - But as bad as that seems, God has a great purpose in it
 - The Bible shows time and time again that God brings discipline upon His children
 - Hebrews teaches this principle best:

Heb. 12:3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Heb. 12:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Heb. 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

**"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;**

Heb. 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Heb. 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected

them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Heb. 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- I know we understand the principle of discipline, the value of being disciplined, the way it causes us to correct our bad behaviors
 - But take a moment to consider what the Bible says it means when God disciplines us
 - Hebrews says in v.8 that discipline means we are God's children
 - To be without His discipline would mean we are not His children
 - The world of unbelievers do not receive discipline from the Father
 - They receive the natural consequences of their sins
 - And they receive God's wrath in the day of judgment
 - But they do not receive His discipline
 - We on the other hand receive His discipline now
 - As proof we are His children, which means we will not receive His wrath in our judgment
 - Instead, we receive His mercy because of His grace
 - Jacob is experiencing God's discipline for his continuing sins of relying on himself instead of relying on God
 - And for his tendency to scheme and exploit others to get what he wants, rather than trusting in God to bless Jacob as the Lord promised
- So how does God accomplish these purposes through discipline?
 - God's favorite way to get our attention is to visit our own sins back upon ourselves
 - If we are a man like Jacob who is prone to scheming and trusting in ourselves, then God will often turn the tables to teach us a lesson
 - He may allow us to experience what it feels like to be exploited
 - And He will find creative ways to show us what happens when we depend on ourselves instead of trusting in Him
 - In short, He gives us exactly what we asked for until we realize it wasn't what we should have wanted
 - Remember how the Lord dealt with Israel in the desert when they grumbled to Him about wanting meat?

Num. 11:16 The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their

officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

Num. 11:17 “Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone.

Num. 11:18 “Say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, “Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt.” Therefore the LORD will give you meat and you shall eat.

Num. 11:19 ‘You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days,

Num. 11:20 but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, “Why did we ever leave Egypt?””

- God has given Jacob a wife, Leah
 - And this wife is God’s appointed mate for Jacob, though it’s not the one he wanted
 - And God did it to teach Jacob a lesson about himself and about God’s power and authority in his life
- Consider the parallels God draws between Jacob’s past sins and Laban’s scheme
 - Jacob was able to deceive his father, Isaac, because he took advantage of his father’s blindness
 - Laban was able to blind Jacob with the darkness in the tent and the veil over Leah’s face
 - Leah went along with the plan of her parent, Laban, pretending to be someone she wasn’t
 - Jacob likewise went along with the plan of his parent, Rebekah, pretending to be someone he wasn’t
 - Jacob was tricked into marrying the older daughter when he intended to marry the younger
 - Isaac was tricked into blessing the younger son when he intended to bless the older
 - Jacob entered into a binding agreement with Leah, one he couldn’t reverse
 - While Isaac entered into a binding agreement with Jacob, one he couldn’t reverse
- This situation has God’s fingerprints all over it, once again
 - Jacob need only wake up from his self-centered view of life and realize that the God Who appeared to him at Bethel was the same God working in his life in Haran
 - What’s the right thing for Jacob to do at this point?
 - He should honor his marriage to Leah and seek no additional marriage

- He should fall back on God in repentance and in the hope God would bless this union
- He should learn his lesson
- But Jacob is a stubborn man, and rather than looking past Laban, who was merely God's instrument, Jacob continues to depend on himself
 - So Jacob pushes forward in sin still seeking Rachel and inviting yet more discipline

- Poor Jacob
 - He seems to have met his match in Uncle Laban
 - Jacob is someone who schemes and manipulates others to get what he wants
 - He arrived in Haran to work for Laban thinking he was a man in control of his own destiny
 - Never mind God's appearance and His promise to take care of Jacob's needs
 - Jacob heard but didn't listen, so he's already forgotten God's promise
 - So as he seeks Rachel as his wife, he falls for Laban's trick and ends up marrying Leah, the undesirable older daughter
 - Jacob fooled himself into thinking he was in control of his own destiny
 - And that's Jacob's essential problem...a willingness to trust in flesh rather than rest in God's promises
 - Truly, Jacob is a poster child for every man since Adam, in that all men share his weakness to some degree
 - But Jacob is to be the father of a nation of God's people
 - He more than anyone else needs to be a man who understands and demonstrates dependence upon God
 - Laban is an ungodly man, living in his flesh and ignorant of the word of God
 - So who better for God to use to discipline Jacob?
 - Laban's schemes and tricks offer God the perfect antagonist to bring Jacob to the end of himself
 - To show Jacob the foolishness of depending on himself
 - To cause Jacob to turn to God recognizing God's authority, faithfulness and goodness
- Last week, Jacob had entered the marriage tent as a man in love and exited the tent a man in despair...and that isn't a commentary on marriage
 - He emerged to find himself married to the wrong woman, Leah

Gen. 29:25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"

Gen. 29:26 But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.

Gen. 29:27 "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."

Gen. 29:28 Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.

Gen. 29:29 Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.

Gen. 29:30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

- Remember we mentioned last week that the marriage process in the ancient East was a week-long affair
 - The week began with the marriage day and marriage night
 - Jacob entered the tent on that first night
 - His bride was waiting in the dark tent, fully veiled
 - So Jacob was unable to detect Laban's deception until after the marriage was consummated
 - So Jacob emerged from the tent married, like it or not
 - To add insult to injury, the marriage still had another week of celebration, where the bride and groom were expected to celebrate their union with the guests
 - This would be the greatest celebration in their lives, and it was especially important for the woman
 - In this patriarchal culture, the woman was rarely celebrated or made the center of attention
 - So the marriage week was perhaps the biggest week of her life
 - Poor Leah
 - She's unwanted and unloved by the man who was tricked into marrying her
 - The scripture portrays Leah as smart enough to understand the situation with her new husband
 - She knows she was not wanted
 - Her marriage starts in the worst possible way
 - And don't forget about Rachel
 - She expected to marry Jacob, only to discover on the wedding night that Laban was substituting his oldest daughter instead
 - Rachel couldn't warn Jacob or disobey her father
 - She could only stand by and feel jealousy for her sister
- Despite Laban's trickery, Leah is the woman God had intended for Jacob
 - We could compare this situation to the way Jacob obtained the birthright
 - We know Jacob was the man God had chosen to receive the birthright, for God said so even before the boys were born
 - Yet God allowed Jacob to obtain it through a sinful act of deception
 - God did need Jacob to take that step in order to bring about His plan in Jacob's life
 - He allowed it to happen so that through the consequences of Jacob's sin God could discipline and mature Jacob

- Similarly, God selected Leah for Jacob, and God took advantage of Laban's sinful deception to accomplish His plan while disciplining Jacob
 - We'll see further evidence later that Leah was God's one and only choice of wife for Jacob
 - For now we need only note that Jacob wasn't willing to see God's hand in these circumstances
- Does this perspective of God working through the sin of men to accomplish His will challenge your understanding of who God is and how God works? If so, don't reject it out of hand
 - God can accomplish anything He desires without our help, but the story of scripture testifies that God chooses to work through sinful men because that's all He has
 - He saved humanity through the work of Noah, a man who sinfully became drunk after the flood
 - He delivered His promises to save a people and the world to Abraham, a man who sinfully lied about his wife twice and married a concubine
 - He chose kings who were sinners
 - He chose prophets who ran from their assignments and were convinced only after spending days in the belly of a fish
 - He chose apostles who fought over who would be the greatest then later abandoned His Son in His time of need
 - He chose you and I, men and women who sin everyday and yet somehow in His wisdom and mercy God is able to make something good come from it all
 - So the Lord has used Laban's sin to bring Jacob a wife that can both bless Jacob and humble him
- Rather than recognize God at work, Jacob remains prideful and determined to control his own destiny
 - So he demands an explanation from Laban for how he could trick Jacob in this way
 - Laban answers that it is not the custom of this land to marry the younger before the older
 - We can't be sure Laban is lying, but he probably is
 - Even if this was a custom in the land, why didn't Laban tell Jacob of this custom when they entered into the deal?
 - Jacob clearly stated he would work seven years for Rachel, not Leah
 - Obviously, if Laban had told Jacob in the beginning that Jacob must marry Leah first, Jacob probably won't have agreed
 - At the very least, he would have negotiated further
 - Laban's answer was simply a way for Laban to save face now that his deception has been revealed
 - This culture worked very hard to look righteous even when it was obvious to

everyone that someone had done the wrong thing

- As long as the offender offered a plausible explanation, everyone else played along with the face saving excuse because no one wanted to rob another man of his honor
- Having made excuse for his deception, Laban still knows what Jacob wants...he wants Rachel
 - And Laban still wants something himself
 - We remember that Laban's plan from the beginning has been to hold Jacob in his household as long as possible
 - Jacob is a valuable asset to Laban's sheep operation
 - Jacob knows shepherding and as a man blessed by the Lord, Jacob brings blessing everywhere he goes
 - So far Laban has kept Jacob close at hand for seven years, but now Jacob is angry and probably likely to leave town
 - But Laban has another card to play in his scheme
 - He offers Jacob the hand of Rachel for another seven years of labor
 - In reality, Jacob will have worked 14 years for Rachel, since he never intended to work for Leah
- Knowing Jacob isn't in a mood to trust his uncle, Laban makes the deal a little sweeter
 - He says he's willing to give Rachel to Jacob right now, but Jacob has to work an additional seven years
 - Jacob isn't going to turn this down, because he wants Rachel and thought he had her
 - So Jacob agrees
 - Laban adds one other condition, probably out of pity for his oldest unloved daughter
 - Laban asks that Jacob complete the week for Leah first
 - The week refers to the week of marriage celebration that Leah expected
 - It would have been embarrassing for Leah to find her week cut short because Jacob marries her sister
 - Laban must have also realized that under these circumstances Leah would find herself in a loveless marriage
 - So He asks Jacob to at least have the common courtesy to give Leah her week before casting her aside for Rachel
- In v.28 we're told Jacob completes the week of celebration, and then immediately marries Rachel
 - This would have involved yet another week of celebration
 - Like Leah, Rachel receives a maid as a dowry gift
 - And then in v.30 our suspicions are confirmed

- Jacob loves Rachel more than Leah
- What a sad situation for Jacob and his two wives
 - God never endorses multiple marriages
 - The results of multiple marriages is always portrayed as a negative influence in the family and not something God desires
 - In fact later in the Law in Leviticus, marriages to sisters is specifically prohibited
 - Yet these marriages are considered legitimate and binding
 - The fact that they are not to God's liking and they bring negative consequences doesn't mean they aren't real
 - Every time these men make a marriage commitment, they are bound by that commitment, even though it brings negative consequences
- Consider the situation Jacob now finds himself
 - His first wife, the one God provided, has been cast aside to live out her life as a second class citizen in Jacob's household
 - Meanwhile, Jacob has moved on to the woman he wanted
 - How do you think these women are going to respond to each other?
 - Jacob's stubborn decision to seek after Rachel is going to bring lifelong struggle to this family
 - In fact, Jacob's favoritism for Rachel will be the root cause for intense jealousy in Jacob's family, leading to the most horrifying experience in Jacob's life
- And the troubles start virtually right away

Gen. 29:31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

Gen. 29:32 Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."

Gen. 29:33 Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon.

Gen. 29:34 She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi.

Gen. 29:35 And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

- Notice right away, Moses tells us that the Lord is acting in these circumstances

- The Lord gives Leah the opportunity to have children
 - But he left Rachel barren for the time being
 - Here again we see God expressing His preference for the woman Jacob should have as his wife
 - God leaves Rachel unable to have children but gives children to Leah
- Moses tells us that this decision was a response to Jacob's lack of love for his first wife
 - Being able to give your husband children was the highest possible blessing a woman received
 - The truth of this is reflected in Paul's teaching as he says:

1Tim. 2:15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

- The word preserved is actually the word for saved, as in salvation
- Paul is saying that a woman's most important contribution to God's plan of salvation is to birth children who might one day become children of God
- Think of the magnitude of that statement
 - A woman carried in her body the unique and awesome power to bring a soul into existence
 - A person who may become a citizen of the eternal city, the New Jerusalem
 - One day that mother will walk the golden streets side by side with the believers she birthed
 - Both equals in God's plan, both eternally serving God, yet one gave physical life to the other
- Nothing a man does can compare with this privilege
- So when God gives Leah the privilege to bring forth the first children in Jacob's family, it was a clear statement from God about where His choice lies
 - Leah was the intended wife, yet she was the unloved one
 - Can Jacob not see the irony in this situation?
 - He was the unloved son, from the perspective of his father
 - Jacob was the one His father was determined to overlook, yet he was the one God chose
 - Now Jacob is committing the same sin upon his wife
 - He is rejecting the wife God chose so he can favor a woman of his own choosing
- Leah's first child was Reuben
 - The name Reuben in Hebrew means "see a son"
 - There are two things notable about this name

- First, it's notable that Leah named the boy and not Jacob
 - Normally the patriarch would name the child, and the fact that he doesn't tells us how disengaged he was
 - Jacob doesn't seem to take any interest in Leah's child
- The second thing is the name itself: Reuben
 - Leah names the child Reuben to make a point to Jacob
 - She says to Jacob, "See, I gave you a son"
- Notice in v.32 Leah says surely now Jacob will love me
 - Giving a husband a son was very important, and Leah's first child – Jacob's first child – is a boy
 - So naturally Leah assumes this will bring Jacob around
 - But Jacob is so hard hearted, it has little effect
- Still, God shows more mercy on Leah and gives her a second son, whom she calls Simeon
 - The name means hearing, and Leah chooses this name to honor the Lord for hearing her sorrow at being unloved
 - This name is also important for two reasons
 - First, it tells us that Reuben didn't change Jacob's view of Leah
 - He remains in love with Rachel only and has no feelings for Leah
 - Poor Leah is still hated
 - Secondly, it tells us that Leah was God fearing, a believer as we say today
 - She is conscious of God's work in her life and credits God for receiving two sons
 - Leah understands the truth, that the Lord is working to bring her husband back to her
 - But Leah hasn't given up hope yet, so when she has a third son, she names him Levi
 - The name Levi means joined, because Leah is hopeful that a third son will finally be enough to join her to her husband
 - Interestingly, the Levites are the tribe who later join the nation of Israel to the Lord in His temple
 - So the name is prophetic in that it points to the role of the priesthood which comes from Levi
 - Finally, Leah has a fourth son, Judah
 - The name means praise, as in praise the Lord
 - She is praising the Lord for having been given four sons in a row, which was quite an honor
 - So this provides further confirmation that the Lord has selected Leah for Jacob, but Jacob won't listen

- But there is a deeper meaning here
- Look at the progression of Leah's names
 - First she assumes that a first-born son will be enough to win her husband over, so she names him Reuben
 - When Reuben fails to have that effect, she names the next son Simeon, because she knows the Lord is taking note of her situation
 - After she fails to win Jacob, she has a third son she names Levi, assuming a third time is the charm
- But now that all three sons have failed to impress Jacob, she seems to have given up hope of winning over her hard-hearted husband
 - The fourth son is a tribute to the Lord, praise to the Lord
 - Leah's husband is the Lord and she is praising Him for His faithfulness
 - If you want further proof that the Lord intended Leah for Jacob, consider two of the sons she brings into the world
 - Levi is the tribe of priests
 - And Judah is the tribe of kings
 - More importantly, Leah is in the line to the Messiah, the seed promise, while Rachel isn't
 - This isn't to say that Rachel isn't important to God's plan, but it does tell us that God would have been content with Leah as Jacob's wife
 - But Jacob wasn't content with God's plan
- What a stubborn man Jacob was
 - He is the man carrying God's promises yet he ignores God's obvious work in his life
 - While his new wife, coming from a pagan family who has yet to see or hear from the Lord, is the one responding to the Lord's grace
 - Before we shake our head at Jacob, ask whether we've done similar things
 - Who among us isn't as stubborn in our own way and to a similar degree
 - We carry God's promises too, made sure in the blood of Christ found in the New Covenant
 - We're called to see Him at work in our world and in our life, and follow Him
 - Yet how often do we repeat the sin of Jacob?
 - Do we chase after the shiny objects in our lives, the Rachels, while ignoring the Leahs God has given us
 - God is at work keeping His promises to give us food and clothing and a place to live, but maybe we're not content to accept what He provided
 - Maybe our house isn't big enough, or our neighborhood isn't nice enough
 - Or our job or wardrobe or toys don't suit our desires
 - So we continue working to obtain the very thing God has already given us

- Like Jacob, who had a wife yet decided to work another seven years for another wife, he felt his needs went beyond God's provision
 - Think about that...how much work and effort in your life can be traced to trying to obtain something better than what God has already provided in the by and by?
 - Scripture isn't saying that it's necessarily wrong to have hopes and dreams and desires
 - But if those desires distract us from following God and serving Him, then yes they're wrong
- Jacob is clearly distracted, and this distraction is sowing seeds of discontent that won't bear fruit until many years later
 - Yet God will continue to work faithfully in this increasingly dysfunctional family because His faithfulness doesn't come and go like our faithfulness
 - Still, God finds ways to be faithful even as He allows the consequences of our sin to rest on our heads at times
- The story of Jacob and his sin is only just beginning...

- The story of Jacob and Jacob's family is a story of human weaknesses set upon one another, while God's grace and mercy abounds
 - Jacob is a man of weaknesses, and his weaknesses propagate among his wives and children
 - He has stubbornly continued to seek after things God has not prepared for him
 - Thereby bringing consequences upon himself and his family
 - He is also a man who does not foresee the consequences of his actions, especially in the way they will mold his family
 - Jacob's choice to marry two women instantly leads to jealousy among the two women
 - Jacob pours fuel on this fire by showing favoritism to Rachel over Leah, and as sisters we can only imagine how desperately each wanted to have Jacob's attention
 - It has once been said that jealousy is bred in doubts
 - And when those doubts change into certainties, then the passion either ceases or turns into absolute madness
 - Clearly Leah had doubts concerning Jacob's love, and so she sought something to give her an upper hand in the marriage
 - So as God honored the unloved Leah, He gives her four sons before giving Rachel any children
 - But Jacob continued to ignore Leah despite the boys, leading Leah toward madness
 - Ironically, Leah lacked Jacob's love, but she could give Jacob children
 - While Rachel had Jacob's love, but couldn't give him children
 - God seems to be emphasizing that Jacob's unfair treatment of his wife Leah is not in keeping with God's intentions for bringing forth the tribes of Israel
- Meanwhile, Rachel's jealousy grows, as does her frustration at not giving her husband children
 - It's also been said that jealousy is the art of injuring ourselves more than others, and Rachel proves that statement by her actions
 - This chapter sets up several important issues that come through later in the story of Jacob
 - For today, we're going to focus on the actions and consequences of each actor

Gen. 30:1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."

Gen. 30:2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

Gen. 30:3 She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children."

Gen. 30:4 So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.

Gen. 30:5 Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

Gen. 30:6 Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.” Therefore she named him Dan.

Gen. 30:7 Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

Gen. 30:8 So Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed.” And she named him Naphtali.

- Presumably, Jacob has been showing his affection to Rachel at least as much as Leah, and probably more since Jacob is attracted to Rachel more
 - Yet God is preventing Rachel from bearing children
 - As Rachel watches Leah bear son after son, her jealousy grows
 - We can assume that Leah has been having roughly one son every year, so it’s been four years since the marriages
 - And still Rachel has nothing for her husband
 - It would be bad enough for a woman to fail in having children
 - But in this contest between wives, the shame is made worse by the jealousy
 - Once more the sin of multiple wives is clearly evident in this family situation
 - There is nothing natural or good about this family situation
 - And now it’s spilled over into discord between Rachel and Jacob
- Rachel demands that Jacob give her children or she will die
 - This statement is notable for two reasons
 - First, Rachel is speaking with great disrespect to her husband, according to the culture of the day
 - She can’t accuse him of infidelity, since he has clearly fathered children with Leah
 - So she accuses him of somehow withholding his seed from her
 - It’s a statement rooted in frustration and hatred for her sister, but it’s directed at her husband
 - The second notable thing about her statement is its irony
 - Rachel says she will die if she doesn’t have children, but in reality the opposite is true
 - Rachel will ultimately die trying to give birth
 - We’ll consider that implication later
- Meanwhile, Jacob responds to Rachel’s insensitive accusations
 - He is angry with her
 - The text indicates an intense form of anger

- Her jealousy is driving a wedge between her and her husband
- Jacob corrects his wife by reminding her that God alone controls the outcome of these things
 - His point to her is that God is responsible for her infertility
 - And we know from the text of Genesis that this is literally the truth
 - God has a reason for withholding Rachel's womb
 - There is also irony in Jacob's statement
 - He recognizes that God is at work in these outcomes, but he never stops to consider why God has done this
 - Jacob doesn't stop to ask himself whether God has favored Leah for a reason, and thereby learn a lesson
- So now we see Jacob's sin begin to propagate within his family
 - Jacob's rejection of his wife Leah led to jealousy between the women
 - And this has led to a competition over children
 - And that has led Rachel to grow desperate and now to seek the wrong solution
 - Like Sarah before her, Rachel resorts to a cultural practice, one that was not in keeping with God's desires
 - Rachel gives her maiden to Jacob, meaning Jacob will take a third wife
 - Any child from this woman would be considered Rachel's child
 - That's the meaning of bearing "on my knees"
 - It refers to the way Rachel would act as midwife and deliver Bilhah's child and claim it for herself
 - Giving a maid as wife was a sin for Sarah, and it's a sin for Rachel
 - And Jacob's willingness to entertain this request is also sin, as it was for Abraham
 - Isaac and Rebekah didn't resort to this mistake, and Jacob didn't have to either
 - But having already taken a second wife, Jacob assumes what's the harm in a third?
 - And of course the harm is the multiplication of the jealousy and sin in the family
 - And the multiplication of the consequences
- With Bilhah, Jacob now produces two sons, Dan and Nephtali
 - The name Dan means judge, because Rachel says God has vindicated her
 - The word judge refers to God having declared Rachel innocent like a judge in court
 - The name is a message for Leah
 - Rachel is telling Leah that the Lord is on her side now
 - This is a name soaked in jealousy and bitterness

- The second name Naphtali means I have wrestled, which is also a dig at Leah
 - Rachel is saying she wrestled or fought with Leah and won, in that she is now bearing sons for her husband through Bilhah
- Is this truly what is happening?
 - We know the Lord is allowing the children to be born, of course, and He has a good purpose in doing so
 - But His purpose is not the one Rachel has presumed
- Rachel's attitude is typical of those who are living far from the Lord and outside His will
 - They may presume to tell others what God is doing and why
 - And they always find a way to justify their circumstances as something God approves
 - They assume that the mere fact they are getting what they want is proof that it is also what God wants
 - Let's not be confused on this point today
 - We often get what we want, but it isn't what God wants
 - It's called sin, and it happens everyday
 - Every day billions of people do what they want and get what they want, but this says nothing about what God wants
 - Except that God is capable of using all that sin to accomplish some greater purpose
 - But that never equals God's approval
 - God used Satan to lead Judas in betraying Jesus, but that doesn't mean God approves of Satan
- Clearly, Rachel is engaged in a sinful war of hate and spite with Leah, a woman who is the victim in this situation
 - She is presuming that the Lord is on her side and wants her to win this fight, but that's a lie she tells herself
 - Be careful in assuming that God always sees things the way you do
 - We don't need to rely on our circumstances to discern God's desires
 - We can see for ourselves what God says He desires
 - God states in His word what He desires in men
 - And His desires bend to no man's desires
- In this case, God is speaking clearly about His wishes
 - He blessed Jacob with a woman, Leah, capable of bearing him sons
 - God brought her sons that will ultimately become priests and kings for the future nation
 - But Jacob ignored that wife, and instead chose other women

- One woman God has kept barren for some reason, and now God has allowed the maid to bear two children, but no more
 - The number two in scripture is the number of division
 - Just as Ishmael and Isaac were divided and Esau and Jacob were divided, so is God highlighting the division in the family of Jacob
 - The woman are divided, Jacob's attention is divided, and eventually the sons will be divided
 - Those divisions run deep
 - Eventually the nation itself will split into two divisions, one named after a son of Leah and one after a son of Rachel
- The jealousy and division doesn't end here...there is more

Gen. 30:9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

Gen. 30:10 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

Gen. 30:11 Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad.

Gen. 30:12 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

Gen. 30:13 Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.

- We're told that Leah noticed she had stopped bearing, but there is no indication that God has stopped her from having children
 - The cause is more likely the lack of Jacob's affection
 - So far Jacob has four sons with Leah and two more with Bilhah
 - We know he prefers Rachel and probably spent his nights with Leah strictly because she was bearing children
 - But once Bilhah started bearing, Jacob focused his attention and energy there
 - Plus he was still showing affection to Rachel, though it had not produced any children
 - So Leah has noticed that she isn't getting much of Jacob's time
 - Perhaps Jacob has tired of her company, plus he has two other wives to attend to
 - So she hatches a plan to compete with Rachel
 - Leah offers Jacob her maid
 - The attraction for Jacob at this point is purely lust
 - He has no need for another wife and he has already seen six sons come along, which was plenty for a family in that day
 - Still he agrees to take the maid, so the only reason we can assume is because he

is following his flesh

- More importantly, Jacob has clearly abdicated any leadership among these women and within his growing family
 - We'll see that weakness time and time again in later chapters of Genesis, as his sons begin to rule the household
- Leah's maid Zilpah bears two sons, Gad and Asher
 - Gad comes from the Hebrew word for fortunate, while Asher means happy
 - Like Rachel, Leah is naming these sons in a way to insult her sister
 - No longer is she praising the Lord for these blessings, now she is seeking to injure and discourage another in her family
 - If this keeps up, one of them is bound to name a son "Nah nah na na nah" to mock the other
 - Once again God delivers only two children to the fourth wife, yet another coded message of division
- But the story of the children isn't over yet

Gen. 30:14 Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

Gen. 30:15 But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

Gen. 30:16 When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night.

Gen. 30:17 God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

Gen. 30:18 Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar.

Gen. 30:19 Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob.

Gen. 30:20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.

Gen. 30:21 Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

- Jacob's oldest son is probably about five or six years old at this point
 - And he is out in the field during the harvest when he finds a flower, called a mandrake
 - A mandrake is a rare wild plant that has blueish flowers in winter and yellowish plum size fruit in summer
 - Prized as an aphrodisiac and inducer of fertility

- It's name is *duday* from *dud* which means beloved
- Called the love-apple in the Middle east
- This is obviously why both women desired it
- Reuben probably brought it to his mother, Leah, as a simple gift like any son might bring a flower to his mother
 - But when Rachel sees it, she immediately recognizes it as the plant that might solve her infertility problem
 - Remember, of Jacob's four wives, only Rachel has failed to bring Jacob a son
 - So she asks Leah for some of the mandrakes
- Leah is bitter and jealous of Jacob's love for Rachel, so she asks Rachel why she wants the mandrakes since she already has Jacob to herself
 - The implication is that Rachel receives Jacob's company regularly, so why should she need the mandrake
 - We can gather that this is why Leah hasn't had a chance to conceive more sons
 - Rachel was able to wrestle Jacob away from Leah
 - Apart from the two children to Zilpah, Rachel has prevented Jacob from giving Leah any more children since the original four
 - So Leah decides to negotiate with Rachel
 - Rachel wants children, while Leah wants Jacob's affection again
 - So Rachel says she will sell her husband to Leah for one night in exchange for the mandrakes
- Leah tells Jacob about the arrangement, and he complies
 - Was Jacob obligated by this deal? Absolutely not
 - He could have refused, since he was not a party to the arrangement
 - Yet he agreed, once again we presume he was willing to play along either because he wasn't prone to leading within the family
 - Or perhaps he was enamored by their competition for his affection
 - Either way, Jacob is feeding the flames of a dangerous fire
 - In describing their time together that night, the scripture says in v.16 that Jacob lay with Leah
 - The word for lay or lie is a special word in Hebrew only used in the context of illicit sexual activity
 - It was used for Lot and his daughters
 - And it will be used to describe Potiphar's wife's offer to Joseph
 - By the choice of word, Moses is indicating that this is not a sanctifying act in the marriage bed
 - They are married, but they are acting in sin because their behavior is driven

by jealousy and sinful hearts rather than out of love or a desire to follow the Lord

- This is not the way the Lord wants to build their marriage or this family
- Nevertheless, Leah is not barren and she will continue to bear children
- That night brings her another son, Issachar
 - The name means hire, since Leah hired Jacob with a mandrake
 - Later, Leah receives a sixth son, Zebulun
 - After Leah produced the son Issachar, Jacob probably returned to giving Leah some of his time
 - And since Leah was capable of bearing children, she bore another son
 - His name means endowed or dowry, since these sons are gifts for Leah
 - Notice again that Leah has returned to thanking the Lord with the name of the last son
 - She seems to have lost her appetite for attacking Rachel
 - Later, Leah will bear other daughters, including Dinah
 - Women aren't normally mentioned in Genesis, but Dinah plays an important role in the story of Jacob later
- Finally, God brings His grace to Rachel, so that she might bear a child for Jacob

Gen. 30:22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.

Gen. 30:23 So she conceived and bore a son and said, “God has taken away my reproach.”

Gen. 30:24 She named him Joseph, saying, “May the LORD give me another son.”

- When God is ready to show himself to Rachel, He gives her a son
 - He's waited long enough for Leah to have become pregnant at least two more times
 - He doesn't want Rachel's pregnancy to be credited to the mandrakes
 - Those flowers would have been long gone by the time He decided to bring Joseph
 - Her choice of a name is interesting and ironic
 - She names her son Joseph, which means He shall add, because she hoped the Lord would add another child to her
 - God eventually does give her a second child, but since two is the number of division, the second child will divide her from her family
 - She will die in childbirth
- Let's end by considering God's wisdom in how He used the sin of these women and Jacob especially

- First, notice that God's choice of wife for Jacob was Leah who had six children by herself
 - Had Jacob stuck to Leah alone, there is no reason to doubt the Lord could have brought forth all twelve sons from her womb
- Secondly, every other wife of Jacob will have two sons, though Rachel has yet to bear her second son
 - The other wives all represent division in the family of Jacob, while Leah has the honor of bearing three times as many sons
 - Three being the number of God
- Third, Rachel will die in giving birth to her second child
 - Can we see the wisdom in God giving Leah to Jacob rather than Rachel?
 - It would appear that Rachel wasn't able to live through 12 births
 - God knew that giving her sons would bring her to an end, so He graciously kept her barren for several years
 - But sometimes, God may eventually give us what we desire just to prove us wrong
- Finally, all eleven of these sons are born within the seven years that Jacob will work for Laban to pay for Rachel
 - The conceptions happened in the order mentioned, but obviously many of these women were pregnant at the same time
 - So that by the time Jacob is ready to leave the land, he will have already acquired all but one of his sons
 - Nevertheless, God used Jacob's sin and the jealousy of the women to bring the nation of Israel into existence in a rapid time, so that these sons were of similar age
 - Thus ensuring that the family would live and grow together, thus allowing the Lord to direct their lives in unison according to His plan
 - The final son is born as Jacob leaves Laban's household
- But the sin of this family, lead by the sin of the patriarch, will continue to fester in the lives of these boys leading to several crises
 - Including the most significant crisis in Jacob's life in about ten chapters from now

- Jacob, his four wives and eleven sons and one daughter (that we know of) are living in Haran, serving Laban
 - Jacob has been living here 14 years now
 - In that time he's paid the dowry for two wives
 - We remember that the extra seven years was made necessary by Laban's dishonesty
 - In fact, Laban's plan all along has been to hold on to Jacob forever
 - Jacob's knowledge of shepherding has been a tremendous blessing to Laban
 - Before Jacob appeared on the scene, Laban had been forced to use his daughter to help raise the sheep
 - And we saw the operation was nothing to brag about
 - But now as Jacob has reached the end of his 14 years, he is anxious to return home
 - Besides the obvious desire to see his family, Jacob wants to return to his own inheritance
 - He has worked to pay off his debt with Laban, so any further work at this point will simply be building the inheritance of Laban's sons
 - So Jacob is ready to leave, and he announces his intentions to Laban

Gen. 30:25 Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country.

Gen. 30:26 "Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you."

Gen. 30:27 But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, stay with me; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account."

Gen. 30:28 He continued, "Name me your wages, and I will give it."

Gen. 30:29 But he said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me.

Gen. 30:30 "For you had little before I came and it has increased to a multitude, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?"

- Following the birth of the eleventh son, Joseph, Jacob asked Laban to send him away
 - Jacob tells Laban to give him his wives and children and allow Jacob to depart since his fourteen years of service have been completed
 - We might ask why Jacob doesn't just leave on his own initiative
 - Why does Jacob need to ask Laban to let him go?
 - The culture of the day placed tremendous authority in the leader of a tribe or clan

- Jacob has come under the authority of Laban since the time Jacob was welcomed into Laban's house
- And since Jacob was bound by his word to work for Laban to pay for his wives, only Laban could release Jacob
- So Jacob is asking for Laban to honor his agreement and release Jacob according to the terms of the deal
- Laban still doesn't want Jacob to leave
 - As I said, Laban would prefer that Jacob never leave, so he must find some new angle to play in keeping Jacob in his household
 - Laban makes a counteroffer to Jacob
 - Laban tells Jacob that he knows his household has been blessed to have Jacob in it
 - In fact, Laban says that he has come to know that Jacob is a source of supernatural blessing through divination
 - The Hebrew word for divination is *nachash*, which is the word for satanic sorcery or incantations
 - Laban is a pagan who turns to the occult to find his spiritual direction
 - And the enemy has instructed Laban that Jacob is the cause of Laban's blessing and he should remain in Laban's household
- Obviously the enemy is working to keep Jacob away from the promised land
 - The enemy wants to disrupt the Lord's plan, and keeping Jacob in Haran is one way to do that
 - Take note of the way Satan has manipulated Laban in this situation and in the process is trying to control Jacob
 - Satan has told Laban that Jacob is the cause of Laban's wealth, which is a partial truth
 - The full truth is that God's promises working through Jacob are the source of Laban's strength
 - Nevertheless, by showing Laban the means to greater wealth, Satan gains control of Laban, who in turns schemes against Jacob
- So Laban offers to hire Jacob as a permanent employee
 - Laban will pay Jacob to work and he offers Jacob any wage he wants to name
 - This may sound like a very fair and even generous offer
 - Jacob could finally begin to amass his own wealth after years of simply making Laban rich
 - But remember, Laban is the owner of the flocks and the herds
 - And in any business, who gets richer? The employees or the owners?
 - No matter how generous the wages may be to an employee, the owner of a business is always the richer

- And Jacob knows this too
- Jacob isn't interested in working for someone else when he has his own flocks and herds waiting him in his father's house
- So Jacob says to Laban, you know this isn't a good deal...
 - You know I've served you for fourteen years and made you rich in the process, because I have the ability to multiply herds
 - In v.30 Jacob says Laban's herds have "increased"
 - In Hebrew the word is *parats*, which means to break forth
 - In Jacob's day, Laban's herds have leaped forward in prosperity
 - And Jacob reminds Laban that the source of this blessing is the Lord Who brings success to Jacob at every turn
 - Here we find hopeful evidence that Jacob has been listening to the Lord and the promises
 - Jacob understands that the Lord has been at work to bring about these blessings
 - So Jacob asks Laban if he continues working for Laban's household, who will provide for Jacob's household?
- Laban tries another tactic

Gen. 30:31 So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this one thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flock:

Gen. 30:32 let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep and every black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages.

Gen. 30:33 "So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, will be considered stolen."

Gen. 30:34 Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word."

- Laban offers to give Jacob some of Laban's household as Jacob's inheritance
 - This is a sign of Laban's desperation
 - He is basically willing to adopt Jacob as if he were a son and include him in the inheritance over Laban's own sons
 - Jacob can build wealth for his family in this home rather than returning to the land of Abraham and Isaac
 - In hearing Laban's offer, Jacob makes a counterproposal of his own
 - He first states that he will not take anything from Laban
 - Jacob means he is not interested in becoming party to Laban's inheritance

- Jacob still wants to return to Canaan and to his family, so he has no interest in waiting for Laban's death and for the inheritance to be split
- Plus, Jacob is following in the footsteps of his grandfather who did not wish to be enriched from the largess of pagan benefactors
- Jacob knew the Lord was blessing him and would depend on the Lord
- So knowing that the Lord was working with Jacob, Jacob enacted a plan to outsmart Laban
 - Jacob tells Laban that he is willing to continue to keep Laban's flocks if Laban will allow Jacob the opportunity to build up a herd for himself
 - Jacob says he will take only the spotted and speckled lambs, the black lambs and the speckled and spotted goats
 - In this region, the lambs were generally white and the goats were solid black or brown
 - Speckled goats and lambs were few in number and black sheep were very rare
 - So Jacob is asking to keep a minimal number of animals from the herd as a way of obtaining a herd for himself
 - Jacob emphasized that this plan would also make it easy for Laban to know which animals were Jacob's property and which were Laban's
 - Otherwise, it would be nearly impossible for Laban to know whether Jacob was building his flock honestly or stealing from Laban's herds
- Jacob's plan is built on two assumptions
 - First, Jacob is assuming that his knowledge of animal husbandry will allow him to multiply the herds to his advantage
 - Secondly, Jacob is expecting the Lord to continue blessing him in these efforts
- Notice this plan has no timeline
 - Jacob is agreeing to work under these terms indefinitely
 - Both parties assume they will get the better end of the bargain
 - Laban assumes he will have Jacob employed forever, since it would be very hard to build a meaningful herd by only collecting the odd colored animal here and there
 - Jacob is assuming this plan will not last long because as his own herd grows quickly, it will become a threat to Laban's household
- So Jacob embarks on at least several more years of working for Laban, but Laban still has a few tricks up his sleeve

Gen. 30:35 So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons.

Gen. 30:36 And he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and

Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

- In v.35 we're told that Laban pulls a fast one on Jacob
 - On the day this bargain is struck, Laban immediately orders that all the speckled and spotted and black animals be removed from among the main herd
 - These animals were assigned to the care of Laban's sons
 - Then the sons traveled three-day's journey away from the main herd and shepherded the flock there
 - The point of this maneuver was to make Jacob's task as hard as humanly possible
 - Laban removed the "stock" that Jacob would have used to begin breeding more speckled and spotted animals
 - Laban assumes that Jacob will now have to work many decades to produce a sizable flock
 - Clearly, this is a devious trick, yet nothing in their agreement prohibited this action
 - So Laban was taking every advantage he could
 - But Jacob had a few tricks of his own

Gen. 30:37 Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which was in the rods.

Gen. 30:38 He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink.

Gen. 30:39 So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.

Gen. 30:40 Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

Gen. 30:41 Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods;

Gen. 30:42 but when the flock was feeble, he did not put them in; so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

Gen. 30:43 So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

- As Jacob cares for Laban's flock of white lambs and solid colored goats, he begins to employ careful techniques for selective mating
 - First, Jacob takes fresh rods or sticks of poplar and almond trees
 - He peeled the bark back on these rods

- And he placed the rods in the watering troughs where the animals drank
- Then in v. 39 we're told the flocks mated by the rods, and in the process of mating the animals brought forth striped and spotted animals
 - Then as the spotted and speckled lambs and goats grew older and were ready to mate, Jacob positioned the animals in a certain way
 - He faced the black and striped animals toward each other, but the solid animals he set apart, since they were Laban's flock
 - Furthermore, when the stronger animals were in mating season, Jacob placed the rods in their water but the feeble animals he didn't give the rods
- So over time, Jacob built a flock of speckled, striped and black animals that were very strong and healthy
 - And he left Laban a weak and sickly flock of solid color animals
- So what's going on here?
 - You can find many views in the commentaries, and most of them provoke more humor than insight
 - You'll see every explanation from superstition to supernatural causes
 - Most draw a connection between the appearance of the animals and the appearance of the rods themselves
 - As if the animals' reproductive process was changed in some way by what their eyes saw in the water
 - Remember our review of Evolution's claims which we completed after we finished Chapter 2 of Genesis?
 - We noted that the early naturalist and evolutionist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck proposed a theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics
 - He said that an animal that acquires physical changes brought about by environmental factors can pass those changes along to offspring
 - Example: if you cut off the tail of the mouse, then the mouse's offspring would have shorter tails
 - Or if you wanted taller children, you should stretch yourself every day
 - Later scientists disproved this theory, and our present day knowledge of genetics tells us exactly how parents' genes pass along characteristics to children
 - So clearly the sight of these rods could not possibly explain how Jacob produced a flock of speckled and spotted and black animals
 - Nevertheless, we know precisely what Jacob was doing here, since farmers do it all the time today
- Jacob was simply applying Mendelian genetics to perform selective breeding
 - In the DNA of these animals was all the genetic information required to produce all the color variations of the herd
 - A solid white sheep or solid brown goat has in its DNA recessive genes for

speckled or spotted coats

- In fact, you can breed a black sheep from two solid white sheep
- In sheep, the color white is the dominant gene and black is the recessive gene
 - If you mate sheep and goats carefully, you can select for the kind of color you want
 - The key to your success is ensuring that you can control which animals mate with each other
 - If you allow the animals to mate in any way they want, then the expression of color will follow Mendelian probabilities
 - Simply put, you'll end up with a lot of solid colored animals but very few of the speckled and spotted variety
 - On the other hand, if the animals with recessive color genes mate exclusively with each other, then you will reliably produce offspring that share the parent's colors
- So how does Jacob get these animals to mate on cue?
 - He can't set a romantic table and play soft music...
 - As we'll see in later chapters, Jacob can't even get his sons to date the right women
- Jacob used the sticks or rods of poplar and almond trees to control the mating
 - Notice in v.38 it says that the flocks mated when they came to drink
 - The word for mated is *chamam*, which is the Hebrew word get hot or to heat up
 - So literally, it says that when the animals drank the water with the bark in the water, they became hot
 - Or as we would say today, they went into heat
 - The female animals entered a time of fertility and attracted the attention of the male animals
 - Jacob must have learned that these barks contained chemicals that caused the animals to go into heat
 - So this was Jacob's catalyst
 - Rather than waiting for the female animals to go into heat on a random basis, Jacob forced them to become fertile at certain moments
 - Then he carefully arranged which animals were present in that moment
 - Notice in vs.40-41 Jacob peels back the bark and places the rods in the water but only for certain animals
 - First, Jacob only placed the rods in the water when the speckled or spotted animals were drinking
 - Later, Jacob only placed the rods in the water for the strong offspring of these animals
 - Then once Jacob had the right females in heat, he turned his attention to the male

animals

- Notice in v.40 Jacob separated the male animals so that only the speckled and striped and black males were faced toward the fertile female animals
 - The rest were separated so they couldn't mate with the female animals
- The Hebrew word for face toward means to gain the attention of another
 - Jacob basically introduced the males of his choosing to the females of his choosing to produce ideal mates
 - Jacob was running an eHarmony for sheep and goats
- This process had two striking outcomes
 - First, it would have resulted in a rapid growth in the herd
 - Sheep can begin to reproduce at six months old and give birth in five months
 - That means a lamb can become a mother before its first birthday and average better than two births a year
 - And they can have multiple offspring per pregnancy
 - So if Jacob is inducing fertility at will, then he would have been running a serious breeding operation
 - Despite Laban's trick of removing the spotted and speckled animals at the outset, Jacob could have produced a sizable flock of these animals in only a few years
 - Secondly, by isolating the stronger animals for himself and leaving only the runts for Laban, Jacob would have quickly altered the nature of the two flocks
 - Laban's flock would have quickly turned weak and unproductive
 - Many would have been infertile or sickly or unable to produce milk
 - Meanwhile, Jacob's flock would have been awarded FFA blue ribbons
- In v.43 we see that result
 - Jacob became exceedingly prosperous
 - In fact, Jacob earns so much wealth at Laban's expense that he can afford to purchase servants, donkeys and even camels, which was a sign of immense wealth in that day
 - Remember, Jacob's grandfather Abraham once left the land for Egypt
 - This was a journey that began with Abraham's sin but resulted in a great blessing from God as Abraham returned enriched at the expense of the Egyptians
 - Here again Jacob leaves the land on the basis of a sin, but he is preparing to return a blessed and rich man

- The story of Jacob in the book of Genesis is fundamentally a story of God's sovereignty working in and through the flawed lives of men
 - Standing at the the head of the line is Jacob himself
 - God intended to give Jacob the blessing, but he took it for himself through dishonest means
 - God intended for Jacob to take a wife from Abraham's relatives in Haran, but Jacob's deception required him to flee there under threat of death
 - God intended to give Jacob one fertile wife, but Jacob chose to take three more in lust
 - Each of these decisions will cause him grief in one way or another

A pastor was addressing his congregation one Sunday with a message of preserving their bodies, the temple of the Lord.

"The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here years ago. Red meat is awful. Soft drinks corrode your stomach lining. Fast food is loaded with preservatives. High fat diets can be disastrous, and none of us realizes the long-term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water. But there is one food that is the most dangerous of all. Can anyone here guess what food causes the most grief and suffering, even many years after eating it?"

After several seconds of quiet, a 75-year-old man in the front row raised his hand and said, "Wedding Cake."

- Jacob's life is a tug-o-war between trusting God and relying on himself
 - Increasingly God has revealed Himself to Jacob as the One in authority and control of Jacob's life
 - But Jacob is a slow learner, so he's struggling to trust and rest in God's authority and control
- Today Jacob takes another step in that direction even as his family lags behind
 - Jacob's family becomes an increasingly bigger focus in this story
 - Such that we'll see the true consequences of Jacob's sin play out in the lives of his family whom he has influenced by his sin

Gen. 31:1 Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth."

Gen. 31:2 Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly.

Gen. 31:3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.”

Gen. 31:4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field,

Gen. 31:5 and said to them, “I see your father’s attitude, that it is not friendly toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me.

Gen. 31:6 “You know that I have served your father with all my strength.

Gen. 31:7 “Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.

Gen. 31:8 “If he spoke thus, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth striped.

Gen. 31:9 “Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given them to me.

- Jacob works for six years under these new terms, building a large and impressive inheritance for himself (v.38)
 - In that time, Laban’s son have taken note that their inheritance has withered away to nearly nothing
 - The part of the herd that belongs to them is weak and getting weaker even as Jacob’s flock is growing
 - And Jacob gets word that Laban’s sons are beginning to accuse Jacob of theft
 - They conclude that Jacob’s strength is coming at their expense
 - But they go a step too far to assume that Jacob has done something unfair in the process
 - We know from last week that Jacob’s actions were in keeping with the agreement he made with Laban
 - Jacob acted entirely in his own self-interest, resulting in large strong herds of spotted, speckled, and black lambs and goats
 - The inevitable outcome of this breeding was to leave only weak animals in Laban’s herd
 - So Jacob wasn’t stealing from Laban, as the sons suggest
 - He was fulfilling his end of the bargain in the most advantageous way he could
- Jacob took note of these accusations and then observed that Laban was not friendly as he was before
 - The Hebrew literally states that Laban’s face was not toward Jacob as before
 - Laban’s entire attitude toward Jacob has done an about face
 - Before, Laban was inclined toward keeping Jacob and favoring Jacob so long as Jacob worked for him
 - The reason for that favoritism was simple: Jacob was increasing Laban’s wealth

- Now that Jacob was hurting Laban's wealth, everything was different
- This is the world's form of friendship
 - The world is friendly toward those who give us what we want
 - Whether money, power, fame, compliments, sex, whatever
 - If the thing we want disappears, then the reason for the friendship or relationship goes with it
 - This is conditional love, the world's kind of love, the only kind of love sinful flesh has the capacity to experience
 - The love of God is entirely different
 - It is agape love, self-sacrificial brotherly love that is unconditional
 - It doesn't seek relationship for what it can get out of it, but what it can give to it
 - This is a type of relationship that the world cannot know apart from the love of God in their lives

Luke 6:32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

Luke 6:33 "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

Luke 6:34 "If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

- With that recognition, Jacob hears from the Lord
 - This is the first time Jacob has heard from God in twenty years since leaving the land
 - Now the Lord is directing Jacob to leave Haran and return to his own land
 - The fact that the Lord is speaking now tells us that the Lord has wanted Jacob to remain here for the previous twenty years
 - Those years served a purpose in Jacob's life, but now the time has come to go home
 - Jacob apparently hears this while in the field shepherding the flock, so he calls to his two wives to meet him there
 - Away from Laban and Laban's sons, Jacob explains his situation
 - After six years of working for Laban, Laban's daughters would have naturally assumed this would be their life forever
 - They had no reason to suspect that Jacob would ever return to his father's land

- Essentially, Jacob has been working as an adopted son of Laban
- And this work has obviously benefited Jacob's family
- So Jacob must make a strong case for these women to follow him
 - Though they have a legal obligation to follow him, Jacob is working to win them over to the plan
 - He knows he will have a fight on his hands with Laban, so the last thing he needs is divided allegiance among his wives
- Jacob begins by noting that his relationship with Laban has changed in recent years
 - Laban is no longer Jacob's ally and friend
 - Yet Jacob is blameless in their work relationship
 - Jacob has always served Laban in good faith
 - And yet Laban has been nothing but dishonest
 - In fact we learn here that Laban has changed Jacob's wages ten times
 - In v.8 Jacob says that after Laban saw Jacob's flock growing, Laban unilaterally changed the rules
 - He would declare that only the speckled sheep and goats were to be Jacob's rather than speckled and spotted and black
 - But then the herds would produce speckled only
 - Then Laban would respond by declaring that only the striped would be Jacob's
 - And then the flocks began producing primarily striped
 - This was particularly unfair, since a striped animal was very unusual
 - This switcheroo happened no less than ten times in the course of the six years
 - Clearly Laban was making every effort to cheat Jacob
 - He wasn't interested in a fair deal; he was only interested in manipulating Jacob into remaining in his employment
 - But now after six years of watching his wealth disappear, Laban is no longer friendly toward Jacob
- In v.9 Jacob tells his wives that the Lord has been behind this surprising increase of the flocks
 - We know from Chapter 30 how Jacob accomplished the process of mating the herds and interbreeding the animals
 - He used his knowledge of animal husbandry and careful breeding to select for the kind of animals he wanted
 - But as Laban changed the rules ten times, how did Jacob's breeding process respond so quickly?
 - The nature of the breeding process would have made turning on a dime very difficult
 - Once Jacob had isolated the desired types of animals, he would have found

- it nearly impossible to begin selecting for different characteristics
 - Yet somehow he managed to continue collecting the kind of the animals he wanted
- Now Jacob knows that the real secret behind his success has been God all along
 - As Jacob worked to respond to each of Laban's unreasonable demands, he successfully produced exactly the right kind of animals
 - Jacob says this was proof that the Lord was at work enriching Jacob at Laban's expense
 - We can understand why the Lord may be blessing Jacob, because God has promised by His word to bless Jacob
- But why does the Lord choose to bless Jacob at Laban's expense?
 - This is also a result of the Lord's promises
 - The Lord said that He would bless those who blessed Jacob and curse those who cursed Jacob
- Laban is a perfect example of this promise played out
 - For the years where Laban was blessing Jacob, the Lord ensured that the relationship resulted in a reciprocal blessing for Laban
 - Laban gave Jacob a home and wives, so Laban saw his flocks increase under Jacob's care
 - But now that Laban has turned against Jacob and continued to cheat him, the Lord has brought these sins back against Laban
 - Meanwhile, the Lord continues to bless Jacob
- How did Jacob come to the recognition that the Lord was behind these blessings? He tells his wives...

Gen. 31:10 “And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating were striped, speckled, and mottled.

Gen. 31:11 “Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’

Gen. 31:12 “He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

Gen. 31:13 ‘I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’”

- Jacob received a dream from the Lord
 - The dream was simple: everywhere Jacob looked in the flock, all he saw was striped, speckled and mottled male goats mating

- Remember, Jacob is caring for both Laban's flock and his own flock
- So in real life, the male goats and sheep would have also included the white and solid colored
- But in the dream, the entire herd was speckled, striped, etc.
- The message of the dream was that regardless of what the animals looked like God would produce the kind of offspring Jacob needed
 - The entire flock had the DNA necessary to ensure Jacob's success
 - This was God's work behind the scenes
- So what do we conclude? Did Jacob's efforts at interbreeding lead to his success or was it God's grace to bring Jacob success?
 - The answer is yes
 - Jacob's work led to the outcome and God's work made it possible

**Prov. 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man,
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.**

**Prov. 16:9 The mind of man plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.**

- It doesn't diminish the Lord's sovereignty to acknowledge that the Lord works through the plans and actions of men
- In the end, we must recognize that all good things come from the Father of lights, as James says
- It's another encouraging sign that Jacob received the dream in the proper perspective and recognizes the Lord's role in His success
 - And this is his argument to his wives as well
 - The Lord has been the one protecting them in the face of Laban's tricks, and this same God is now telling Jacob to leave Laban
 - The Lord will protect and care for them so they can trust His direction and leave this good situation
- This is a challenging call for these women, and perhaps even for Jacob himself
 - Essentially, Jacob has called a family meeting with his wives, and he has announced that the Lord says I must quit my job and move away from our home
 - This life is all the wives have ever known
 - And the work has made Jacob's family rich
 - But now Jacob is expecting the women to simply pull up stakes and move to a great unknown future
 - Similar to the way the Lord called Abraham in the first place: leave

everything and follow me to a new place

- Don't you think this would have been a difficult request for the women to accept?
 - And look at how Jacob tries to gain their confidence...he says their provision is from the Lord and not from Laban
 - This is the essence of following the Lord successfully, especially in the area of our material life and material needs
- God is in control, including of your finances and your wealth
 - Some men are wealthier than others and this will always be the case
 - God made Solomon the richest man in the world and yet it was Jesus Himself who said we will always have the poor in the world
 - God isn't unconcerned with our physical needs, but the word says clearly in many places that His first concern for us is our obedience, not our net worth
- Like Jacob, we can and should contribute to our own needs, but what comes of our efforts is directed by the Lord and His grace
 - Therefore, we are to exhibit contentment in whatever He gives us
 - Otherwise, our pursuits for greater wealth will become an impediment to our spiritual development

1Tim. 6:6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.

1Tim. 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

1Tim. 6:8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

1Tim. 6:9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

1Tim. 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

- Jacob finishes his testimony to his wives by recounting the word he received from God
 - In v.13 Jacob says the Lord spoke and reminded him of the pillar of stone Jacob anointed in Bethel before he left the land
 - Jacob's anointing of the pillar was something he did in connection with a vow Jacob made
 - Do you remember that vow?

Gen. 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,

Gen. 28:21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.

Gen. 28:22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

- The Lord has done all the things that Jacob expected
- Now the Lord says it's time to keep that vow, to return to the land and worship
- So Jacob has presented his case to these women, and though Jacob isn't exactly the best model of a godly husband, there is something husbands can learn from this moment
 - Jacob had a difficult decision to make, one that impacted his entire family
 - And as he went about making that decision, he involved his wives in a very sensitive, caring and God-centered way
- First, Jacob entered into a private discussion with his wives in a place and time and manner that was clearly intended to show he valued their opinions and respected their views
 - His patient efforts to include them in this decision and to seek their support communicated that their opinions mattered to Jacob
 - Obviously, Jacob couldn't leave Haran successfully without their support and agreement
- Secondly, Jacob presented a case, built on facts and intended to show that his thinking is grounded in concern for them and the family
 - He doesn't declare the plan in a "Because I said so..." manner
 - He explains his thinking and works to win them over
- Thirdly, and most importantly, He places God's actions and desires in the center of decision-making and conversation
 - His explanation to the wives is centered on what he has learned from God
 - And when it comes time to support his decision, he rests on the word of God
 - In this case that word was a statement God delivered in a dream
- Jacob is the head of the household and the husband, and by culture, law and according to God's plan for the family, Jacob could make this decision without his wives' consent
 - But that wouldn't have been the loving or smart thing to do
 - A loving husband values his wife's opinion and values his wife's insight
 - A loving husband gives time for deliberation and exploring options
 - A loving husband demonstrates his own willingness to listen to the Lord and follow His word
 - And a loving husband is willing to do all these things as he leads his family in obeying the voice of the Lord
 - As husbands, we could do much worse than following Jacob's example here

- Jacob is showing great progress in his character and his faith
 - And these twenty years have become an important part of how the Lord is working to grow him
 - But Jacob's wives lag behind him, in part because of his own weaknesses as a husband
 - And that becomes very evident as the family makes its escape from Laban in the second part of Chapter 31

- Jacob made his case to his wives that it was time to leave Laban and head to a new place
 - God had appeared to Jacob and given him the instructions to pack up and move
 - Laban had turned against Jacob because of Jacob's success
 - And Laban was probably looking for any reason to accuse Jacob and recover his lost herds
 - But Jacob needed to bring his wives along with him in this change
 - They are Laban's daughters, so Jacob deals with them in a respectful way, seeking their support and agreement
 - He pleads his case and waits for their response
 - Let's take note of how these women respond and see what we can learn about their hearts today

Gen. 31:14 Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house?"

Gen. 31:15 "Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price.

Gen. 31:16 "Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."

- Jacob made his case to his wives in a two-part argument
 - First, he said the family's situation was now in jeopardy because Laban had taken notice of Jacob's gains and was hostile toward Jacob
 - In fact, Jacob's gains were designed by God to come at Laban's expense
 - So it was no surprise that Laban has become upset
 - Secondly, the Lord has called Jacob to return home
 - The call came in a dream, where God reminded Jacob that he had made a vow to return
 - So Jacob had little choice but to obey God's call
- In their response, the wives focus on the issue of the inheritance and the wealth of their father
 - First, they ask if they have any inheritance in their father's house?
 - Since Jacob wasn't a true son of Laban, he wasn't entitled to any of Laban's wealth
 - That's why Jacob has been required to earn it
 - And since Jacob had fallen out of favor with Laban, they assume correctly that Jacob will never receive anything
 - Secondly, the daughters themselves had no inheritance since only the men could inherit property

- So the women conclude that there is nothing to expect from their father in the future
- Secondly, they say he has treated them as foreigners because Laban sold them to Jacob
 - Remember that normally women were betrothed with a purchase paid to the father
 - The higher the price paid, the more it honored the woman
 - But Laban allowed Jacob to buy his wives through labor
 - And the value of that labor remained with Laban
 - He alone profited by that labor
 - Thus he consumed the purchase price that Jacob paid rather than using it to bless the daughters with their dowry
 - So the wives' second observation is that they have been treated poorly by their father all along
 - They have little reason to cling to their father's household
- Finally, they acknowledge God's authority in the situation
 - They see the hand of God doing all these things to enrich Jacob
 - They tell Jacob to do as God directed
- With that begins Jacob's personal exodus out of Laban's family
 - This is a fascinating story with more intrigue than meets the eye
 - As we study this section, remember the main theme of Jacob's story:
 - The sovereignty of God working through the sin of people
 - Jacob is showing helpful signs as a man who knows the Lord's work and trusts in Him to a degree
 - But he still has a tendency to rely on schemes and deception to make things happen
 - And his wives follow in his footsteps

Gen. 31:17 Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels;

Gen. 31:18 and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

Gen. 31:19 When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's.

Gen. 31:20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing.

Gen. 31:21 So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the Euphrates River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

Gen. 31:22 When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled,
Gen. 31:23 then he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.

- Jacob aims to make a midnight escape from Laban
 - He knows that Laban doesn't want to see Jacob leave his employment
 - This is especially since Jacob will be taking most of Laban's wealth with him
 - Therefore, Jacob makes a run for it
 - In v.20 we're told Jacob deceived Laban by not telling him he was leaving
 - Here's a wonderful verse to remind us that deception can take the form of withholding truthful information
 - Jacob knew that the proper thing to do in this case was to tell Laban of his departure
 - After living in Laban's house for 20 years and having married his two daughters, Jacob would certainly be expected to inform Laban
 - In fact, he was under a legal obligation to seek the patriarch's blessing for this action
 - As a hired man, Jacob was bound to remain in Laban's employment until Laban released him
 - Therefore, Jacob purposely withheld the news that he was leaving, and in not telling Laban something he should tell him, Jacob was deceitful
 - Reminding us of James' instructions

James 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

- We don't need the Bible to spell out godly living down to the last detail of life
 - The Holy Spirit living in each of us provides a compass in our heart true enough to point out right from wrong in any situation
 - When we know what is right, we sense it by God's grace and by that knowledge, we instantly become obligated by God's word to do the right thing
 - When we go against that knowledge, we sin
- Jacob was right to leave Laban, but he was wrong to do it in this way
 - Once again Jacob relies on deception, complicating his obedience to God
- Meanwhile, Rachel makes a move of her own
 - Laban is out shearing the flock, which is a multi-day endeavor involving many men
 - This leaves the homes empty of men, so Rachel takes the opportunity to steal Laban's household idols

- Among pagan worshippers, each household would adopt its own idols
 - These idols could take many forms, and were represented as small figurines a few inches high
 - The idols became associated with the household's identity, protecting and blessing the house
 - They might be inscribed with the family name
 - The patriarch of the family held these idols
 - They were passed down to the next patriarch of the family
 - So the idols also indicated family authority and the right to rule the inheritance
 - Nuzi tablets of this era have been found with instructions that whoever possessed the family idols could lay claim to be the legitimate heir
 - So whoever possessed these idols could assume ownership of Laban's estate upon his death
- Reading that Rachel took these idols leaves us wondering if her intentions were to worship them
 - The suggestion is that she didn't have a faith in God but retained her pagan religious views
 - While this is possible, the issue of inheritance is much more likely
 - Rachel took these idols as leverage against her father and protection against his threats
 - She took the "keys to his kingdom," which would have left Laban very vulnerable
 - Perhaps she wanted some insurance that Laban wouldn't attack them
 - Or maybe she intended to use them to claim some of the estate that Laban has withheld from her and Leah when he denied them a dowry
- Regardless of her reasons, her actions mirrored those of her husband
 - While Jacob was deceiving Laban, Rachel was stealing from Laban
 - Aren't these two tempting God by their actions?
 - As readers we know the Lord has promised to act in Jacob's best interest, but will their mischief cause God to go back on his promises?
 - It's important to remember that at this early point in the Bible, a reader is still trying to understand the character and nature of this Creator God
 - And Moses is teaching us about God by recording God's responses to men in their sin
 - In the first part of Genesis, God showed that sin has consequences
 - Adam and Eve received consequences for failing to keep God's word
 - So God is a God who responds to sin

- Then later in the face of worldwide rebellion, God judges men through a worldwide flood
 - But God promises to preserve a family of godly people if Noah builds an ark
 - So God is a God who executes judgment while offering mercy to those who hear Him
- Now we watch as God makes covenant with men, covenants that hold no requirements for men
 - And as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob experience sin in their lives, God has shown Himself faithful regardless
 - So God is a God who honors His promises unconditionally
- Clearly, the relationship we want with this God is one based on His promises, and not one based on our performance
 - When our relationship with God depends on man's performance, the outcomes are disastrous
 - When we turn to God's mercy, rescue will come
 - And when we rest in God's promises, nothing can shake God's faithfulness
- Still, even if our sin won't break God's covenants, it will bring consequences
 - We've seen this throughout the story of the patriarchs, especially in the story of Jacob
 - He continues to introduce deception into the work of God
 - God is preparing to show Jacob a better way, but for the time being continues to rescue Jacob
- So Jacob reaches Gilead, which is directly east of Bethel across the Jordan
 - Jacob has crossed the desert directly, which is the hardest way to travel but it indicates how quickly he was trying to move

Gen. 31:22 When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled,

Gen. 31:23 then he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.

Gen. 31:24 God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad."

Gen. 31:25 Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead.

Gen. 31:26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?"

Gen. 31:27 "Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre;
Gen. 31:28 and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

Gen. 31:29 "It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to

me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.’

- It takes three days before Laban hears that Jacob has left with his family
 - Remember that Laban made his sons move their flocks three days journey away from Jacob
 - This distance is the reason for the three day delay in the news reaching Laban
 - But as soon as Laban hears, he rushes to catch Jacob
 - Moses offers no commentary on what is motivating Laban’s haste to catch Jacob, but is there really any mystery?
 - More than likely Laban intends to kill Jacob and take his daughters and the herd back
 - Jacob’s escape is reason enough in the ancient world for Laban to take this action, and he would love nothing better than to have an excuse to reclaim his herds
 - Before Laban reaches Jacob, the Lord appears in a dream to give Laban a warning
 - This is the first time we’ve seen the Lord appear to Laban and the second time in Scripture that we see the Lord speaking to an unbeliever
 - As such, it’s a remarkable moment, and it’s proof that saving faith isn’t simply a matter of knowing about God
 - Like Abimelech before him, Laban has come to know about the living God and even receive a vision from Him
 - Nevertheless, they remain outside God’s mercy since they have not received a promise and rested in it by faith
 - Instead of a promise, Laban is given a stern warning not to say anything good or bad to Jacob
 - This is a strange command
 - We might have expected God to say something like “don’t raise a hand against Jacob” or maybe “don’t say anything bad”
 - Why does God tell Laban not to say anything good to Jacob?
- God is intent on protecting Jacob, but he’s also intent on teaching Jacob a lesson along the way
 - The protection of God is evident in the instruction not to say anything bad
 - The command not to speak anything bad implies not doing anything bad either
 - A man’s word was his command, so Laban has been prohibited from commanding anything negative against Jacob
 - But the chastisement of the Lord will become evident in His second instruction that Laban say nothing positive either
 - Laban might have been inclined to make an offer to entice Jacob to return or to tempt Jacob to stay longer

- God wants Jacob to rest entirely in His promises and not on the mercy of unbelievers
- So as Laban catches up, he gives Jacob a sob story of concern and hurt feelings
 - Laban says Jacob deceived him, which is true
 - And Jacob denied Laban the chance to say a proper good bye to his daughters, which is also true
 - Now it's Laban's turn to deceive
 - He says had he known of Jacob's departure, he would have celebrated the event in songs of joy
 - Finally, Laban accuses Jacob of denying him the chance to kiss his daughters goodbye
 - After living with Laban for twenty years, Jacob wouldn't have possibly been fooled by this show
 - But the show must go on, because saving face and posturing was built in to the culture
- Finally, Laban declares it is in his power to do harm to Jacob
 - The Hebrew word for harm is *ra*, which means evil or disaster
 - Clearly, this would have been Laban's choice, by his own words
 - For if God had not stopped him, he would have gone forward in this act
 - Clearly, this man has understood the power of God
 - But notice he describes God as the God of your father in v.20
 - Laban hears from God, knows God's power and obeys God, yet he doesn't have a personal relationship with God

James 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

- A relationship is based on more than knowing about God or even hearing from God or even conforming to God's decrees
 - The demons do all these things at times but to no good outcome...they still shudder
 - The only test that matters is whether we have entered into a personal relationship with God
 - And only through a covenant can man have a saving relationship with God
- Here we see God acting according to His word through a covenant with Jacob to protect Jacob
 - God said:

Gen. 28:15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will

bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

- In v.19 we see God at work as Laban reveals that God is holding him back from bringing harm to Jacob
 - God’s protection is both a result of His promises and the natural consequences of Laban’s behavior
 - Laban’s hatred of Jacob and his poor treatment of Jacob have left God no choice but to bring calamity upon Laban
 - God’s word was to deliver Jacob back safely and to curse those who curse him
 - Jacob has done wrong things to Laban, but nothing in Jacob’s behavior could cause God to go back on His word
 - Nevertheless, Jacob has deceived Laban and his wife has stolen from Laban
 - And will God deal justly with these mistakes?



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 31C

Chapter 31:27-55

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- God's sovereignty is absolute
 - No part of life lies outside His divine will
 - He knows all knowledge, controls all events, determines all outcomes
 - Spurgeon stated:

I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall of . . . leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.

- The most amazing thing about God's sovereignty is the way His control masquerades as everyday life
 - It's as if God is hiding in plain view
 - A chance meeting of friends on the street, a unexpected check in the mail, a random thought in our minds
 - Or as Spurgeon put it, the march of an insect and the falling of leaves
- God is especially active in the lives of His people, prompting events and circumstances to encourage spiritual development
 - In our story of Jacob, we've reached one of those moments when God shows Himself in the details of a passing encounter
 - And through the experience, God shows Himself to be a patient, teaching Father who loves His children and keeps His word
- We left Jacob and his family in the hill country of Gilead
 - He has fled Laban, but Laban followed and confronted Jacob
 - He accuses Jacob of leaving without notice, which was true
 - But God has appeared to Laban to prevent him from acting against Jacob
 - Last week we noted Laban's example of how God works through unbelievers just as He does those who fear Him
 - In fact, we marveled a bit at the way Laban can acknowledge God's existence
 - And experience fear and respect for His power
 - And even obey His instructions...
 - Yet Laban never has a testimony of saving faith
 - He is merely like the demons: a man who experienced the reality of God but never obtained a relationship by faith
 - Today we continue to watch the confrontation evolve and the lessons continue

Gen. 31:27 “Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and

with lyre;

Gen. 31:28 and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

Gen. 31:29 “It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.’

Gen. 31:30 “Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father’s house; but why did you steal my gods?”

Gen. 31:31 Then Jacob replied to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.

Gen. 31:32 “The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take it for yourself.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

- Laban discovered the absence of the household idols
 - In the haste to pack up supplies and other necessities, Laban noticed that the idols were missing from his home
 - These idols usually held a prominent place in the home, often at a sacred setting or altar
 - So it would have been easy for Laban to notice they were gone
 - This was a high crime in the culture
 - Last week we learned that these idols are more than merely religious icons
 - They were the symbols of authority within the family tribe
 - The one who possesses the family idols can lay claim to the patriarchal authority and the inheritance
 - Laban is threatened by the prospect that Jacob could return at any time with the idols and displace Laban’s sons
 - Laban expects to use this crime as an opportunity to compel Jacob to return to working for him
 - If Jacob refused, Laban would have the right to call for Jacob’s death as penalty for his crime
 - So Laban pursues Jacob, catches him, complains about the departure, and then drops the bomb
 - You stole my idols
- Jacob’s response is exactly as we might expect from someone in his situation
 - In v.31 Jacob gives a truthful, if a bit pathetic, excuse for his surreptitious departure
 - He was afraid that Laban wouldn’t allow Jacob to leave with Laban’s daughters
 - Perhaps this is true, and Laban was certainly capable of such things
 - Nevertheless, Jacob is confessing his own lack of faith in God’s power to solve these problems
 - It stands to reason that if God appears to Jacob and directs him to leave

Laban, then God has a plan for how to get the family out safely

- God didn't need Jacob's help, especially help that came in the form of another deception
- This is an ends-justifies-the-means logic
 - "Since God told me to do something, I am free to do whatever is necessary to bring this about..."
 - That is not a faith-based walk
 - At its worst, this kind of thinking leads men to do very ungodly things in the name of following God
 - Crusades, Inquisition, Saul and the Pharisees persecuting Christians, and many contemporary examples abound
- Jacob's actions are less severe than my examples, but his approach is fundamentally the same
 - He lies to further the cause of obedience
 - Instead, he should have done the right thing at each step and watched as God cleared his path of obstacles
 - When we act in this way, the experience builds our faith better than anything else I know
- Then in v.32, Jacob responds to Laban's second accusation
 - Jacob is insulted by the accusation that he or anyone in his house stole Laban's idols
 - Remember, in this culture saving face and preserving honor was all important
 - Laban made a strong accusation that threatens Jacob's very honor
 - So Jacob responds in an equally forceful way declaring his innocence, offering to allow Jacob to conduct a search, and promising a severe penalty for anyone who may be guilty of the act
 - Jacob's statement is the right thing to say, because the act would deserve such a penalty
 - But of course he has no idea he is placing one of his own wives under a death sentence
 - He doesn't know Rachel took the idols, so he's confident that he will be vindicated in the end
- Laban proceeds to search the camp of Jacob

Gen. 31:33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

Gen. 31:34 Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find them.

Gen. 31:35 She said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me." So he searched but did not

find the household idols.

- Laban searches each tent in Jacob's caravan and finds nothing
 - Finally, he enters Rachel's tent
 - Now we know that Rachel has the idols, so the suspense peaks at this point
 - How will God protect Jacob and Rachel?
 - There is still another child to come from Rachel
 - How will God keep Rachel from suffering the penalty that Jacob pronounced?
 - As Laban enters Rachel's tent, he finds her sitting on a saddle in her tent
 - Saddles were made of leather and blankets, and when the caravan is encamped, they served as lounges in the tents
 - Rachel is sitting on the idols, and normally she was required to stand in the presence of a man entering her tent as a show of respect
 - But women who were experiencing menstruation were not required to stand
 - Remembering this is an age of rudimentary sanitation, women typically refrained from much standing or walking during this time
 - First, they were considered unclean because of blood flow (even before the giving of the law)
 - And they didn't want that flow to be exposed
 - So Laban must respect her decision to remain seated
 - Was Rebecca lying about her condition? Perhaps, but perhaps not
 - It may have been a convenient time for Laban's arrival
 - Or she may have concocted the story to protect herself
 - Either way, it served the purpose of protecting her guilt
 - The idols are never found
 - Like Laban used custom to trick Jacob into marrying two women, now Rachel uses a custom to fool Laban
- As Laban comes up empty handed, the shame moves from Jacob back to Laban
 - Laban is now ashamed for appearing to have made a false accusation
 - What's interesting about this situation is Jacob still doesn't know about Rachel's guilt
 - He suffered the humiliation of watching Laban methodically search the camp, but all the time Jacob was confident no gods would show up
 - Now Jacob assumes he's been proven right, but in reality Jacob himself is being deceived just like Laban
 - Here we see God's sovereignty in full display
 - Over the course of these relationships, Laban deceived Jacob, Jacob deceived Laban, and now Rachel has deceived both of them

- With each step of sin, God turned it to produce a godly outcome He intended
- As all the deception comes to a climactic end, God's purpose in grooming and growing Jacob begins to come to the surface
- Jacob has endured 20 years of misery at the hands of Laban, and just as he thought he had escaped the man, he suffers one more indignity, or so he thinks
 - God permitted each of these indignities to address some character flaw in Jacob and to strengthen his faith
 - And now all those lessons produce a boiling point as Jacob lets Laban have it

Gen. 31:36 Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me?"

Gen. 31:37 "Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.

Gen. 31:38 "These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks.

Gen. 31:39 "That which was torn of beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. You required it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night.

Gen. 31:40 "Thus I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

Gen. 31:41 "These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times.

Gen. 31:42 "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night."

- This is a passionate and angry Jacob, a man who has a lot to be angry about
 - He begins by asking rhetorically, "What is my sin that you should pursue me so hotly and embarrass me in this way?"
 - You searched everything in my camp, so show me what you found?
 - Jacob is done with pretense or saving face or preserving Laban's honor
 - He's talking plainly and honestly with Laban
 - And in his recounting of his life in Haran, we hear Jacob's testimony of God
 - Jacob begins by reminding Laban of his faithfulness in service to him
 - He served twenty years, which was in keeping with their agreements
 - Secondly, he did his job well, ensuring that the goats and sheep didn't miscarry, demonstrating Jacob's care and skill in the work
 - Despite Jacob's efforts, Laban treated him wrongly throughout their time

together

- Jacob reminds Laban that when a wild beast killed a goat or sheep in the field, Jacob bore those losses himself
- Under the custom of the day, a shepherd wasn't expected to absorb the cost of animals lost to thieves or wild animal attacks
 - He could bring back the carcass of the dead animal to prove it was the result of an animal
 - Jacob never bothered to produce such proof when animals were killed
- Laban required that Jacob bear those losses himself, meaning it was Jacob's responsibility to repay Laban for those animals
- Furthermore, Jacob worked under difficult and harsh conditions living in the fields caring for the flocks
 - Hot days, cold evenings, and sleepless nights in protecting the flock
 - While Jacob worked for 20 years in keeping with his agreements, Laban changed the wages ten times trying to minimize Jacob's wealth and maximize his own
- In summary, Jacob worked hard doing everything in honor and according to his word, while Laban did everything in dishonor and in an attempt to win an advantage
- So what does Jacob conclude in reflecting on how the past twenty years have transpired?
 - In v.42 he says that if the God of Abraham and Isaac had not also been for Jacob, Jacob would have had nothing to show for his 20 years
 - We can fairly assume that no man had ever out-smarted Laban before
 - He was a true scoundrel who took every advantage, yet he hadn't found a way to best Jacob
 - And when Jacob finally had enough and left Laban, Laban was intent on following Jacob, and destroying him with any excuse he could find
 - Jacob declares that God has seen his affliction and his hard work and has rendered judgment in favor of Jacob
 - At the end of v.42, Jacob adds that God has rendered judgment against you last night
 - Literally in Hebrew, Jacob says God rebuked you yesterday
 - Jacob is referring to the dream God gave Laban telling him not to speak good or bad to Jacob
 - Jacob is interpreting that dream to be a sign that God is working for Jacob to protect him
 - Notice though that Jacob has made a fundamental mistake in understanding why God did what He did
 - Jacob believes that he is prevailing in this struggle with Laban because he was worked hard and done the right things
 - And since Laban has done bad things, God is passing judgment against Laban

- Is this how God's favor works?
 - Is God favoring Jacob because Jacob is a man who does the right things?
 - And has God chosen to leave Laban at a disadvantage because he is a dishonest man?
- Well, if you're confused about how to answer remember how we got here
 - Jacob deceived Laban when he left and Rachel is hiding stolen idols
 - Ironically, this is probably the first time in their relationship that Jacob is entirely in the wrong and Laban is entirely right, at least about the immediate circumstances
- If God were going to reward the person in the right, it would be Laban receiving a reward and Jacob and Rachel receiving the rebuke
- Instead, God has protected Jacob, just as Jacob has stated
 - The basis for that favor was not Jacob's performance, but God's grace
 - Jacob has taken an important step forward in his understanding of the God he worships
 - He knows that God is working to bring good outcomes in Jacob's life
 - But Jacob still has a false view understanding of his own righteousness while overlooking God's grace
 - Jacob the man is also a picture of Israel the nation, and this thinking permeates the nation of Israel over all of its existence
 - Works above faith, law above grace
 - External vs. internal, appearance before reality
 - Jacob is simply the first in a family that reflects this thinking even as God works to show them the truth
 - In Chapter 32, the Lord takes the extraordinary step of appearing to Jacob in a theophany, a physical form to impress upon Jacob that his view of God's mercy needs to change
 - But for now, let's finish Chapter 31 watching God in His wisdom turning man's sin to good to protect Jacob

Gen. 31:43 Then Laban replied to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?"

Gen. 31:44 "So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

Gen. 31:45 Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.

Gen. 31:46 Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.

Gen. 31:47 Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.

Gen. 31:48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed,

Gen. 31:49 and Mizpah, for he said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.

Gen. 31:50 “If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.”

Gen. 31:51 Laban said to Jacob, “Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me.

Gen. 31:52 “This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.

Gen. 31:53 “The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

Gen. 31:54 Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

Gen. 31:55 Early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

- In response to Jacob’s protest, Laban demands a covenant
 - Remember, covenants were powerful agreements that bound each party to mutual obedience under penalty of death
 - In this case, the agreement Laban seeks is actually an agreement of protection
 - He demands that Jacob never cross this line again, and likewise Laban will never cross into Jacob’s territory
 - Furthermore, Jacob can never take additional wives
 - Why does Laban insist on these rules in the covenant?
 - Superficially, Laban claims that since these two men are at odds with one another now, they must remain separated for protection
 - In reality, Laban has other reasons for this agreement
 - Remember the household idols?
 - Though Laban couldn’t find them, he knows that Jacob has them
 - So he fears that Jacob will return sometime with the idols and lay claim to Laban’s property
 - So the line in the sand protects Laban from Jacob’s claims
 - Secondly, Jacob is prohibited from taking other wives so that his family won’t extend into other families or clans which then might inherit Laban’s idols and cross the line looking for his inheritance
- These are Laban’s intentions, to protect himself and prevent Jacob from ever harming him in the future
 - But God is using this agreement to protect Jacob and the nation of Israel
 - By agreeing to never take an additional wife, Jacob is prevented from taking a

wife from among the Canaanites, like Esau did

- God is at work in Laban's terms to ensure that Jacob remains apart from the Canaanite people
- Next week we'll see Jacob prepare to face his latest and greatest adversary, only to discover he's been fighting in the wrong way from the start

- One of the most dangerous things God can do for us in the course of our daily walk of faith is to reveal some detail of his plan for our lives
 - If God dares to tell us about where He wants us to go or what He plans to do with us in our future, He is taking a big risk
 - The reason why it's such a risk is because a little knowledge is a dangerous thing for Christians
 - So often, we take that revelation and begin to run ahead of God thinking we have all we need to create our own plan
 - In effect, we leave God behind

A middle-aged woman had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. While on the operating table she had a near death experience. Seeing God she asked, "Is my time up?" God said, "No you have another 43 years, 2 months and 8 days to live."

Upon hearing this, the woman decided to stay in the hospital and have a face lift, liposuction and a tummy tuck. She even had someone change her hair color. Since she had so much more time to live, she figured she might as well make the most of it.

She was released from the hospital but while crossing the street on her way home, she was hit by a bus and died.

Arriving in Heaven and standing before God, she demanded, "I thought you said I had another 43 years?! Why didn't you pull me out of the path of the bus?"

God replied, "I didn't recognize you."

- When we run ahead of God, we take God out of the driver's seat and place Him in the passenger's seat of our life
 - We start trying to drive and expect God to just help us navigate
 - We set our own course and ask God to bless it
 - Rather than allow God to set the course and then we join in His work
- This is where Jacob is at this point in his life
 - God set him outside the land for 20 years so that Jacob could experience God at work in his life
 - Jacob has seen the Lord and recognized His power and provision
 - Last week we saw Jacob giving Laban that passionate speech in which he declared that God has been at work protecting Jacob

- Jacob has recognized that God is in his car, so to speak
 - And Jacob knows God is helping navigate the journey of Jacob's life
- But Jacob hasn't taken the next step of spiritual maturity to recognize that God is not just riding shotgun in Jacob's journey
 - God is driving the car, and Jacob needs to follow the Lord's lead
 - And when Jacob tries to go his own way, through deception or trickery or scheming, then he is fighting against God rather than working with God
- Chapter 32 exists in the record of Genesis precisely to show us how the Lord finally gets Jacob's attention on this point and shows him to follow

Gen. 32:1 Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him.

Gen. 32:2 Jacob said when he saw them, "This is God's camp." So he named that place Mahanaim.

- Jacob is headed westward into Canaan from Gilead, and as he travels, God gives Jacob a vision of angels escorting him into the Promised Land
 - In seeing the angels Jacob declares that this location is God's camp
 - The word he uses to name the place means two camps in Hebrew
 - Meaning that God's camp has joined his camp
 - Why does God bring Jacob this vision now?
 - You may remember that God gave Jacob a vision of angels as he left the Promised Land
 - And now He provides Jacob a second vision of angels just as Jacob prepares to re-enter the land
 - The message would seem to be similar in both cases
 - Jacob left the land to uncertain circumstances and in fear of what the future held, so God reassured Jacob in the vision
 - Now Jacob re-enters the land under uncertain circumstances as well
 - He isn't sure what he will find, especially concerning his brother who may still harbor violent intentions against Jacob
 - So God wants Jacob to know that God has everything under control and He will ensure Jacob's safe passage
 - But how does Jacob interpret the vision?
 - Jacob declares that God's camp was joining Jacob's camp
 - The sense of his statement is that God was sending reinforcements
 - The word for camp in Hebrew is *machaneh*, which literally means army
 - God's army is reinforcing Jacob's army of men
- We see Jacob's backward perspective clearly evident in the next things he does

Gen. 32:3 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Gen. 32:4 He also commanded them saying, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob, “I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now;

Gen. 32:5 I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.’”

Gen. 32:6 The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.”

Gen. 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies;

Gen. 32:8 for he said, “If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape.”

- Before Jacob crosses the Jordan and enters Canaan, he thinks it prudent to notify his long lost brother of his return
 - This makes sense
 - Jacob doesn’t want to return to the land unannounced potentially leading Esau to assume it was a sneak attack
 - But the plan Jacob sets into motion reveals more of his thinking
 - Jacob instructs his servants to head southward toward Edom, the place Esau has chosen to dwell
 - The messengers are to inform Esau of Jacob’s return
 - But notice the language they are told to use
 - They are to refer to Jacob as Esau’s servant
 - They are to mention that Jacob is quite wealthy and has many possessions
 - Clearly, the tone of these statements is intended to appease Esau
 - Should Esau still harbor resentment and hatred toward his brother, perhaps he would be willing to make peace for a price
 - We can clearly see Jacob’s thinking here
 - He needs to prepare his own way to enter the land
 - He must defend himself or else he won’t be safe
 - Despite seeing the angels, Jacob is still trying to drive the car
- So God begins to work to get his attention
 - The messengers then return to Jacob to report that Esau is coming north to meet Jacob
 - And by the way, Esau is bringing 400 men with him

- Naturally, Jacob assumes the worst
 - Esau is coming with a strong force to conquer and kill Jacob
 - This will be payback for the deceit Jacob perpetrated on Esau 20 years earlier
- In response, Jacob does something that proves he has a glass-half-empty mentality
 - He decides to divide his force
 - Dividing one's force weakens your ability to withstand attack
 - It makes defeat all the more likely
 - And Jacob even says that his purpose in the division is to ensure someone survives Esau's attack
 - Jacob is already assuming that he will lose this battle
 - Therefore, he wants to leave some of his family hidden away and safe so that after the defeat, there will be some of the family remaining
- Jacob is terrified and he lacks any hope of surviving Esau's attack
 - Didn't God bring a vision of angels to give Jacob confidence?
 - And yet here's Jacob scared and trying to plan and scheme his way out of his situation
 - This is Jacob: a man of faith, but weak faith
 - A man who acknowledges God in his life and recognizes God's work to bless him
 - Yet with each new challenge Jacob reverts to trusting in himself and assuming God will come along for the ride
 - But finally – and perhaps for the first time – Jacob sees no solution at hand
 - He is facing death, he believes, and he can't figure out a way to avoid it
 - The best he has is a plan to save half of his family
 - So what does a man of faith do when all his options are exhausted and he has no ideas and no escape from his circumstances? What is the last option of every man of God? He prays

Gen. 32:9 Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,’

Gen. 32:10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies.

Gen. 32:11 “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children.

Gen. 32:12 “For You said, ‘I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as

the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.’”

- Jacob turns his face toward God and cries out, deliver me!
 - Jacob makes his sincere confession of repentance
 - He says I am unworthy of God’s kindness (true statement)
 - And reminds God of His promises
 - And then makes his appeal: deliver me from Esau
 - Jacob schemed and planned and bargained to get Esau’s favor, and now that these efforts have failed, he turns to God and asks God to handle it
 - Couldn’t he have skipped the first part and gone directly to the prayer?
 - Jacob’s approach is standard practice for so many of us
 - Prayer is the last thing we do
 - It’s the response of last resort
 - It represents us getting out of the driver’s seat and asking God to slide over and take the wheel
 - Are we really so prideful and foolish so as to think that we ever had control of the wheel in the first place?
 - God was always driving and is always driving
 - Our lives are in His hands at all times
 - And it’s only our own self-deception that leads us to think that we are in control
- Why has God allowed Jacob to know that Esau was approaching with his 400 men?
 - It would seem there is only one reason: to bring Jacob to this crisis, this crisis of faith
 - With no other choice, Jacob must turn to God and cry out for God’s grace and mercy
 - God’s goodness was never in doubt, nor was God’s faithfulness to His promises ever in doubt
 - After all, God sent His angels to Jacob as reassurance that Jacob would enter the land successfully
 - More over, consider that Esau is already living outside the land of Canaan
 - The very fact that Esau didn’t remain in the land but chose to settle outside Canaan is clear sign of God’s goodness at work
 - After Jacob fled, we might expect that Esau would have tried to occupy the land to deny Jacob the chance to receive his inheritance
 - Instead, Esau decided to leave for Edom and settle outside the land, leaving it available for Jacob
 - Clearly, God is more than capable of fulfilling the promises to Jacob
 - Nevertheless, Jacob thinks his success lies with his own efforts, and God’s army was

merely a reinforcement

- He got the relationship backward
- So what does a man of faith do after having prayed for God to intervene and resolve his situation? Well, if you're Jacob, you go back to scheming...

Gen. 32:13 So he spent the night there. Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau:

Gen. 32:14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,

Gen. 32:15 thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.

Gen. 32:16 He delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on before me, and put a space between droves."

Gen. 32:17 He commanded the one in front, saying, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?'

Gen. 32:18 then you shall say, 'These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.'"

Gen. 32:19 Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, "After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him;

Gen. 32:20 and you shall say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.'"

For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."

Gen. 32:21 So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.

- After making his appeal to the Lord, Jacob sleeps on it, and when he awakes, he has a new plan to save his skin
 - He takes a large quantity of his best animals (500), and then instructs his servants to create a receiving line stretching to the horizon
 - This is a lavish gift, representing about 2-3 years of work at least
 - It also shows how prosperous Jacob has become that he can let so much go so easily
 - The animals are grouped into like kinds and separated by some distance from one another in a line stretching away from Jacob in the direction of Esau
 - This created five groups, and each group represented a gift to Esau
 - Jacob hoped that with each gift, Esau's anger would subside that much more
 - And Jacob gave each servant the same instructions to deliver to Esau

- Once again, they are to use the phrase “your servant Jacob” sent us
 - And these animals are a present for Esau
 - The word for present in Hebrew is *minchah*, which means offering or tribute
 - Later in v.20 Jacob tells the servants to say to Esau that these gifts are intended to appease him
 - The word for appease in Hebrew is *kaphar*, which literally means propitiation or atonement
- Jacob is putting these animals before Esau to make amends or to atone for his past sins against Esau
 - With his back against a wall, Jacob experiences the weight of a repentant heart and seeks to make amends for his deceits
 - And these animals are sent to Esau to appease or atone for his sin against Esau
 - Jacob does have reason to feel guilty, but he’s seeking to solve his problem in the wrong way
 - Jacob’s language and actions are an attempt to communicate to Esau that Jacob was willing to give the birthright back to Esau
 - First, he is willing to send Esau a large piece of his wealth
 - Secondly, he is willing to be called Esau’s servant
 - Remember, the birthright inheritance always included the patriarchal leadership role in the family
 - Everyone else in the family was considered the servant of the patriarch
 - So for Jacob to tell Esau that he would be Esau’s servant was tantamount to saying you can be the patriarch over me
 - Jacob’s only hope is to stay alive at this point, and he’s willing to sacrifice everything else he has to achieve that goal
 - There is to be a place for repentance in Jacob’s life, just as there is to be for every believer
 - The problem for Jacob is that he is repenting of the wrong thing and he is repenting to the wrong person
 - First, Jacob is sorry for the wrong thing
 - He upset Esau and took away Esau’s birthright, but Jacob has nothing to repent for
 - Esau sold his birthright to Jacob
 - Esau wasn’t a victim and had no claim to the birthright in the first place
 - If Esau was going to be upset about the birthright, he should have been upset at himself or at God
- Jacob’s misdirected repentance is an example of seeking friendship with the world
 - Jacob was more interested in worldly friendship and harmony than with standing in God’s promises

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2Cor. 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

- Paul says because we have God's promises, we cleanse ourselves of the world and live in fear of God
- Jacob was living in fear of the world rather than in fear of God
 - We are certainly commanded to be at peace with all men so far as it depends on us, but we are not to seek harmony at all costs
 - On the contrary, some discord and conflict is inevitable, since our faith makes us enemies with the world

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- What Jacob should be repentant for is his dependance upon himself rather than trusting on God
 - The chief sin he's committing over and over again is prideful self-reliance
 - If he's going to be sorry about something, it shouldn't be for hurting Esau's feelings, but for putting God in the backseat
- Secondly, Jacob is directing his repentance toward Esau, when he should be directing his sorrow to the Lord himself
 - He's working hard to fix the wrong relationship
 - So often this happens in the lives of Christians
 - Sometimes we're suffering hardship and trials, especially in our relationships, and we work desperately hard to repair these wounds
 - It's always healthy to seek reconciliation and to make amends for hurts we cause, there is another relationship that must be repaired first
 - Our relationships with others can be a reflection of our relationship with the Lord
 - Jacob is at odds with his brother because he schemed against him
 - But that scheming was itself a product of Jacob's unwillingness to depend on God, to take matters into his own hands
 - Likewise, if we have friendships, marriages or other family relationships that are

strained, consider whether they may be a reflection of our own weaknesses in following the Lord

- Let's bring our repentant hearts to the Lord first even as we seek to reconcile with our brothers
- Jacob is still trying to drive the car of his life, and with the little knowledge God has given Jacob about Esau's arrival, Jacob is ready to drive off a cliff
 - God has appointed Jacob to inherit the blessings and the promises of the covenant, so Jacob can't change that plan
 - Jacob is ready to give back his birthright to survive an encounter with Esau
 - What happened to that prayer Jacob lifted up to God?
 - It's barely been 24 hours since the prayer, and already Jacob has given up all hope and is making foolish decisions
 - Since God isn't going to allow Jacob to forfeit his birthright, He is ready to intervene in a dramatic way to set Jacob straight

- If the story of Jacob has a climactic moment, then the end of Chapter 32 must be it
 - Jacob's story is easily the most complex of the three patriarchs
 - Abraham's life was mostly a testimony to faithfulness
 - He was willing to take risks and shoulder the burdens God gave
 - And except for a few times when he succumbed to impatience, he walked a straight line with God
 - Isaac's life was long but largely uneventful
 - Apart from sharing some of Abraham's impatience, he maintained the testimony his father established
 - His notable weakness was in favoring the wrong child for all the wrong reasons
 - Jacob is easily the most complex patriarch in the record of Genesis
 - Probably because of his father's favoritism for his brother, Jacob developed a strong sense of self-determination
 - And as a result, Jacob's life is filled with trials and struggles, both against men and God
 - While Jacob knew and followed the Lord, he also had a troubling tendency to double down on every plan God revealed
 - He schemed, deceived, and manipulated others to obtain the outcomes he preferred
 - Often his schemes were working to the same objective as God, but he complicated God's work unnecessarily and introduced sinful consequences
 - Other times, Jacob would actually work against God's purposes, leading God to step in and short circuit Jacob's efforts
 - As Jacob worked in this way, he believed he was working with God's blessing, but in reality he was fighting against God
 - Like one man rowing in the opposite direction of his shipmates, Jacob was working against God
 - And his relationship with the Lord has reached a critical point where he needs to cease working against God
 - So as Jacob prepares to return to the land, God makes an extraordinary appearance to Jacob to teach an important lesson
- Jacob has heard of Esau's arrival to meet him on the occasion of Jacob's return to the land
 - And Jacob fears that Esau intends to hurt him, so he has divided his family into two camps in the hope at least one group survives
 - He expects to encounter Esau tomorrow, so as the day comes to an end, Jacob makes final preparations

Gen. 32:22 Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

Gen. 32:23 He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

Gen. 32:24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

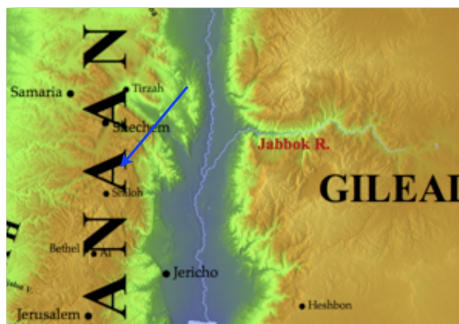
Gen. 32:25 When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

Gen. 32:26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Gen. 32:27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."

Gen. 32:28 He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

- Jacob is sitting on the east side of the Jordan river in the Gilead region
 - There is a tributary feeding the Jordan river called the Jabbok



- The name Jabbok means empty, or demoralized or devastated
- The ford runs east to west through the Gilead, and then it angles southwest until it meets the Jordan
- Jacob is coming from Haran, so he's headed southwest toward Bethel
 - So he's ready to cross from the north to the south side of the Jabbok
 - All the while Esau is coming up from the south in Edom to meet Jacob
- The river crossing takes some time and it involves some effort
 - So Jacob helps his family across the river, including all the children, livestock and servants
 - They are headed in Esau's direction, so Jacob doesn't follow his family over the river
 - Perhaps it was too dark for Jacob to cross or perhaps he was too tired to make it across himself
 - But it's likely that Jacob remained on the north side of the river out of fear of Esau

- The river provided a natural barrier to Esau's army, so Jacob stays behind to protect himself from Esau's attack
- Jacob is all alone in the Gilead
 - He has literally no one but himself and nothing but darkness
 - There is a poetic irony in Jacob's situation
 - He has always been a man who relied on his own strength while taking advantage of others
 - But now he's got nothing and no one
 - He's hidden himself attempting to secure his own safety
 - And in the morning, he faces an uncertain and frightening future
 - So under these circumstances, God begins to bring Jacob to the end of himself, to teach a lesson
 - The text says that Jacob wrestled a man until daybreak
 - The text brings the news in such an abrupt manner, we're a bit confused over how this situation developed
 - Did the "man" attack Jacob as he slept?
 - Was it an ambush?
 - We don't know, because the text makes no attempt to explain those details
 - They don't matter because the attacker is no ordinary man, as the text will make clear
- They wrestle literally all night
 - The word for wrestle refers to hand-to-hand combat
 - It comes from a Hebrew root that means dust, as in to get dusty on the ground
 - But don't imagine sports wrestling
 - Instead, think a brawl, two men fighting for their lives
 - Who is this man and why has he attacked Jacob?
 - The way Moses narrates the story, he allows us to wonder at first
 - In fact, we might suspect that Esau has found a way to circumvent the river and attack Jacob anyway
 - But this man is not Esau
 - In fact, this is no man at all
 - In v.28 we learn that Jacob has been struggling with God Himself
 - That tells us that this is an appearance of the angel of the Lord, Who is the Second Person of the Godhead
 - A physical representation of God, this is a pre-incarnate Christ
 - Notice it was God who engaged Jacob

- God attacked Jacob leading to this wrestling
 - The Lord wants the confrontation so He can teach Jacob by it
- After a significant period of time has gone by, Moses says the Lord has not prevailed against Jacob
 - How can the Lord fail to prevail over the strength of a mere man?
 - Doesn't God have enough power to win this engagement?
 - Certainly God had the power to win a test of strength, but this wasn't a test of strength
 - This was a test of wills
 - Jacob's will was directed toward defending himself and defeating his enemies
 - Everything Jacob does is calculated to obtaining what he wants and undermining his adversaries
 - The problem is Jacob's life was Jacob's will
 - His will was not submitted to the Lord Who has called him into covenant
 - That prideful, stubborn, deterministic will was the barrier God was determined to penetrate
 - And in a test of wills, God finally resorts to entering into a physical confrontation with Jacob
 - Jacob's will is so unbendable that even after hours of fighting for his life, Jacob hasn't called upon the Lord or sought the Lord's intervention
 - Imagine had Jacob called to the Lord at any point in this struggle, he would have discovered the Lord right in his midst
 - Instead, Jacob continues to fight in his own power
 - And in one of the chief ironies of the entire Bible, Jacob is fighting against the very One with the power to save him from the fight
- So after a time, the Lord decides to increase the pressure on Jacob
 - He touches the thigh of Jacob and sets his hip out of joint
 - The Hebrew for the word touch is *naga* and literally means strike
 - This was a blow to the hip strong enough to knock the femur out of its socket
 - This kind of blow requires strength beyond the ability of a normal man
 - And the effect would have been incredibly painful for Jacob
 - I once dislocated my shoulder wrestling, and the pain remains to this day as one of the most painful injuries I've felt
 - The pain of a dislocated hip is even greater
 - Also, the injury would have completely immobilized Jacob
 - At that point, Jacob would have had no chance of prevailing against an attacker

- And at that point, the entire nature of the struggle changes
 - Where before Jacob was fighting with the attacker, now Jacob is clinging to him
 - The attacker is trying to get away, but Jacob won't let him go
- Why has Jacob switched from defending himself to holding on to the attacker?
 - Because he has come to recognize that this man is a representative of God
 - Jacob isn't sure who this person is exactly, but he knows he has supernatural powers
 - The man set his hip out of socket with a single blow
 - And the manner of that blow must have convinced Jacob that this was no ordinary man
 - And as the lights came on in Jacob's head, he begins to sense that this encounter was intended for reasons other than his destruction
 - Notice in v.26 when the angel of the Lord demands to be released from Jacob, then Jacob begs for a blessing
 - Once again, could the Lord escape Jacob's clutch had He wanted to leave?
 - Of course, therefore we must conclude that the Lord is playing a part in this encounter to prompt certain responses from Jacob
 - And Jacob is slowly but surely beginning to get the point
 - Jacob now lies wounded, tired and daybreak was coming
 - With daybreak comes his encounter with Esau
 - And in his condition, Jacob is as desperate as any man could be
 - But now that he knows he has the Lord in his grasp, he is completely dependent on God for his rescue
 - He isn't going to let the Lord leave without an assurance that the Lord will protect and bless Jacob
 - Finally after an entire night of physical confrontation, followed by a serious injury, only then does Jacob begin to seek the Lord's blessing
- God has given every man physical strength, intellectual abilities, and some degree of wealth and resources
 - These things are ours so that we might enjoy life serving God
 - But they are not replacements for our dependence upon God
 - In fact, we are equally dependent on God regardless of how much strength or how many resources He has given us
 - But our resources and physical abilities can become the things we trust in for our protection
 - And even for a man or woman of faith, we may be tempted to believe they are the manifestation of God's power in our life
 - The old adage that God helps those who help themselves is a reflection of that

mentality

- I wonder if Jacob would have been a man who might have agreed with that thinking
- But the Bible teaches that the opposite is true
 - God helps those who recognize their dependence on Him and turn to Him seeking a blessing
- This is the place God has delivered Jacob
 - All his wealth is gone, all his family, all his servants
 - He is alone and wounded
 - No scheming will solve the problem and he has no hope apart from God
 - And so he calls to God clinging to Him for grace
- The irony is this has always been Jacob's situation, though he didn't see it that way
 - He is a man blessed by a promise given to him by God, and that promise was given to Jacob, Paul reminds us, before Jacob was even born
 - We are also entirely dependent on God's grace for the ability to serve Him and accomplish those things He has decreed
 - Jacob's lesson to us all is that we ought not force God to bring us to the end of ourselves to prove to us that we can't trust in ourselves or our resources
 - God is prepared to bring us to a low point of desperation if necessary in order that we might learn what it means to cling to the Lord
- In response to Jacob's demand, the Lord asks Jacob what is his name?
 - Here again, the Lord knew Jacob's name, so the question was intended to provoke a thought in Jacob's head
 - As Jacob answers, he must have remembered the name's meaning
 - Supplanter, deceiver, a man who contends with men to obtain his blessing
 - Now the Lord changes Jacob's name
 - No longer would he be called Jacob, but now it would be Israel
 - The name Israel means to strive with God
 - The sense of the word is God fights for Israel
 - Where before Jacob fought with men in his own power, now he will see the Lord fight on his behalf
 - This renaming of Jacob is prophetic of both him individually and for the nation of Israel overall
 - God will defend Jacob as He has been doing all along
 - And God will forever honor His covenant with Abraham's descendants, defending and upholding the nation of Israel
 - Remember when Abram saw his name changed to Abraham?

- It happened in Chapter 17 when Abram took the sign of the covenant, circumcision
- His new name incorporated a part of God's name, signifying he was now bound to God by God's promises
- Now we see God doing the same for Jacob
 - Jacob has turned to the Lord and begged for God's mercy and blessing
- And with Jacob's turning to God, God confirms his covenant with Jacob
 - First, God gives Jacob a reminder in his physical body, in the form of a limp caused by the hip injury
 - Secondly, God changes Jacob's name to include reference to God
- Jacob finally asks for the identity of the One blessing him

Gen. 32:29 Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

Gen. 32:30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

Gen. 32:31 Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh.

Gen. 32:32 Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

- God answers Jacob by asking why Jacob needed to ask his name
 - God's point was that Jacob already knows the answer
 - Jacob's request for a blessing proved he knew this man had a supernatural origin
 - Others in scripture have had similar encounters with the angel of the Lord and received similar responses
 - Men who encounter God know
- Sure enough, Jacob knew this was God, for he names the place Peniel, which literally means the face of God
 - Jacob explains this was a place he met God face to face
 - Though Jacob didn't literally see God's face, for if he had seen God in that way, he would have died according to scripture
 - But Jacob did have an encounter with God in a special way
 - And Jacob will never be the same Jacob again
- In fact, this change of names will begin a new pattern in the record of Genesis
 - At times, Moses will continue to refer to Jacob as Jacob, while at other times Moses will use his new name, Israel

- Those times when Moses uses the name Jacob will indicate moments when Jacob is reverting to his old nature, living in his flesh
- And those times when Moses uses the name Israel, it's a sign that he is walking with the Lord in his new nature
- Finally, Jacob limps away to his encounter with Esau
 - Moses mentions a Jewish tradition of not eating the ligaments of the hip, though this tradition has disappeared from Jewish practice

- It's a new dawn for Jacob
 - He's encountered the Lord in a powerful way
 - Hand-to-hand combat between the Angel of the Lord and Jacob
 - Not a test of strength...a test of wills, one in which the Lord was determined to show Jacob the folly of striving against God
 - After an entire night of struggle, the Lord struck Jacob with a supernaturally strong blow, placing his hip out of joint
 - And Jacob got the point
 - Jacob demanded a blessing, and a blessing was exactly what the Lord had planned in the first place
 - So now Jacob, or Israel, as the Lord called him, is ready to move forward with a new understanding of what it means to be in covenant with the living God
 - There is still the issue of Esau
 - Esau's arrival has been the event propelling Jacob's fear
 - In fact, fear of Esau created the opportunity for the Lord to pressure Jacob into the moment of blessing
 - Is yet another example of the Lord turning all things to good for His elect, including turning Jacob's struggle with Esau into a cause for discipling Jacob
 - So now Jacob moves toward the meeting with his brother
 - And as we read last week, the journey continued appropriately enough as dawn breaks

Gen. 32:31 Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh.

- A new Jacob greets a new day
- But the new Jacob will still do battle from time to time with the old Jacob, as we'll soon see

Gen. 33:1 Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids.

Gen. 33:2 He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

Gen. 33:3 But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

- As Jacob crossed the river to join his family, Esau arrives

- As promised, Esau is accompanied with 400 men
 - The news that Esau was bringing such a large contingent triggered Jacob's worries in the first place
 - So as Jacob sees this large force approach, he's still not sure what will happen
- Earlier, Jacob divided his family in an attempt to save at least some of them from Esau's attack
 - Now we learn how that division was done
 - Jacob placed the two concubines in the foremost part of his family, Bilhah and Zilpah
 - Together with the maids, he included their children
 - Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher
 - Next he placed Leah and her children
 - Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun
 - Finally, Jacob placed Rachel and Joseph at the back
- Do Jacob's actions leave any doubt concerning his feelings toward his family members?
 - Clearly he placed the most expendable members of his family in the front ranks
 - And he placed the most valuable members of his family in the rear ranks
 - Rachel has always been the wife he loved
 - And now we see that Joseph is the favored son, though he was the youngest
- Don't you think the rest of Jacob's family got the point as well?
 - As they walked toward an uncertain encounter with Jacob's estranged brother, they look around and take note of where Jacob has positioned everyone
 - The handmaids see that they will be first to die should a battle ensue
 - Leah can see that she is clearly less valuable to Jacob than Rachel
 - And likewise, her children count for less
 - Finally, all eleven sons must have been keenly aware of where their father's affections centered
 - By custom the youngest son would have been the least worthy of honor
 - But Jacob has placed the younger in highest regard
 - These distinctions sow seeds for tremendous jealousy and hatred within Jacob's family
 - And the irony is that Jacob himself was the unfavored child though God had directed Isaac to grant Jacob preference
 - Now Jacob seems to be repeating that mistake
 - The ramifications of this behavior will be a serious rift in Jacob's sons
 - And the effect will nearly crush Jacob himself

- Remember last week I noted that Jacob's new name comes and goes in the narrative of Genesis
 - Unlike Abram, who never used his old name again, Jacob's old name is still commonly used in the story
 - Occasionally, we hear Moses uses Jacob's new name of Israel
 - When he does, it's an indication of Jacob walking with the Lord in some way
 - But for the most part, we continue to call him Jacob
 - And the use of that name suggests the old nature of the man is still at work in his life
- As Esau and Jacob meet, he bows seven times to meet Esau
 - Once again, Jacob is suggesting that he and Esau have assumed roles opposite those prescribed by Isaac's blessing
 - Jacob is bowing to Esau as if Esau were the patriarch
 - But Jacob was granted that role and can't give it back
 - Jacob is still relying on deception, in a subtle way
 - He is using the deception of flattery
 - He is granting Esau a title and privilege that isn't accurate in an attempt to win his favor
 - That's what flattery is...dishonesty
 - Christopher James Gilbert said:

I cannot encourage any fabrication even for the sake of making people feel good. If I were to fabricate consciously and knowingly, I would not only be ordaining myself their enemy, but also ordaining myself God's enemy.

- Jacob is using false, flattering words to curry favor with Esau
 - Jacob's trust and dependence upon the Lord is still weak, and in stressful moments, Jacob can't seem to help relying on the old tactics of deception and dishonesty

Gen. 33:4 Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Gen. 33:5 He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

Gen. 33:6 Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down.

Gen. 33:7 Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down.

- Now we reach the moment that the narrative has been leading us to for nearly two chapters
 - Esau finally sees Jacob bowing on the ground, and he runs to Jacob, embracing him and kissing him
 - The two men weep together, probably for very different reasons
 - Esau seems sincerely happy to see Jacob again after 20 years apart
 - Whatever animosity existed earlier has long since been forgotten
 - His tears are tears of joy and happiness
 - Jacob, on the other hand, is probably shocked and a bit mystified over his brother's reaction
 - He assumed he was moments away from death by the sword, and now his enemy is hugging him and kissing him
 - I suspect Jacob's tears are tears of relief and thankfulness
 - The question for us to answer is what does Jacob learn from Esau's response
 - Does Jacob credit his own tactics or God's blessing?
 - Remember, Jacob sent a caravan of animals and servants ahead of him to greet Esau as he arrived
 - This lavish gift was intended to buy peace with Esau
 - Was that the cause of Esau's friendly arrival?
 - Or was this entire outcome God's doing?
 - Before we get the answer, there is the matter of introductions
 - Esau asks who are all these people with Jacob?
 - By the question, it's apparent that Esau didn't expect Jacob to return married, much less with a complete entourage following him
 - Jacob tells him these are the family God has graciously given Jacob
 - There's an answer that reflects the heart of someone who knows the Lord is working in his life
 - So one by one, Jacob's family meets Esau
 - But notice what each does
 - Each wife and child bows down before Esau
 - The act of bowing was an acknowledgment of authority
 - And since Jacob had bowed to Esau, the family of Jacob was obligated to do the same
 - No one in Jacob's household held more stature than Jacob himself, so if Jacob bowed, all must bow
 - Here again we have a problem in Jacob's approach to Esau
 - According to God, Jacob is the superior and should have been the one receiving Esau's patronage

- And in eternal terms, the Edomites will be servants of Israel, not the other way around
- Now Esau raises the question of Jacob's gift

Gen. 33:8 And he said, "What do you mean by all this company which I have met?"
And he said, "To find favor in the sight of my lord."

Gen. 33:9 But Esau said, "I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own."

Gen. 33:10 Jacob said, "No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably.

Gen. 33:11 "Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty." Thus he urged him and he took it.

- Esau asks a rather humorous question
 - What did you mean by sending all that company to meet me?
 - Esau, we now learn, didn't know what to make of the odd greeting Jacob prepared
 - Instead of appeasing Esau and winning him over, the gifts simply confused Esau
 - Esau never imagined they were gifts, since he had no reason to expect such a gift
 - From Esau's perspective, they were brothers, not enemies
 - Jacob had only succeeded in outsmarting himself
 - He thought he was making a sacrifice to reconcile himself with an enemy
 - In the end, his sacrifice wasn't even accepted as such
 - It was pointless and did nothing to gain an advantage for Jacob
 - Clearly, we now see that Jacob's tricks amounted to nothing in protecting him and his family
 - God had already addressed the issue in Esau's heart
 - Before Jacob's schemes and plans, God had already put a plan in place to heal the wound and make Jacob's worthless gesture unnecessary
- In the relationship between Jacob and Esau, we can draw a comparison to the Gospel, and the reconciliation God has prepared for us through Christ on the cross
 - Like Jacob, we were once enemies with God Himself, made such by our sin nature
 - In our conscience, we had an instinctive appreciation for a coming judgment day, a day of reckoning when God would settle our debt
 - And since we were enemies of God by our sin against Him, we had little hope of

surviving that encounter

- As a result, many people thought to make preparations to appease God's wrath and earn his favor when they face judgment
 - We may have begun to perform works of one kind or another in the hope God would accept our gifts of sacrifice
 - Those sacrifices were the best we could offer, since we couldn't go back and erase the past
 - Perhaps those gifts came in the form of religious service or personal sacrifice or good works
- But just like Jacob, those gifts were useless
 - Because God has already solved the problem
 - He gave His only Son as a sacrifice in our place
 - And having offered that perfect solution, God will accept nothing less in payment for our sin
 - Like Esau, God declines our offer and tells us it was unhelpful
 - In fact, our gifts of service and sacrifice were of no value
 - If our relationship with God is to be repaired, it can only come from God's sacrifice on our behalf
- So here's Jacob hearing that his gift did nothing for Esau, nevertheless Jacob insists that Esau accept it anyway
 - What's Jacob's purpose in pursuing the gift at this point?
 - If it didn't serve a purpose in appeasing Esau, then what good does it do to give it?
 - In fact, Esau says he has "plenty"
 - The word in Hebrew for plenty is *rab*, which means an abundance or enough
 - Esau is at least as rich as Jacob at this point
 - These gifts aren't increasing Esau's wealth
 - Jacob gives his reason in vs.10-11
 - First, Jacob says he sees the face of God in Esau's welcome
 - Only the night before, Jacob had seen God's face in the form of the Angel of the Lord
 - And that encounter had delivered to Jacob the realization that he had been fighting against God, instead of letting God fight for Jacob
 - Now Jacob sees the Lord's face, so to speak, in the way Esau welcomed Jacob
 - Secondly, Jacob says that God has dealt graciously with Jacob
 - Jacob knows that he has offended God in many ways and many situations

- Despite all Jacob's flaws and offenses, God has remained faithful, protecting and blessing Jacob
 - This is the definition of grace: unmerited favor
- Finally, Jacob says he has plenty as well
 - The Hebrew word for plenty here is different than the earlier one
 - This word is *kol*, and it means all things
 - Jacob feels he has everything, so that even the loss of this gift means nothing to him
 - In practical terms, Jacob meant that he had received the land of Canaan and a full household and continual supply from the Lord
- So Esau takes the gift at the insistence of Jacob
 - Here we see the new Jacob shining through
 - Where before he wanted to give a gift to solve his own problem, now he wants to give a gift in honor of the Lord's work on his behalf
 - Same gift, but very different purpose and a different heart in the giver
- Once again, this relationship gives us a picture of our response to God's work in the Gospel
 - Once we have recognized the work of God on our behalf, our entire attitude toward our gifts change
 - Where before we might have been inclined to give God gifts of service or sacrifice hoping to appease his anger, now we give out of a new heart
 - We give our gifts and sacrifices in thank, recognizing that we too have witnessed God in our life
 - We've come to know God in the face of Christ
 - We've watched the Lord give us grace
 - And we've come to understand the depth of our riches in Christ, the eternal inheritance that awaits
 - And knowing all these things, we freely and joyfully give back whatever we can in gratitude for God's work
 - This is the heart of Jacob with Esau
- But having made peace with Esau, Jacob also recognizes that they are on different paths with different futures

Gen. 33:12 Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you."

Gen. 33:13 But he said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die.

Gen. 33:14 "Please let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will proceed at my

leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir.”

Gen. 33:15 Esau said, “Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.”

Gen. 33:16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

- Esau is so happy about the reunion that he assumes Jacob will bring his family to live with him in Seir
 - Seir is the mountainous region of Edom, the land where Esau’s descendants settled outside Canaan
 - Jacob knows that God has promised him a different land
 - And like his father before him, Jacob intends to wait for that inheritance
 - So Jacob has no interest in going to Seir
 - Instead of addressing the issue directly, Jacob decides not to spoil the moment
 - He uses the excuse of a tired family as his reason for not following
 - Interestingly, Jacob still gives the impression he would follow Esau, albeit more slowly
 - At that point, Esau offers to leave men behind to escort Jacob back to Esau’s land
 - Jacob, again, politely declines the offer
 - We have to read between the lines a little to know what’s truly happening, but it would have been clear to Esau
 - Esau understands that Jacob isn’t coming to Seir
 - Jacob’s excuse is the thinnest of reasons not to follow
 - And when Esau offers to at least leave some men to guide Jacob, it was a test of Jacob’s sincerity
 - Jacob’s refusal told Esau clearly that Jacob had no interest in going to Seir
 - By declining in this polite way, Jacob avoided offending Esau
 - And so Jacob moves westward while Esau returns south to Edom

Gen. 33:17 Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the place is named Succoth.

Gen. 33:18 Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city.

Gen. 33:19 He bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money.

Gen. 33:20 Then he erected there an altar and called it El-elohe-israel.

- Jacob first camps in Succoth, a place just east of the Jordan
 - He stays there long enough to build a home and tents for the animals
 - This was probably 1-2 years
 - We're not sure why he decides to stay there for that long, but it gains the name Succoth (which means tents or booths)
 - Later he moves into the land to Shechem, the place his forefathers have frequented
 - But notice again he doesn't move into the city
 - Like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob remains a wanderer, proof that he knew and accepted God's promise of a future inheritance in the land
 - In fact, Jacob buys a small plot of land to accommodate his family
 - The fact that Jacob buys land in the place that God has already told Jacob He would give him proves that Jacob understood that grant would come in a later time
 - Specifically, it shows that Jacob looked forward to an eternal inheritance in the land
 - And on that land he set up an altar called El-elohe-Israel
 - Meaning the mighty God of Israel
 - How Jacob must have rejoiced to be back in the land, safe
 - But Jacob's story has only finished Act I...

- Jacob has returned to the land and settled near Shechem, a place his father and grandfather often occupied
 - The first act in the story of his life revolved around his relationship with his brother Esau
 - It began with the conflict over the birthright and Jacob's deception of his father and brother, leading to a division in the family
 - God used Jacob's sin to divide the two brothers, so that the child of the seed promise and the child of flesh would be separated
 - Just as God did between Isaac and Ishmael
 - Then it became a story of Jacob's struggle outside the land, which was the consequence for his sin
 - During that struggle he gains wives and children
 - And he contends with Laban
 - Finally, the story ended with a reconciliation of sorts with Esau
 - They depart on good terms, so that the threat of Esau against Jacob no longer exists
 - Thus allowing Jacob to reenter the land
 - Through this first act, the key messages were that God was patient and faithful while working to grow Jacob's faith and dependence on the Lord
 - Meanwhile, Jacob was self-centered and deceptive
 - Leading God to wrestle with Jacob to bring him a new understanding of God's power and authority in his life
- With the first act coming to conclusion and Jacob settled in the land again, the next part of his life story begins
 - This second part still centers on Jacob's weaknesses, but the focus in the story shifts slightly
 - Instead of learning about Jacob's failings, now we begin to understand the consequences of Jacob's sin
 - In particular, we come to understand that his sins of deception, impatience, and self-centeredness have combined to yield a family of sons who share his weaknesses
 - So that the consequences of Jacob's sin begin to play out in the sin of his children
 - Reminding us that sometimes the consequences for sin wait many years to blossom

Gen. 34:1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.

Gen. 34:2 When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.

Gen. 34:3 He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her.

Gen. 34:4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this young girl for a wife.”

- But in Genesis 30:21 we learned that one of the children born to Leah was a daughter Dinah
 - In the Bible, women rarely receive mention in the genealogies of the Bible
 - This pattern does not mean women are valued less to God
 - It merely reflects the Biblical and cultural emphasis on men determining family identities
 - The story of Genesis, and the Bible as a whole, is a story ultimately about the Messiah
 - About where and when He comes to save us from sin
 - And the line of Messiah is traced through the seed of men, according to Scripture
 - Though it ultimately ends with the seed of woman - a virgin birth
 - Therefore, it serves little purpose for the writers of scripture to note all the women born along this path to Messiah unless they play a role in determining the line of the Messiah
 - Like Ruth
 - So the mention of Dinah in Genesis 30 was an early indication that she would play a role in determining the line of the Messiah, and she does
 - Genesis 34 tells us how Dinah made that contribution
- In v.1 we're told that Dinah went to visit the daughters of the land
 - The land is Canaan, of course, and the occupants of the land are the ungodly Canaanite people
 - Jacob, like his fathers before him, had chosen to settle outside the cities of Canaan because he understood that he was to remain apart from these cursed people
 - Jacob was looking into the future in faith for the inheritance God promised him
 - But he has not been effective in teaching that viewpoint among his children
 - Here we see evidence of that weakness
 - Dinah goes out to make friends with the daughters of the land
 - She is a young girl, probably 14-16 yrs, seeking friendship with the locals living in the nearby town of Shechem
 - We haven't heard much about Shechem up to this point, except in Genesis 12 when we learned how Abraham first came into the land

- At that time we learned that Shechem was a place of the Canaanites
 - The Canaanites were a dreadfully sinful and wicked people
 - They were idolators, of course, who practiced child sacrifice, ritual prostitution and sodomy
 - They showed little regard for human life and virtue
- Clearly, this is the kind of culture that Jacob should have warned his children to avoid at all costs, especially since God had declared they were cursed and were to be displaced by Abraham's descendants
 - Instead Dinah tries to make friends with them
 - One of the sons of the king of Shechem takes notice of Dinah
 - He takes her by force and rapes her
 - There were few offenses in the ancient east more egregious than rape
 - It defiled the woman, stole her honor and brought shame to her family
 - Rape was punishable by death in virtually every culture until the past century
 - After raping the girl, the prince of Shechem keeps Dinah prisoner in his home for a time
 - He becomes attracted to her and begins to desire her as his wife
 - Perhaps his first interest in her was merely as a sexual conquest
 - But now he wants her
 - Since the prince couldn't keep her forever, he decides he can make her a legitimate wife
 - This is the kind of hubris common to rich and powerful people
 - When someone has unchecked power, sinful flesh has no natural constraints
 - In one moment, the prince could commit a terrible crime against this woman and her family
 - And the next moment, he assumes he can cause this family to bow to his will and consent to a wedding
 - Remember this, should you ever wish for great power or wealth
 - Should God chose to grant your desire, it might be a sign that God wishes to curse you rather than bless you
- Now word reaches Jacob

Gen. 34:5 Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.

Gen. 34:6 Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.

Gen. 34:7 Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

- Jacob hears about the prince and his daughter
 - Jacob hears she had been defiled
 - The word for defiled is “unclean” indicating that Dinah was no longer suitable for marriage
 - At the time Jacob hears this, his sons were in the field
 - Jacob stays silent initially
 - By “silent” the Bible means he made no decision concerning how to respond
 - He wanted to have the counsel of his sons, which would have been customary
 - We remember already we've seen brothers negotiating marriage arrangements for sisters
 - The king of Shechem has come to Jacob to negotiate for the marriage of the prince with Dinah
 - Meanwhile, the brothers hear of their sister's plight, and they rush in from the field
 - The brothers are incensed over their sister's treatment
 - They declare this is a disgraceful thing in Israel
 - This is the first time in the Bible that the family of Jacob is collectively called Israel
 - The family has taken on a national identity under the new name of their father
 - The national identity is partly the reason for their strong reaction
 - It was bad enough that their sister was defiled
 - But the action is an act of war
- Canaan was populated by city states
 - Each settlement was its own power, ruled by a king
 - We've already seen the king of Gerar
 - Now we see the king of Shechem
 - Israel was a nomadic group of people living among the city states
 - Israel was large and powerful, probably as powerful as many city states themselves
 - In that regard, Jacob would have been considered a king of his family
 - Therefore, the actions of the prince amounted to an act of war of one city state

against another

- So the brothers are intent on defending their sister's honor and in defending the family name of Israel
- To do otherwise would be a sign of weakness and a risk of greater conflict

Gen. 34:8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage.

Gen. 34:9 "Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves.

Gen. 34:10 "Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it."

Gen. 34:11 Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me.

Gen. 34:12 "Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage."

- Hamor approaches the marriage negotiation as if there was nothing amiss
 - He says my son wants to marry your daughter
 - In fact, let's intermarry in general
 - He proposes that the two cultures should become one
 - Why does the king make this offer?
 - Besides trying to win Dinah for his son, the king see economic advantage to this deal
 - Jacob's family wealth would be a great boost to the city's stature and power
 - Obviously this arrangement would be a serious departure from God's plan for Israel
 - The land will one day belong to Israel, but they were not to obtain it through compromise with the cursed Canaanites
 - Instead, Israel was to remain a separate people wandering in the land until God gave them an inheritance
 - There is simply no way Jacob could consider this offer
 - Notice Hamor doesn't directly acknowledge the rape or his son's defiling of Dinah
 - But in a tacit admission of guilt, he offers unusually generous terms
 - First, he waives the right for a dowry that usually accompanied with the bride
 - You see that in the first half of v.12
 - The English reads incorrectly in my version
 - It should read "ask me never so much..."

- It means he wouldn't ask for a dowry
 - Secondly, Hamor offers to pay whatever bride price Jacob wanted
 - Name your price, he says
- While these terms sound good, in reality they are increasing Dinah's shame
 - By not following the normal process of expecting a dowry and negotiating in earnest to obtain a bride price, he is treating her like a prostitute
 - He is diminishing her even further
- So now Jacob faces a decision of how to respond to this situation
 - On the one hand, he has an opportunity to put the episode behind him through compromise
 - He could name a high price for Dinah, which would have helped restore some sense of honor to his daughter
 - The higher the bride price, the greater the honor for the bride
 - Still, no price can erase the shame suffered by the family
 - Plus he would have had a serious increase in wealth
 - And if Jacob agrees, he would gain access to the city's wealth and the opportunity to own land and settle down in the region
 - On the other hand, a Canaanite nation has committed a terrible act against his family
 - His daughter has been shamed and expects her family to come to her defense
 - Secondly, they want to go a step further and corrupt the entire family by intermarriage
 - But if Jacob takes up arms against the king, he risks his entire family being wiped out
 - Plus, any conflict would put his peaceful existence in the land at risk
- As was customary, Jacob leaves it to his sons to take the lead in the negotiations

Gen. 34:13 But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

Gen. 34:14 They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us.

Gen. 34:15 "Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised,

Gen. 34:16 then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.

Gen. 34:17 "But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

- In v.13, Moses tells us that Jacob's sons intended to deceive Hamor and revenge their sister's treatment
 - While their desire to defend their sister and the family honor is justified, everything they do after this point is wrong
 - Notice where it begins...they deceive
 - This is the Jacob family tradition
 - You can bet these sons live and think much like their father
 - And Jacob's penchant for relying on deception to solve his problems is reflected in his boys' thinking
 - In fact, it's likely that Jacob himself doesn't even realize that they intend to deceive Hamor
 - This itself tells us something about Jacob
 - He appears satisfied with the possibility of his sons marrying Dinah off to this family
 - It's a sad commentary on Jacob that he is willing to overlook his daughter in this time of need
 - And he was willing to stand by and permit such a serious compromise with the local Canaanites
 - Jacob has raised a family that is marked by his own nature and weakness of character
 - The most common lie our sin feeds us is either that no one will get hurt or at worst, it only hurts us
 - The reality is that sin often has far-reaching and long-lasting consequences
 - We are too limited in our ability to see the power of sin so we underestimate it's power in our life and in others'
 - Jacob could never have imagined how his tendency to deceive would become an influence on how his sons think
- It's appropriate that this chapter makes absolutely no mention of God, one of the few in Genesis without such a reference
 - Clearly, God's presence is simply not a factor in this family's decision-making
 - The Lord has promised to bless and keep this family
 - He has assured Jacob of an inheritance
 - He has shown Himself ready and willing to protect Jacob in the face of greater enemies
 - Yet neither Jacob nor his sons give even a moment's thought to the Lord
 - Yet God is certainly present in this story, despite the family's unwillingness to acknowledge His presence
 - God is working to turn the sin of this family to good for His purpose, in keeping with His covenants

- As a result of this deception, God will bring judgment against those who pursue justice beyond what was proper
 - Meanwhile, He will vindicate Dinah's honor and bring about her freedom
 - And the Lord will use these circumstances to ensure Jacob's protection for the rest of his life in Canaan
- Once again the Lord will remain faithful despite Israel's shameless faithfulness and the sin of the family
 - How often do you think the nation of Israel took encouragement in reading these accounts knowing their collective unfaithfulness?
 - If God could take Jacob and his family and still make a nation out of their sinfulness, then certainly God would remain faithful against later periods of Israel's sin
- We can say much the same thing about our life in faith with Christ
 - We aren't perfect either
 - Some of us are better than Jacob but some are worse
 - Just as Chapter 34 is absent God, we have periods of life that is absent God
 - He's not found in our thoughts or actions
 - He fades into the background as our flesh takes center stage
 - Still, God doesn't disappear and He continues to work things to good for those who love Him
 - But in the meantime, remember that sin has a long reach
 - It taints our future as much as it stains our past
 - Our children will mirror our weaknesses
 - Our daily choices to sin will eventually accumulate a wealth of consequences we can't even anticipate
 - Consequences to our health, our emotional well-being
 - Our reputation, our relationships
 - God will remain faithful to His promises for our eternal destiny
 - But turning things to good doesn't mean taking away consequences to sin
 - The best way for us to avoid the consequences of our sin is simply to turn from that sin in the first place

- Jacob's children are grown and living with their father in the land of Canaan
 - They are parties to a covenant with the living God, a covenant which promises they will inherit this land
 - When Israel leaves the land of Egypt and enters the promise land under Joshua, the nation will experience a degree of ownership in the land
 - But even that moment isn't the complete fulfillment of the Lord's promises, which await for the Kingdom's arrival upon the Second Coming of Christ
 - So in the meantime, the Lord is working to build a nation
 - To fulfill their purpose in God's eternal plan, the nation that comes from Jacob must remain separate from the world around them
 - They cannot lose the distinction God created by separating Abraham from his people
 - The seed promise of the Messiah will find its fulfillment in the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - But the family of Jacob are as sinful as any other family on earth
 - And should they be left to their own instincts, there would be no hope for this family to fulfill their mission
 - Making matters worse, Jacob is a flawed patriarch, incapable it seems of conquering his deceptive character
 - And those character flaws have trickled down to his sons
- So the story of Jacob includes moments like the one we're studying in Chapter 34
 - Low points in the family's history where their sin erupts into a crisis that threatens to undo God's work, by bringing an end to the family God requires for His divine mission
 - We're going to see a total of three such crises in Jacob's family history
 - One occurs here in Chapter 34, another in Chapter 37 and the third in Chapter 38
 - Each of these crises follows a similar pattern
 - Jacob's sons acting in sin make foolish and destructive choices that place the future of the family at risk
 - Then Jacob is an absentee father, taking no meaningful action to correct his sons' behavior
 - But the Lord steps in to turn the circumstances to good thereby maintaining the integrity and sanctity of Jacob's family and ensuring His eternal purposes are met
 - All of these situations are important because they have an impact on the inheritance and the seed promise of the covenant
- Today we finish the first of those three crises
 - In the first half of Genesis 34 the daughter of Jacob has ventured into the local Canaanite culture in Shechem seeking friendship

- Her poor judgment led to an opportunity for evil to take advantage of her
- She was raped, kidnapped and now her captors are negotiating to keep her
- Jacob allows his sons to conduct the negotiation
 - But the terms offered to the sons would result in an even greater tragedy for Jacob: intermarriage with the condemned world
 - While Jacob seems not to object at all, the sons say they will intermarry but only after the men of Shechem agree to be circumcised
 - But this was just a deception on their part

Gen. 34:15 “Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised,

Gen. 34:16 then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.

Gen. 34:17 “But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go.”

Gen. 34:18 Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor’s son.

Gen. 34:19 The young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father.

Gen. 34:20 So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying,

Gen. 34:21 “These men are friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them.

Gen. 34:22 “Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised.

Gen. 34:23 “Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us.”

Gen. 34:24 All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

- (Jacob’s) sons’ deception is working
 - The city leaders say the words seemed reasonable
 - They return to the city, and Shechem is more than eager to submit to the procedure
 - And we’re told he was the most respected member of his father’s household
 - So the city was inclined to listen to his counsel

- When the father and son stand in the city gate, they are holding an official meeting, soliciting the men to agree to this covenant with Jacob's family
 - The prince lists three advantages to this covenant
 - Jacob's family is friendly with the city
 - They will have opportunity to marry the daughters of Jacob's family
 - And they will gain control of their livestock and property
 - The only condition for the men would be circumcision
 - This was no small concession
 - In an age without anaesthetics or the sharpest of knives, the procedure would be very painful, both in the moment and over the course of several days
 - Still it was a short term sacrifice for a long term benefit
- If we take a closer look at Shechem's arguments in favor of the relationship, we'll find a pattern that God's people encounter regularly
 - First, the opportunity for a relationship rests with the family of Jacob
 - They were showing a willingness to be "friendly" with the Canaanites
 - This word is *shalem*, which means devoted or complete
 - Only after God's people suggested a willingness to be devoted to the city and to become complete with them could the rest follow
 - Secondly, the men sought to intermarry so they could absorb the family of Jacob into the Canaanite culture
 - The added population would strengthen the city within the land
 - Remember, the family of Jacob was roughly equal in size and power as the city of Shechem
 - Yet no one is suggesting that Jacob would absorb Shechem
 - Instead, the family of Jacob will become part of the city
 - Finally, the end result for the world was earthly gain
 - They would benefit materially through the relationship
 - Meanwhile Jacob would have lost a far greater eternal reward
- Hamor and Shechem's statements perfectly summarize how God's children suffer when they compromise with the world
 - First, it begins when we make the choice to make friends with the world
 - And we're not talking about merely being neighborly,
 - We're talking about becoming devoted and committed to living our lives according to the world's rules, expectations and values
 - The world remains forever willing to accept us into their way of life
 - The choice is ours, not theirs

- And Scripture teaches us not to unite with the world, but rather we are to remain separate and distinct

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2Cor. 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

**“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

2Cor. 6:17 “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

**“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will welcome you.**

- Secondly, if we make the mistake of such a union, be forewarned: we won’t sanctify the world, the world will absorb us
 - God alone has the power to change hearts, and though He works through relationships to bring about faith, He’s told us not to build relationships that compromise our walk
 - So we’re only fooling ourselves when we establish worldly relationships
 - Those relationships won’t bring spiritual fruit
 - Our sinful compromise can’t create holiness in others, especially when we’re living like they do
 - When our distinction is lost, so is our witness
- Finally, whatever earthly benefits we accrue by these relationships with the world, we stand to lose far more in the eternal
 - Time and time again we’ve all seen believers make this devil’s bargain
 - They seek the approval and acceptance by a falling and ungodly world, and as they win that approval, they forfeit godliness and a sanctified life
 - On judgment day, when everything is made known, their loss will be evident

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- As it turns out in Chapter 34, Israel’s offer to unite with the city was not genuine
 - It was merely a deception, and the deception has worked
 - In v.24 we’re told that the men of the city agree to become circumcised

- The procedure was painful, like any cutting of skin would be
- But given the sensitive location of the body, the pain intensifies for the next several days as the body tries to heal
- At about the third day, the men would have been in great discomfort
 - They would probably be suffering mild fevers from infections
 - They were probably sleep deprived from several nights of little rest
- And this situation was exactly what Jacob's sons expected

Gen. 34:25 Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.

Gen. 34:26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.

Gen. 34:27 Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister.

Gen. 34:28 They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field;

Gen. 34:29 and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses.

- Two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, entered the city on the third day and began to kill every male in the city
 - This was probably somewhere in the range of 50 to 100 men
 - As v.25 says, they had a tactical advantage in the fight because of the pain of the men
 - The pain would have weakened them enough to ensure that Jacob's sons had the advantage in the battle
 - From their own experience in practicing circumcision, they must have known what to expect
 - So their deception has played out exactly as they expected
 - When they reached the King's home, they killed both he and his son who had raped Dinah
 - Then they set their sister free
 - But freeing their sister wasn't enough
 - The sons then began to loot the entire city
 - The looting was payback, we're told, for the rape of Dinah
 - They took all the livestock of the city
 - They took all the children and all the wives of the city

- The people of Shechem became servants of Jacob's family
- The brothers have essentially wiped Shechem off the map
 - The city was essentially gone and all that it contained was now part of Jacob's caravan
 - What caused the two sons to respond in this way?
 - The clue comes in their relationship to Dinah
 - Dinah is the daughter of Jacob and Leah
 - And Simeon and Levi are sons of Leah as well
 - They are the full brothers of Dinah
 - And they know their mother is the unloved woman in Jacob's life
 - Likewise, they remember that as the family met Esau, Jacob had demonstrated that Rachel and Joseph were most valuable
 - While Leah and her children were more expendable
 - To top it off, when Dinah was kidnapped and raped, the best their father could do was agree to negotiate a price for her
 - Jacob gave no effort to defend her honor or his family's honor
 - He made no demands of Hamor
 - And he gave no thought to the covenant God had given him
 - Jacob seemed only concerned about how to avoid confrontation
- It's obvious that years of Jacob's favoritism for Rachel and her son has boiled over into this rage
 - While their actions were wrong, beginning with the deception, we might at least find some sympathy for how they felt
 - Still, they have stepped well beyond what was appropriate and reasonable
 - They have murdered an entire city of men
 - And they have brought an entire city of idolators and pagan worshippers into the family of Jacob
 - While they will be absorbed into the family of Jacob, they will bring trouble
 - Secondly, they have dealt treacherously with a city state in the land
 - Other city states are going to learn of this deception and defeat
 - And when the news gets around, the other city states are likely to take action to defend themselves
 - They might band together to wage war against Jacob
 - At the very least, they won't be willing to trade or work with Jacob
 - Jacob has exactly these concerns

Gen. 34:30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household.”

Gen. 34:31 But they said, “Should he treat our sister as a harlot?”

- Jacob’s first and only concern in the entire matter is how he will be perceived in the land
 - He knows that his sons’ treachery will make his family a pariah from this point forward
 - And this is precisely the good outcome God is at work to establish
 - God has used the sin of Shechem, Simeon and Levi to address the wrongs against Israel and to ensure His plan is met
 - The injustice against Dinah has been paid out, albeit in excessive ways
 - The Lord’s promise to curse those who make themselves enemies of Israel has been kept
 - And God kept it by using the sin of two sons
 - God didn’t author their sin, but He made good use of it
 - Because in addition to avenging Dinah, this action will ensure the nation has strong incentive to remain separate and distinct in the land
 - Furthermore, the extreme nature of the city’s destruction ensures that no other city state will dare attack Jacob’s family
 - They will be a feared people, further ensuring their isolation
- After hearing their father’s protest, the sons respond with indignation
 - They ask if it would be better that their sister be treated as a harlot?
 - It’s important to notice they call Dinah “our sister” rather than addressing her as Jacob’s daughter
 - They defended her because they knew Jacob wouldn’t
 - These sons are guilty of their sinful actions, but the seeds for their evil fruit were planted by Jacob decades earlier
 - When Jacob was practicing deception, he was teaching his sons to deceive
 - When Jacob was treating his first wife unjustly, he was breeding malice and revenge in his sons’ hearts
 - When Jacob was sidestepping his responsibilities to settle the jealous disputes between his wives, he was teaching his sons that they had to take matters into their own hands
 - When Jacob was fighting against God rather than resting in the Lord’s promises, he taught his sons to live in their flesh rather than relying on God’s power
- So Jacob’s first crisis begins with his children’s desire to make friends with the

Canaanites and it ends with a city destroyed and his family alienated from the Canaanite people

- God turns the crisis to good by ensuring His people remain separate
 - And yet he also holds the two sons accountable for their terrible sin
- You may remember I said last week that the events of this chapter have an impact on the Messiah's arrival, which is why Dinah is recorded in the story of Jacob
 - Simeon and Levi are second and third in line to be the patriarch after Jacob
 - Because of this sin, Jacob will withhold a blessing on them upon his death bed
 - Later, we'll see Reuben, the first born, will also sin against his father and lose his blessing
 - Therefore, because Simeon and Levi were denied an inheritance in the family, they also forfeit the chance to be the family bringing the seed promise of the Messiah
 - That promise will eventually fall to the fourth son in line

- Last week we watched as Jacob experienced a sad and shameful episode in his family
 - His daughter is assaulted by the local prince, and Jacob's family is asked to join the local pagan culture as a way of compromising over the dispute
 - We watched as Jacob's life-long struggle to demonstrate moral leadership within his family has caught up with him, in the actions of his sons
 - Sons who, out of revenge, deceive, murder, plunder and enslave the local people
 - And in the end, all Jacob can think about is his own misfortune at being made a pariah among the local tribes
- Remember, at the beginning of Chapter 34 we learned that Jacob had put down roots here in Shechem
 - Shechem was to be his home, Jacob was done wandering, he hoped
 - Now his sons' actions put him in danger again
 - And the newly taken slave families bring with them the sinful pagan influences of their culture
 - Now in Chapter 35, Jacob begins the chapter fleeing for safety according to God's word
 - The chapter continues with God confirming his covenant and ends with Him fulfilling His promises

Gen. 35:1 Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.”

Gen. 35:2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments;

Gen. 35:3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.”

Gen. 35:4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.

Gen. 35:5 As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

- This is the fourth appearance of the Lord to Jacob
 - Jacob is commanded to leave Shechem for Bethel, to build an altar in Bethel, and to make Bethel his home for a time
 - Notice God says to dwell in Bethel
 - Jacob had made Shechem a place of dwelling, but God wants Jacob to move

away from the now empty town

- Perhaps God wanted to remove Jacob's family from the temptation of settling into the city, since it was now vacant
 - In fact, we have evidence that Jacob had intended to make the land around Shechem his permanent place in the land
 - At the end of Chapter 33, Jacob spent 100 pieces of money to buy the land he occupied
 - And he has now lived in Shechem for 10 years since returning from Haran
- This was a degree of investment in the land that exceeded anything his forefathers had done
- According to the promise God gave Abraham, He intended Jacob's family to wander in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt for 400 years
 - He didn't want them to put down roots and blend into the local culture
 - So now Jacob's circumstances have made it impossible for his family to remain in one place for long
 - They are pariahs in the land of Canaan
 - They must remain separate from everyone, since they carry a reputation of the massacre in Shechem
- I wonder what he would have done in response to God's command to leave if he weren't so hated by the local population?
 - Would he have obeyed a command to leave in a situation where everything was perfect?
 - God is more than willing to make our circumstances uncomfortable to the point we feel forced to make a change
 - God wants us forever moving in this world, whether physically or spiritually or both
 - So we won't try to put roots down into a world where we can't find common ground
- Speaking personally, my own moves or changes in location have usually been preceded by circumstances that made staying unattractive
 - When God wants our obedience, He often stacks the deck of our life circumstances in His favor
 - When we encounter that stacked deck and ignore the obvious trying to beat the odds, so to speak, then the time we spend in denial will only make the inevitable adjustment all the more painful
 - Even more remarkable is God's ability to work through Jacob's own mistakes to produce God's desired outcome
 - The need to move was prompted by the sins of Jacob and his sons
 - God wasn't the author of that sin, but it plays directly into God's purpose by serving as the fulcrum to dislodge Jacob from his comfort in the land

- The more we study God in the scripture the more amazing are His ways, His ability to ensure His purposes are met
 - In particular, I'm continually amazed at God's ability to turn our sins into vehicles by which He drives us into obedience
 - Doesn't it warm your heart and bring awe to your mind to know you serve a God who can make so many details in life – even the regrettable ones produced by our own hands – lead to His glory?
- As Jacob departs Shechem, he tells his household to dispose of all idols and to purify and change garments
 - Remember as Jacob's family absorbed the women and children of Shechem, these families brought idol worship with them into Israel
 - These idols must be purged from Israel
 - Moreover, the sons of Israel must also come before the Lord seeking forgiveness for the sin of murder in the city
 - This is why the Lord orders Jacob to build an altar
 - An altar is specifically a place of sacrifice, where sin is acknowledged and blood is spilled to ritually atone for sin
 - God intends Jacob's family to make sacrifices to Him, in seeking to be cleansed for their sins in Shechem
 - Animal sacrifice doesn't actually atone for sin by the ritual
 - Like water baptism, it pictures a spiritual truth that God forgives sin through the application of blood
 - When Jesus provided His own blood as a sacrifice on the cross, He was atoning for all sin
 - This is why today churches should not have altars
 - Altars are a place of sacrifice but now that Jesus has atoned for our sin, no more sacrifice is required
- So Jacob orders his household to purify themselves
 - This command refers to ritual washing, which is an act picturing a repentant heart seeking forgiveness
 - Furthermore, they are to change their garments
 - This declaration is likely happening on the same day, or the day after, the murder in Shechem
 - Their clothes may have still carried bloody marks from the massacre
 - So they needed to be changed
 - God says change your garments as a part of purifying yourself
 - This act also pictures our new walk with Christ having come to repentance and faith
 - Paul tells us to "put on Christ" after we come to faith

- Jacob's family knows God, but it's time they begin to walk in Him
- Not only do the slaves have idols, but it's likely that the sons of Jacob took a few for themselves as well
 - In v.2 we're told Jacob spoke to his household and all that were with him
 - The household refers to his natural born family
 - And those that were with him refers to the foreigners who have joined with them
 - The corrupting influence of the surrounding peoples had already begun to take its toll among Jacob's family
- But Jacob has turned a corner in his own life
 - Though he still has a long way to go, he realizes that he again finds himself in need of God's protection
 - And he knows from experience how God does protect him, even mentioning it in v.3
 - This is a big step for Jacob
 - He is afraid of imminent attack, but rather than make his own scheme, he responds first in obedience and secondly in loyalty
 - This is a good sign
- Interestingly, Jacob hides the pagan gods under a tree
 - Perhaps Jacob wanted to make a point to God and his family that these idols were forever dead to Jacob's family, as pictured through a burial
 - I believe there may have been a more practical reason
 - Perhaps Jacob knew that if he didn't bury them, his family would have secretly returned for them before they departed
 - Jacob has clearly become wiser about the importance of obedience and holiness
 - He will forever contend with sons' disobedience
 - This is a consequence he can't avoid
 - But he seems determined to follow the Lord's commands from here forward
- Finally, we read in v.5 that the Lord was faithful to produce such fear among the peoples that Jacob was protected in his flight

Gen. 35:6 So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.

Gen. 35:7 He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

Gen. 35:8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth.

- Jacob has returned to an important place in the life of his family: Bethel
 - This was the place where Jacob stopped in his flight from Esau
 - He saw the ladder of angels ascending and descending to Heaven at this point
 - He heard the Lord promise to keep him and bless him
 - He learned of the covenant from God for the first time
 - It's been 30 years since Jacob last heard from God here
 - Jacob's first act upon returning is to build the altar God commanded and he names the altar "God of Bethel"
 - And at this moment Jacob's obedience is complete and God's promise is fulfilled
 - Remember that when God appeared to Jacob in Bethel 30 years ago that God promised:

Gen. 28:15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

- And in response Jacob said"

Gen. 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,

Gen. 28:21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.

Gen. 28:22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

- Then when it was time for Jacob to leave Laban's home and return, God appeared to Jacob with this reminder:

Gen. 31:13 'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.'"

- The Lord reminds Jacob that he should return to Bethel where he set up an altar and made his vow
 - In this place, Jacob would see God's faithfulness
 - But until this moment, Jacob has been delaying obedience
 - And because his obedience was delayed, so was God's blessing and fulfillment of His promise

- God's faithfulness was never in doubt, but the timing was connected to Jacob's obedience
 - Ultimately, God pressed Jacob to obey by allowing Jacob's sin to become the motivation for Jacob to complete his journey back to Bethel
- Why did Jacob delay ten years in moving to Bethel?
 - We can only guess, but it seems that the cares and pleasures and concerns of the world intruded, and left Jacob without sufficient cause to seek for God
 - Now Jacob has reason and so he obeys
- I wonder if Jacob could possibly have realized how much time would pass, how much sorrow and grief he would experience, between the time he received the promise and the time he would see it fulfilled
 - God's will will be done, and we will be conformed to God's purposes one way or another
 - We can be conformed the easy way or the hard way
 - The easy way is to listen to the word of God and live according to it
 - The hard way is to pretend God isn't listening and God won't care, until we force Him to act against us
 - For us, the hard way can be really, really hard
 - And as if to emphasize the trials and grief that came to Jacob for his life of disobedience, the family experiences yet another death; Deborah, Rebekah's nurse
 - Remember that Rebekah is Jacob's mother, the one who cared so much for Jacob
 - Deborah is Rebekah's wet nurse, a woman who has produced milk after the birth of one of her own children
 - A wet nurse is a necessity for a woman who had several children by another woman, as Rebekah did through her concubine
 - Deborah is first mentioned by name here, but she was mentioned earlier in Genesis 24
 - In Genesis 24:59 we're told of Rebekah taking her nurse when she leaves her home to join with Isaac
 - She would have lived with Rebekah and Isaac until the death of Rebekah
 - The Bible never tells us when she joined Jacob's household
 - But the mention of Deborah's death at this point in the story is intended to communicate to the reader that Rebekah is no longer alive
 - Rebekah probably died while Jacob was in Haran and Deborah joined him there
 - Having been with Jacob ever since, she now dies at age 180
 - Why is it important for us to see that Rebekah is gone?
 - Because the Lord wants us to recognize that the sin of Jacob's deception impacted everyone, including Rebekah

- She participated in the deception of her husband
- And as a result, she lost her favored son
- And she died before Jacob ever returned to see her
- The sadness of Jacob and his family losing Deborah is reflected in the name of the oak, which means “oak of weeping”
 - I wonder if Jacob’s mourning over Deborah filled the void in his heart for his inability to be with his mother when she died
 - This would be appropriate since Deborah would have been a surrogate for his mother when Jacob nursed
 - So in some ways, Jacob mourns for Deborah like he would have mourned for his mother

Gen. 35:9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him.

Gen. 35:10 God said to him,
 “Your name is Jacob;
 You shall no longer be called Jacob,
 But Israel shall be your name.”
 Thus He called him Israel.

Gen. 35:11 God also said to him,
 “I am God Almighty;
 Be fruitful and multiply;
 A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,
 And kings shall come forth from you.

Gen. 35:12 “The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac,
 I will give it to you,
 And I will give the land to your descendants after you.”

Gen. 35:13 Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him.

Gen. 35:14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.

Gen. 35:15 So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.

- God appears for the fifth time in his life and the second time since Jacob has returned to the land
 - God pronounces a blessing upon Jacob
 - And this isn’t just any blessing of course
 - This is THE blessing that was given to Abraham
 - This is the seed promise, the inheritance that God created for Abraham and his descendants

- We know the blessing well by now
 - The changing of a name to indicate Jacob has become part of God's covenant
 - The new name of Israel refers to Jacob's partnership with the Lord
 - And Jacob will bring forth a company of nations
 - And kings will come forth from Jacob
 - Furthermore Jacob's descendants will inherit the land one day
 - But that day will await for the Kingdom of Christ
- The promise as spoken here, is a little different than it's been in past times
 - Jacob is promised a company of nations
 - This is a different promise than the one Abraham received
 - To Abraham, the Lord said he would be a father of many nations
 - This referred to the Arab states that came from Ishmael
 - But Jacob will be a father of a company
 - The Hebrew word for company implies a collection of the same
 - We know this refers to the tribes of Israel
- Ironically, this is the blessing that Jacob has long sought from the Lord
 - This is the blessing Jacob schemed to get from Isaac
 - This is the blessing Jacob demanded of God when he wrestled
 - This is the very thing Jacob has always worked to obtain
 - But in all that we've seen happen, God has never before given the blessing to Jacob
 - This is the first time we've seen God deliver Jacob with the blessing of the seed promise that Jacob so desperately wanted
 - You may be thinking that surely God delivered this promise in one of the four earlier moments when He appeared to Jacob
 - But if we look at each of those earlier moments carefully, we find only promises to bless Jacob in the future
 - When Jacob returned to the land and to Bethel
 - When he obeyed the voice of the Lord
 - Then he would be blessed
 - In all these years since, Jacob has yet to complete every step of obedience
 - Only in this moment has he finally returned to Bethel as required, sacrificed and tithed
 - Notice we see him setting up the pillar
 - And anointing it with oils and a drink offering
 - These are symbols of tithing

- Only now has Jacob completed all that God asked
 - Abraham experienced a similar moment
 - Only after Abraham had obeyed the voice of the Lord when he took Isaac to the mountain for the sacrifice, only then did the Lord deliver the blessing completely
- Blessing follows obedience
 - Relationship is established on the basis of faith in God's promises but the blessing of that relationship await obedience
 - God has the power to compel our obedience and He will use our sin and its consequences, if necessary, to create that outcome
 - But in the wise words of Samuel:

1Sam. 15:22 Samuel said,

“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

- We are nearing the end of the *toledot*, or genealogy, of Isaac
 - We've been focused on Jacob for so long you may have lost track that we've been studying the *toledat* of Isaac
 - Each of the patriarch's families take a turn under the spotlight in Genesis
 - And that spotlight ends when the patriarch dies
 - Isaac's life is about to come to an end, and when it does, our story will shift to the family of Jacob, particularly Judah and Joseph
 - Before we reach the moment of Isaac's death, we have one more tragedy to study
 - Last week we heard of Deborah's death, Rebekah's nurse
 - It provided an opportunity for Jacob to mourn his mother's death by proxy
 - Now we learn of an even more traumatic death for Jacob

Gen. 35:16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor.

Gen. 35:17 When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have another son."

Gen. 35:18 It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

Gen. 35:19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

Gen. 35:20 Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

- Last week Moses told us that Jacob finally received the blessing of the covenant
 - In the Lord's earlier appearance, Jacob had received the Lord's promise to bless him with the inheritance
 - But the Lord had yet to consummate that promise with the blessing itself
 - Now that Jacob has obeyed the Lord's instructions and kept his vow, he receives the blessing of the covenant
 - His obedience was made complete by Jacob's movement to Bethel as God commanded
 - God told Jacob to dwell there last week
 - But apparently the time has come to wander again, because Jacob has set out for Ephrath
- Ephrath is the former name of the town of Bethlehem
 - In v.16 we're told they are still some distance away from Ephrath, when Rachel goes into labor
 - Just the news that Rachel is pregnant is a surprise

- Jacob is likely over 100 years old at this point
- Rachel hasn't been pregnant for 15 years, and we remember that she was the last one to give birth in Jacob's family
- So this pregnancy must have been a big surprise
 - But it was also dangerous for a woman of her age to carry a child
 - And since she was Jacob's favorite, he is no doubt concerned for her on this trip
- We remember that back when she was warring with Leah over the affections of her husband, Rachel declared that she would die if she didn't have a child
 - Those prophetic words are coming back to her now
 - Because as she goes into labor, things begin to go wrong
 - She suffers severe labor we're told
 - Likely the labor caused internal bleeding and she bled to death even shortly after the child was born
 - The text says Rachel could feel her soul departing her body
 - This is a sensation that those who have come close to bleeding to death have reported
- In Rachel's case, there would be no resuscitation
 - As she lays dying, she chooses a name for her son
 - This has been the pattern for all Jacob's sons
 - The women were naming the children and often using the names to make a jab at the other wife
 - We noted then that Jacob would normally name the sons
 - But he seemed disinterested and unable to lead within his family
 - Rachel names her son Ben-oni, which means son of sorrow
 - Rachel knows she is mortally injured
 - How painful it must be for a mother to experience the joy of bringing a son into the world only to know that she wouldn't be there to enjoy him
 - But how comforting for believers to know that such a separation is only temporary
- After Rachel dies, Jacob decides to rename the child
 - This is certainly his prerogative as patriarch
 - What's unusual is that Jacob has never before shown an interest in naming any son
 - But for obvious reasons, Jacob feels a greater attraction to this boy
 - He is the last son born to his favorite wife
 - And any time Jacob sees this son, he will remember the loss of Rachel

- So Jacob names his son Benjamin, which means son of my right hand
 - The right hand position in the eastern culture was considered the highest place of honor
 - In fact, this is still a matter of protocol in the military
 - When two soldiers walk side by side, the highest ranking individual always walks on the right side of any group or column
 - Jacob names Benjamin with a name that tells everyone in the family that he will be a special child in Jacob's heart
- Jacob mourns for Rachel and buries her at the place where she died
 - The text says Rachel was buried on the road to Bethlehem, while they were still a distance away from the town
 - In 1 Samuel 10:2 this location is in the area that later belonged to the tribe of Benjamin
 - This makes sense that the tribe would receive as its inheritance the land in which their father was born
 - In fact, Benjamin is the only son born in the land
 - Later in Jeremiah 31:15, we're told that Rachel was buried near Ramah, which is in Benjamin
 - This location has been lost to us today, though the gravestone was standing in Moses' day and lasted until at least Jeremiah's day
 - That means the stone stood for 1,300 years or more after Rachel died
 - This is a testimony to the kind of grave that Jacob built for his wife
 - Doubtless it was a large grave stone, something capable of standing and being preserved for so long
 - And ever since, men have recognized the importance of giving their wives a big rock, so to speak
 - Today there is a tourist location south of Bethlehem that claims to be the burial place of Rachel
 - This is nothing but folklore
 - Ramah is located north of Bethlehem
 - Another example of how tradition often replaces Biblical truth given enough time and enough Biblical illiteracy
- Now the twelve sons of Israel are alive and the family is complete
 - With the next generation in place, it's time for Moses to address the outstanding question of where the seed promise moves next
 - We know it's been promised to Jacob and the Lord has confirmed that Jacob was to carry the promise forward
 - But with Isaac still alive, that promise has yet to transfer, and that time is almost here

- Once Isaac dies and the *toledat* of his life is complete, the same question will shift to Jacob
 - Who will inherit the seed promise in Jacob's family
 - This is a much more interesting and complicated question
 - In the case of Abraham and Isaac, the question was much simpler
 - There were only two sons, so one was in and one was out
 - But with Jacob, we have twelve sons from two different mothers
 - Remember the children of the slave women were considered to have come from their master
- So how will God decide who receives the Lord's promise?
 - Remember the patriarch's estate included an inheritance of his property and the inheritance of the Lord's seed promise
 - The Lord decided where His promise would go in the family
 - And the son with the birthright also held the privilege of receiving a double portion of the estate and the right to be patriarch in the family
- To help answer that question, Moses records one more short story about the behavior of one of Jacob's sons, Reuben

Gen. 35:21 Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

Gen. 35:22 It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it.
Now there were twelve sons of Jacob —

Gen. 35:23 the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun;

Gen. 35:24 the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin;

Gen. 35:25 and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali;

Gen. 35:26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

Gen. 35:27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.

Gen. 35:28 Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.

Gen. 35:29 Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

- Jacob and his family eventually end up moving to a region just outside the town of Bethlehem
 - Once again, Jacob remains a wanderer in the land, rather than set up a home in the town of Bethlehem

- The tower of Eder refers to a watchtower set up in the wilderness just east of Bethlehem
- These towers were erected to help shepherds watch for thieves moving among their flocks
- The fact that Jacob's location is identified with a tower is evidence that he has remained outside the city of Bethlehem
- While in this place, Reuben, Jacob's first born son, decides to lay with Rachel's maid, Bilhah
 - This is a disturbing comment seemingly inserted without connection to the rest of the story
 - But it has tremendous meaning
 - A man's concubine was neither a wife nor a slave, but somewhere in between
 - While Rachel lived, she was a surrogate mother for a barren wife
 - Now that Rachel was gone, she continued to be considered Jacob's property and had a status of wife, although with diminished importance
 - Bilhah was mother to two of Reuben's younger brothers, Dan and Naphtali
 - It seems unlikely that this was a case of rape or mere lust
 - Bilhah was at least 30 years his senior
 - And the timing of the event, following Rachel's death, suggests he waited until after his mother died to make this move against his father
- In that culture, to take another man's wife was a way of challenging his authority and power
 - It was a form a conquest over him
 - Reuben seems to be contesting his father's control of the family
 - Reuben was over 30 by now and perhaps he was impatient in waiting for the inheritance
 - Perhaps he simply assumed he could do what he pleased since the maid would one day be his
 - Being the first born, Reuben held the birthright, or so he expected
- This relationship constitutes a terrible injustice against Jacob
 - Reuben's action was similar to the prodigal son, taking his inheritance before his father was dead
 - It reminds us of a young Jacob, dishonoring his father in order to obtain a birthright he expected would be his
- The most important part of the entire verse are the words "Israel heard of it."
 - Moses' focus in Genesis is always birthright and the seed promise, and where this promise goes in each generation
 - Notice Moses uses the name "Israel" and not Jacob

- That change in name is always a reference to the godly man, being led by the Spirit
- Here we see the Lord influencing Israel to know of Reuben's actions
- In the last verses of this chapter, we will reach the point of Isaac's death and we face the question of where the birthright goes next
 - We eventually get that answer when Jacob hands out his blessings on his children from his deathbed
 - Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Israel will skip over Reuben for the birthright and the seed promise
 - And we now have the crucial piece of information explaining why Reuben does not receive the birthright
 - Because Reuben dishonors his father
- Finally, as we end Chapter 35, Moses gives us a moment to reflect on the relationship between Isaac and his son Jacob
 - When the two last saw one another, Jacob was deceiving his father in an attempt to gain the blessing God had promised to him
 - While Isaac was choosing to ignore the Lord in trying to place the blessing (and with it the seed promise) on the wrong son
 - Nearly 40 years has passed, and from scripture it seems clear that Jacob has never returned home nor seen his father since that time
 - Now begins to close the chapter of Isaac's life, first by showing the faithfulness of God
 - Moses lists Jacob's family of sons, the nation of Israel, the nation of future kings and nations
 - The nation through which the world would be blessed
 - The fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and now Jacob
 - Secondly, God shows us a reunion of sorts between father and son
 - Jacob arrives in Mamre 12 years before his father dies
 - Mamre is the place that Abraham and Isaac have sojourned or wandered
 - The reason for Jacob's return was in preparation to receive his father's estate upon his father's death
 - This is the fulfillment of the seed promise as given to Jacob and of God's faithfulness to Jacob's vow
 - Jacob left 30 years earlier with only a staff and he returns with a large family, with wealth, and now the promise of God is his
 - And when he left, he made a vow to the Lord asking to be returned safely to his father's house
 - God has now seen this promise to conclusion
- With this final step, Isaac's life story comes to an end

- In a sense, each patriarch exists in the story to connect the dots between the prior patriarch and the next patriarch
 - Once that connection has been made, the story comes to its natural conclusion
- Isaac's story was relatively simple
 - In fact, you can remember Isaac more for how he is connected to his father and son than for anything he did himself
 - Isaac was the son nearly sacrificed by his father, and Isaac was the father deceived by his son
- Jacob's story won't end until his death in Chapter 49, but after his father dies, our attention will shift to his sons – and one son in particular; Joseph
 - The first born of each of Jacob's wives may contend for the birthright and the seed promise
 - The first born of Leah is now Judah, since Reuben, Simeon and Levi have been disqualified
 - The first born of Rachel is Joseph
 - Both play instrumental roles in fulfilling God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 15

- Having reached the end of Isaac's toledot, we reach an interlude with Chapter 36
 - The next toledot we will study will be the toledot of Jacob
 - Specifically, we'll study the story of his children
 - The book of Genesis contains 10 toledots, or genealogies, altogether
 - This chapter gives us the ninth toledot
 - Let's remember that the story of Genesis isn't concerned with telling an interesting story or documenting the lives of interesting people
 - It is a very interesting story and it does revolve around some very interesting people
 - But, Genesis is a story of Man's creation and fall, and God's response to that fall
 - The response of God was to promise a Seed Who would come into the world to save Creation from the fall
 - That Seed is Jesus Christ
 - So in Genesis we're focused on the stories of those who are connected in some way to God's fulfillment of His promise
 - Obviously, the patriarchs are important to the fulfillment of that promise
 - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are men who produce the nation of Israel
 - And Israel will be the people to bring the Messiah into the world
- With Abraham and Isaac, Moses focused on which of two possible heirs received the seed promise
 - In the case of Abraham, Isaac received the promise and in the case of Isaac, Jacob received the promise
 - But in both cases, Moses allotted a chapter to bringing to an end the story of the rejected son
 - Chapter 25 was devoted to Ishmael
 - And this chapter is devoted to Esau
 - After these chapters are complete, neither Ishmael nor Esau appears in Moses' narrative again
 - But the people of Ishmael, that is the Arabs, and the people of Esau, the Edomites, do feature prominently in Israel's history
 - So these chapters help us connect the dots between the events of the patriarch's lives, and later events in the nation
- So Chapter 36 is the generations of Esau
 - As we study the scripture, we are likely tempted to skip over a chapter like Chapter 36
 - That's understandable, since the chapter doesn't contain much of a narrative
 - It reads more like a laundry list
 - This is an opportunity for us to appreciate the difference between reading the Bible

and studying the Bible

- Reading the Bible is “leaning back” activity, and in those times we might skip a genealogy chapter for good reason
- Studying the Bible is “leaning forward” behavior, when we pick up pen and paper (or computer) and dig deep into the word
- Today we’re going to take today to study Chapter 36 because there are important issues and people connected with it
 - The chapter is actually two genealogies in three parts
 - The first genealogy runs from vs.1-8
 - It describes the wives and sons of Esau born while he lived in the land of Canaan
 - The second genealogy begins in v.9 and runs to the end of the chapter
 - It comes in two parts
 - The first part is the sons and grandsons of Esau born outside the land while he lived in Edom, southern Jordan
 - The final part describes the various chiefs or leaders of the clan of Edomites

Gen. 36:1 Now these are the records of the generations of Esau (that is, Edom).

Gen. 36:2 Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

Gen. 36:3 also Basemath, Ishmael’s daughter, the sister of Nebaioth.

Gen. 36:4 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel,

Gen. 36:5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

Gen. 36:6 Then Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to another land away from his brother Jacob.

Gen. 36:7 For their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock.

Gen. 36:8 So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

- The genealogy of Esau begins with his three wives
 - Immediately we’re reminded of his choice to take wives of the Canaanites, a cursed people
 - While Esau was wrong simply to take multiple wives, we must remember that his brother took two wives as well (plus concubines)
 - Multiple marriages were wrong for both men, but Esau’s chief sin was to live in

unbelief

- He held no regard for the promises of God, including the seed promise
- He held no regard for the Lord's command not to take wives from the Canaanites
- He was a godless man
- If you are one to notice details, you may have recognized that Esau's three wives have different names
 - Confusing matters still further, the name changes involve one name moving from one wife to another
 - Originally, Esau had Basemath, Judith, and Mahalath
 - Now Esau's wives are called (in the same order) Adah, Oholibamah, Basemath
 - Adah means ornament, while her original name of Basemath meant perfumed
 - Oholibamah means the tent of the high place, which is a place of idol worship, while her original name Judith meant praiseworthy
 - Finally, Mahalath becomes Basemath
- After Esau had established his family in the land, he left Canaan and went to settle in the hill country of Seir, which becomes Edom
 - His livestock had become so numerous, he could no longer live alongside his brother Jacob
 - We remember that as Jacob re-entered the land, he met Esau and discovered that Esau was quite wealthy himself
 - Esau lived in the south of the land but as Jacob arrived, he moved down to Seir to find enough land for both of them
 - It's not merely happenstance that Esau chose to move outside the land promised to Jacob
 - Take note that though almost all of Jacob's sons were born outside the land, the Lord was faithful to bring Jacob's family back into the land
 - Meanwhile, Esau's sons were all born inside the land
 - Nevertheless, Esau despised the birthright and was godless, so he eventually leaves the promised land
 - For Esau, every piece of land was equally valuable so long as it met his needs
 - Moses reminds us that the the inheritance and destinies of a man of faith and a man of the world have nothing in common
 - God told Abraham concerning Isaac and Ishmael:

Gen. 21:10 Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.”

Gen. 21:11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.

Gen. 21:12 But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.

Gen. 21:13 “And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.”

- Likewise, God has separated Jacob and Esau
 - They were already separated spiritually
 - And they will be separated in eternity
 - And now they are separated physically
- If the inheritance that Jacob will receive is not to appear until the Kingdom of Christ arrives, what difference does it make whether Esau lives in Canaan?
 - Canaan is a picture of the promised land of the kingdom
 - And God pushes both Ishmael and Esau out of the land to emphasize that the ungodly share nothing with God’s children
- God makes distinctions between His children and the unredeemed in the world
 - But false teachers and ungodly men will tell you that this distinction will commonly appear in the form of wealth
 - They will lie to you telling you that God intends believers to be wealthy
 - They point to the way God blesses believers in the Bible at times, like Abraham and Jacob
 - And then they tell us that if we aren’t wealthy too, then God must be displeased with us
- But the stories of Ishmael and Esau gives us perfect examples to disprove such false teaching
 - Both Ishmael and Esau were wealthy just like Isaac and Jacob
 - In fact, in Genesis 21:13, we read that God promised to make Ishmael a nation
 - God made that promise to Abraham before he had any children
 - And even though Abraham did the wrong thing to produce Ishmael, nevertheless God blessed Ishmael as promised
- The truth is, God blesses both believer and unbeliever with material provision as He chooses, to suit his purposes
 - Many unbelievers are wealthy
 - In fact, I bet wealthy people are, more often not, unbelievers
 - But remember that while they may be rich in earthly terms, they are destitute in eternity
 - While we may entertain sinful desires for more of this world, we should remember

we have an inheritance in heaven beyond anything we could find on earth

- So Esau moved about 80-100 miles south-southeast into Seir
 - Originally, Esau's family probably arrived peacefully
 - But inevitably disputes arose with the people living in the land
 - And then Esau destroyed the inhabitants of Seir by force as well as by intermarriage

Deut. 2:12 The Horites formerly lived in Seir, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave to them.)

- God ensures that Esau finds a home in Edom, just as He ensured Jacob's family would find their home in Canaan
 - Throughout the rest of scripture, the place of Edom becomes synonymous with evil, ungodly, sinful people
 - Just as Canaan becomes a picture of the Promised Land, Edom becomes a picture of Hell and judgment for the unbeliever
- Even more importantly, the place of Edom is initially a tormentor of Israel
 - The people of Israel often fight the Edomites
 - In the time of Jesus, the family of Herod, who ruled over and terrorized the Jews, were decedents of the Edomites
 - But God promises that one day Israel will turn the tables on the Edomites
 - The Messiah will fight for Israel and crush Edom forever

Num. 24:15 He took up his discourse and said,

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

Num. 24:16 The oracle of him who hears the words of God,

And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered.

Num. 24:17 “I see him, but not now;

I behold him, but not near;

A star shall come forth from Jacob,

A scepter shall rise from Israel,

And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,

And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

Num. 24:18 “Edom shall be a possession,

Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession,

While Israel performs valiantly.

**Num. 24:19 “One from Jacob shall have dominion,
And will destroy the remnant from the city.”**

- Therefore, Esau’s residence in Seir, and his people’s temporary life in Edom, becomes a picture God uses in scripture
 - Esau himself pictures the unbeliever
 - Esau’s family pictures the unbelieving, sinful world that hates God’s word and God’s people
 - Edomites persecute the Jews, picturing the way the enemy uses unbelievers to attack God and God’s people
 - God permits these people to live side by side with His children for reasons that fit His purpose in creation
 - They serve to chastise the people of Israel when they sin
 - They become antagonists for Israel to conquer when God wishes to show His mighty power in Israel
 - But one day, the Lord will have a final victory over the ungodly in the world
 - And the destruction of Edom will become a final picture of Christ’s triumphant return at His Second Coming

**Is. 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom,
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,
This One who is majestic in His apparel,
Marching in the greatness of His strength?
“It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”**

**Is. 63:2 Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?**

**Is. 63:3 “I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.
I also trod them in My anger
And trampled them in My wrath;
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My raiment.**

**Is. 63:4 “For the day of vengeance was in My heart,
And My year of redemption has come.**

- Israel has always understood that the destruction of Edom was a necessary precursor to the arrival of their promised King and Kingdom
 - The Psalmist said as much in his psalm remembering the suffering of Israel in the Babylonian captivity

Psa. 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion.

Psa. 137:2 Upon the willows in the midst of it
We hung our harps.

Psa. 137:3 For there our captors demanded of us songs,
And our tormentors mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

Psa. 137:4 How can we sing the LORD’S song
In a foreign land?

Psa. 137:5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
May my right hand forget her skill.

Psa. 137:6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
If I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.

Psa. 137:7 Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom
The day of Jerusalem,
Who said, “Raze it, raze it
To its very foundation.”

Psa. 137:8 O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one,
How blessed will be the one who repays you
With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

Psa. 137:9 How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones
Against the rock.

- The rest of the chapter tells the genealogy of Esau after he leaves the land
 - He has more sons and these sons become chiefs and leaders in Edom
 - To finish the chapter, we’ll read through the list of the sons of Esau, and note a few interesting names along the way

Gen. 36:10 These are the names of Esau’s sons: Eliphaz the son of Esau’s wife Adah, Reuel the son of Esau’s wife Basemath.

Gen. 36:11 The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho and Gatam and Kenaz.

Gen. 36:12 Timna was a concubine of Esau’s son Eliphaz and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau’s wife Adah.

Gen. 36:13 These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath and Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau’s wife Basemath.

Gen. 36:14 These were the sons of Esau’s wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon: she bore to Esau, Jeush and Jalam and Korah.

- One of Esau's sons is Eliphaz, and his son is Teman
 - Teman was father of the Temanites
 - One of Job's counselors was Eliphaz, the Temanite
 - The story of Job happened in this area and probably around the time of Genesis 36
 - One of Esau's descendants was Amalek
 - He is father of the Amalekites, who settled in the Sinai and the Negev desert in southern Israel
 - These people were the first people to attack Israel after they settled in the land
 - They later defeated and ruled over the nation of Israel in the time of Judges
 - Saul defeated them
 - David attacked them
 - And they were finally exterminated under Hezekiah
 - This completes the list of Esau's descendants
 - In this list you find a total of 13 tribes, just as in Israel
 - Israel has 12 tribes until Joseph's sons
- Now we read a marathon of names to end the chapter, looking at the chiefs or leaders of Esau's family

Gen. 36:15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau, are chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, **Gen. 36:16** chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.

Gen. 36:17 These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.

Gen. 36:18 These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

Gen. 36:19 These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.

- The clans were lead by chiefs because initially the people were not a nation in the land of Edom
 - Esau's family were tribes with chiefs over a tribe
- The next part of the chapter deals with the genealogy of the Horites, the native peoples of Seir that Esau conquered

Gen. 36:20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan

and Shobal and Zibeon and Anah,

Gen. 36:21 and Dishon and Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom.

Gen. 36:22 The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.

Gen. 36:23 These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

Gen. 36:24 These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah — he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.

Gen. 36:25 These are the children of Anah: Dishon, and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

Gen. 36:26 These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan and Eshban and Ithran and Cheran.

Gen. 36:27 These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan and Zaavan and Akan.

Gen. 36:28 These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

Gen. 36:29 These are the chiefs descended from the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah,

Gen. 36:30 chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, according to their various chiefs in the land of Seir.

- The Horites were cave-dwellers (the name means cave-dweller)
 - They lacked fortified cities, and so they were relatively easy for Esau to defeat
 - He then intermarried with them and in the uniting of Esau and the Horites, a nation of Edom was formed
 - Esau's family controlled that land
 - Prior to that merger, the people of Seir were ruled by chiefs over clans much like Esau's family
 - The land of Seir was not a single nation but a region of individual clans
- After Esau conquered the people of Seir, the nation formed with kings ruling over all the people

Gen. 36:31 Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel.

Gen. 36:32 Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah.

Gen. 36:33 Then Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place.

Gen. 36:34 Then Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place.

Gen. 36:35 Then Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city was Avith.

Gen. 36:36 Then Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place.

Gen. 36:37 Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates River became king in his place.

Gen. 36:38 Then Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place.

Gen. 36:39 Then Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar became king in his place; and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

Gen. 36:40 Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families and their localities, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth,

Gen. 36:41 chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon,

Gen. 36:42 chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar,

Gen. 36:43 chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of the Edomites), according to their habitations in the land of their possession.

- These last verses become a closing record to finish the discussion of Esau and his family
 - It's likely that this list ends with those who were in power in Edom at the time Moses was writing Genesis
 - It's interesting that the kings didn't appear to come from a single family dynasty, like in Egypt
 - Instead, the throne moved around from family to family, perhaps based on military power or an election
 - Edom is never said to have a capital city because the throne moved from tribe to tribe
 - Also, it's clear toward the end that the Canaanite pagan god Baal had made his influence known
 - One of the last kings, Baal-hanan, his name means that Baal is gracious
 - And of the 81 names in the list, only two have the name of God (el) in their name
 - Further confirmation of the ungodly nature of Esau's posterity
- Finally, it's interesting that Moses mentions that Edom had kings before Israel
 - Remember, when Moses wrote this book, Israel had never had a king nor sought for a king
 - So how did Moses know to say that Edom had kings before Israel?

- Simply, the Holy Spirit inspired Moses
- But we also know that God had promised to Jacob that his family would have kings
 - So Moses would only need to know the promise given to Jacob to understand that one day Israel would have kings
 - Even if that day were still in the future
- Next week, we turn our attention to the lives of Jacob's sons, and Judah and Joseph in particular.
 - The study of Joseph is probably one of the most famous and powerful stories recorded in all of Scripture
 - Through Joseph we see a clear picture of Christ, as many have taught
 - A man of supreme patience and trust in God
 - But we also see an even clearer picture of God's power and sovereignty, of His unchangeable purpose and His love
 - His wisdom and power to keep His promises, using even the sin of men to accomplish His will
 - With this story, we enter the home stretch in the book of Genesis

- Having transitioned out of the story of Isaac last week, we turn our attention to the generations of Jacob
 - In particular, we embark upon the most fascinating story in Genesis and perhaps in all the Old Testament – the story of Joseph
 - The story is so well loved because it's great drama
 - More importantly, it follows several important themes that hold our attention and spur a lot of theological debate
 - In particular, the story of Joseph is a story of God's sovereignty
 - In this account Moses holds both sides of God's sovereignty in balance, or some might say in tension
 - First we have the sin of Jacob's sons
 - By their will, they make sinful choices, and these choices plunge the family into crisis
 - But through those sinful desires, God accomplishes a plan He set forth decades earlier
 - In the end, man's sin becomes the means of accomplishing God's will
 - But men have long marveled at how God can accomplish exactly the good He intends by taking advantage of men's sinful desires
 - It leaves us asking, what if a man never chooses to sin, how would God have accomplished the plan? Is man really choosing what he wants freely?
 - If so, then how can a man's free will fit so perfectly into God's plan when we know God isn't the author of sin?
 - The answer, of course, is that there is a mystery beyond our ability to reconcile, yet we accept what the text of scripture gives us
 - Moses' account of Joseph will bring man's will and God's will together to explain the reason for Joseph's departure for Egypt and his brother's eventual following
 - First, Moses shows us this is God at work to accomplish what He told Abraham
 - In Chapters 37 and 39-45, we watch God working to bring Joseph and the rest of Jacob's family into Egypt according to His will
 - Secondly, Moses shows us that Joseph's slavery is made necessary by the sinful will of his brothers
 - They will hate Joseph and conspire to kill him, and later sell him to slave traders
 - More over, Judah's sin detailed in Chapter 38 will give us added explanation for God's purpose in the exile of Israel
 - So our first priority in Joseph's story will be in understanding how God takes evil, sinful hearts and uses them to produce exactly the good outcome God purposed
- Speaking of taking evil and turning it to good, that leads us to the second principle we will follow in the story of Joseph: Joseph as a picture of Christ
 - There is probably no OT character whose life better represents Christ than Joseph

- Some scholars have found upwards of 130 similarities between Jesus and Joseph
- It's important to note that these parallels to Jesus do not appear in the text in chronological order to match Jesus' life
 - They occur in random order
- These similarities aren't just there for our amusement
 - The similarities are intended to draw our attention to a larger parallel
 - What we see God doing on behalf of Israel through Joseph parallels what the Lord eventually does for the nation of Israel throughout history, especially in the last days of Tribulation
- Finally, we will examine our continuing story of the seed promise and how the Lord moves that promise ever forward toward Christ, in the family of Judah and Joseph
 - We know Jacob has twelve sons, nevertheless, the *toledot* of Jacob is largely limited to the story of Judah and Joseph
 - That tells us immediately that the question of the seed promise is limited to following these two men
 - By the time we reach the end of Genesis, we will have our answers

Gen. 37:1 Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.

Gen. 37:2 These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

Gen. 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

Gen. 37:4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

- The chapter opens with the tenth and final *toledot* of Genesis
 - It begins with Joseph and continues to the end of Genesis
 - It tells how the story of God's redemptive work moved from Jacob to the next generation and beyond
- As we begin, we're reminded of Joseph's place and circumstances in the family
 - Joseph is the eleventh son of Jacob, the first of Rachel
 - By the time we get to Chapter 37, he's about 17 years old
 - In terms of age, he is closest in age to his natural brother Benjamin
 - And Joseph's natural mother, the woman Jacob loved, has died by now

- These circumstances place Joseph in the difficult situation
 - He is the favorite of his father, because he was first born of Rachel
 - Yet he is very nearly the lowest ranking son in the family, at least by worldly standards
 - Within this delicate situation, Joseph will have a tremendous challenge
 - He will have the great love and affection of his father, a man who sees Joseph as his greatest gift from his beloved departed wife
 - He will also have to deal with his brothers' jealousy and resentment, and they will expect to lord over him since they are older
- This family saga is directly the result of Jacob's own character flaws
 - Jacob has always shown favoritism, creating jealousies
 - And he was a man who didn't rest in God's work and will, but fought against family and foe to obtain what he wanted
 - Now, his sons struggle to gain what they want, never seeking the Lord
- The story opens in v.2 with a curious account of Joseph and his brothers working together
 - Joseph is out in the field shepherding with his other young brothers, which would be typical
 - The youngest are often the ones tasked with shepherding flocks, as David is doing when he was anointed by Samuel
 - But Joseph is said to be pasturing or feeding the sheep, an indication that he was in charge, even among older brothers
 - Apparently, he had been placed in a position of authority even at an early age by his father
 - Then in v.3 we're told Jacob loved Joseph the most
 - And at first we are probably tempted to assume this favoritism as just another in the long line of such poor relationships
 - Isaac had showed preference for Esau, Rebekah for Jacob, Jacob for Rachel rather than Leah, and now Joseph over his brothers
 - Certainly, Jacob does have that sinful tendency to show favoritism, but there is likely much more going on here
 - Jacob loves Joseph more than the other sons because Joseph was the son of "his old age"
 - Some have taken this to mean that he loved Joseph the most because Joseph came late in Jacob's life
 - But if that were the case, logic would dictate that Benjamin would have been the most loved not Joseph
 - Benjamin was also a son of Rachel, and he was born last and his birth included the death of Rachel

- In reality, the phrase “son of his old age” in Hebrew is *ben zaqun* which literally means wise son
 - In fact the word *zaqun* can also be translated as beard or bearded, a sign of both age and wisdom
 - So Jacob’s love for Joseph was a reflection of Joseph’s wisdom
 - Jacob’s other sons had already shown a terrible track record in Schechem, hardly endearing themselves to their father
 - But Joseph had apparently demonstrated wisdom and maturity beyond his years, earning his father’s confidence
 - No doubt, Jacob appreciated having someone he could trust working for him
 - Jacob even went so far as to make his appreciation for Joseph’s leadership plainly known, by granting him a special coat or robe
 - The word for multicolored is *pas* and has no clear meaning
 - It could just mean long-sleeved
 - But it’s meaning was clear to the family
 - Joseph’s robe represented Joseph’s authority over the sons
 - Robes were an ancient sign of authority and honor
 - A robe also signified the holder of the birthright, something the oldest would normally possess
 - Remember, the prodigal son who returned was awarded the ring and robe, which angered the older son
 - To the older son it communicated that the place of honor was going to the younger son
 - Jacob is awarding the place of honor and authority within the family to Joseph, though this was very much against the customs of the culture
 - It may have also been easier for Jacob to make such an award having been the youngest in his family too
 - But nevertheless, it enraged his brothers, who likely saw Jacob’s decision as merely another example of Jacob’s unfair favoritism
 - It’s ironic that Jacob seems to be rewarding Joseph for the right reasons in this case, but his sons still react negatively
 - The lesson here is obvious
 - It’s like crying wolf
 - After a while, no matter how hard you try to change perceptions, your reputation matters more than the facts
 - Let’s work to protect our witness and Christian reputation, otherwise we neutralize our opportunity to influence others for Christ
- At some point in his shepherding duties, Joseph brought back a bad report of his brothers according to v.2

- We don't know what the report was about, but it's not hard to imagine
 - We know Jacob's sons are prone to misbehavior, including little weaknesses like murder, rape, and general mayhem
 - So it's not hard to imagine how they may have misbehaved while shepherding the flock
 - As jealous as they were of Joseph, perhaps they had been intentionally lazy and rebellious, leaving all the work to Joseph
 - Whatever the offense, Joseph decides to report it to the father
- What would have been the consequence of such a report?
 - These young men are too old to physically punish
 - Perhaps the family inheritance was at stake
 - Perhaps something much more serious was at stake (remember Jacob's threat to kill whoever stole the idols)
- Joseph's situation raises one of the more interesting questions every family faces sooner or later
 - When is it right to inform parents of another's misbehavior, or to overlook a transgression for fear of being labeled a tattletale?
 - For example, was Joseph right or wrong here to inform his father of the brothers' indiscretion?
 - When we read this account to our children, should we end by telling them, "See what happens when you tattle...your brothers will sell you into slavery."
 - Or perhaps we might say, "See, if you tell me everything that your brothers do wrong, I'll give you the best clothes."
 - Or in my case, "If you don't tell Mommy you saw me drinking orange juice from the jug in the refrigerator, I'll give you a dollar."
 - In fact, what is a tattletale?
 - I looked the word up in the Webster's Dictionary, and it gave me the very helpful definition of "one that tattles"
 - It goes on to define tattling as gossiping or repeating hearsay
 - In other words, a tattletale is someone who gives false reports of someone else
 - It involves dishonesty
 - What can we know about Joseph's behavior in this case?
 - We have no evidence that Joseph was giving a false report to Jacob
 - And knowing his brothers' past indiscretions, we have every reason to assume Joseph was reporting the truth
 - We could even go so far as assuming Joseph carried himself with a bit of arrogance – or perhaps he lacked diplomacy as a leader

- If that was so, it certainly wouldn't have helped him win his brothers
 - Nevertheless, even if these assumptions were true, it wouldn't give justification for his brothers to resent Joseph's report
 - Scripture's description of Joseph's actions is entirely neutral, without any negative slant or commentary
 - If anything, his actions are portrayed as the burdens of a young man rising to the difficult challenge of ruling over rebellious men
- So what do we tell our children about Joseph's situation? Was he tattling or was he doing the right thing?
 - The simple answer is Joseph was giving a truthful report to his father
 - More over, Joseph had been given the position of authority and had a duty to let his father know about his brothers' inappropriate behavior
 - Joseph did his job
 - As parents, if we choose to place an older child in a supervisory role over siblings, let Joseph's situation be your model
 - First, he was a wise and mature young man, according to scripture
 - Make sure your children are ready for the responsibility
 - Can they execute their leadership duties in fairness and with restraint?
 - Secondly, every child should understand that you expect all misbehavior to be reported
 - Such a report is not "tattling" if it is truthful
 - If we are going to stand for righteousness, then we must stand behind those who seek to reveal unrighteousness
 - Obviously, we need to be careful about raising little busybodies
 - We can discern between helpful reports and those that have no good purpose beyond causing trouble
 - But let's be sure we don't cause those who report the truth to be fearful of the consequences
 - Instead, let's make those who misbehave fearful of your discipline
 - Finally, make clear that the child in authority has no latitude to take the law into their own hands
 - Joseph made no attempt to discipline his brothers
 - He simply reported and allowed the father to act
- In Joseph's situation, we don't know what consequences Jacob handed out, but v.4 makes the critical point
 - The brothers saw clearly that Jacob loved Joseph more
 - We understand Jacob had sensible reasons for favoring Joseph
 - But those reasons couldn't overshadow the reality that bred their intense

hatred to the point that Joseph's brothers didn't even speak to him

- Joseph was a pariah within his own family
- Even at this early point, we have some clear pictures of Christ we can see
 - Joseph's birth happened only after a supernatural intervention by the Lord
 - Jesus was born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit
 - Joseph was the son Jacob loved
 - Jesus was the beloved Son of the Father
- We can also see our other themes emerging at this early point as well
 - The sin of Joseph's brothers is already beginning to percolate
 - They despise their brother, but not for any fault of his own
 - As far as we can tell, Joseph is blameless in this relationship
 - Likewise Jesus was hated by Israel and those in leadership, even though he had authority over them
 - There's another parallel to Christ from John

John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

- Joseph was sent by his father to oversee the sons
- Joseph's 11 brothers were the nation Israel and therefore they represent the entire nation prophetically
- Next week the plot thickens as Joseph alienates not only his brothers but also his father

- Joseph is our focus
 - He is the next-to-youngest child of Jacob, but he's shown himself to be wiser than his years
 - The text last week said Israel loved Joseph more than his brothers
 - The true sense of that statement was that Jacob assigned Joseph the position of the birthright in the family
 - Since Joseph was the first born son of Rachel, Jacob has given to Joseph the position of the birthright holder after Reuben, the first born of Leah, disqualified himself
 - Jacob recognized Joseph's wisdom and emerging leadership qualities
 - We should take note that it says "Israel" not "Jacob" when speaking of Jacob's decision
 - Evidence that this was a godly action in keeping with God's will
 - He gave Joseph a coat of honor indicating Joseph held the position of authority in the family
 - Naturally, his brothers resented their younger brother gaining this position of authority
 - They hate him and won't even speak to him, we're told
 - But their hatred for their brother was due to his righteousness and their unrighteousness
 - Those who had sin and hatred in their hearts hated the one who did right and honored his father
 - This animosity will only grow with time
 - We also noted that Joseph is a picture of Christ, in many of the details of his life
 - Even the fact that he was the beloved son of Jacob chosen to rule over his brothers gives us a picture of Jesus
 - Jesus was the beloved Son of God,
 - But he was born under humble circumstances
 - His outwardly appearance didn't impress the Jewish people as someone they should follow
 - He was hated by His Jewish brothers because he spoke truth and demonstrated righteousness
 - They put Him to death because they had evil in their hearts
 - Nevertheless, Jesus is the One the Father has appointed to rule over the people of Israel
 - And He will obtain that rule in an appointed day
 - Joseph's life is following this script perfectly, picturing Christ in every detail
- Today as we move forward, we're learning still more about how Joseph ends up in Egypt

- The Lord is working in Joseph's life to bring about the transfer of Israel into Egypt, as He promised to Abraham

Gen. 37:5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

Gen. 37:6 He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had;

Gen. 37:7 for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."

Gen. 37:8 Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- Joseph experiences a dream so powerful and vivid he feels the need to share it with his family
 - The dream involves sheaves of wheat in the field
 - Each brother is binding a sheaf of wheat in the field
 - And the sheaves of Joseph's brothers bow down to his sheaf
 - Symbolically, the sheaves represent the person
 - So the clear message in the dream is that someday the brothers would accept Joseph's ruling over the brothers
 - Remember, Joseph has already been appointed as the birthright holder over the family by Jacob
 - So Joseph already has the right to rule over his brothers
 - What's new in the dream is the brothers accepting his rule and submitting to it
 - Joseph didn't need the brothers' acceptance in order to be the ruler of the family
 - He was appointed to that role by his father alone
 - But whether the brothers would accept that rule was another matter altogether
 - This dream was predicting that they would one day acknowledge Joseph's authority
 - Even the symbols used in the dream are important
 - The day of his brothers' submission will come in conjunction with a famine that drives them to Joseph looking for grain
 - They will be seeking wheat and will bow down before Joseph in order to receive it
- This is exactly a picture of Israel's relationship with the Lord Jesus
 - Jesus is the Messiah, the appointed One Who rules over the world and Israel
 - He will return in glory one day and rule the nations, including Israel

- That rule will come with or without the approval of those He rules
- One day, every tongue will confess and every knee will bow to Christ
- But the question is whether the stubborn and stiff-necked people of Israel will ever accept Jesus as their Messiah?
 - Paul teaches us in Romans 11 that one day the nation of Israel will accept Jesus as Messiah
 - And on that day, all Israel will be saved and will receive Jesus upon His second coming
- So Joseph shares this dream with his brothers, and provokes them to great anger
 - His brothers understand its meaning, and assume Joseph is retelling it in their hearing so as to pressure them to submit
 - Didn't Joseph understand that repeating this story wasn't going to win him any friends?
 - Perhaps, but he spoke prophetic truth without fear for how it was received
 - We need to see Joseph not as someone who lacked tact
 - Or as a naive young man who lacked an appreciation for how his words were taken
 - Instead, we need to see Joseph as a man who was obedient to God and spoke truth without fear of the consequences
 - Clearly, this dream was given by the Lord, and therefore the message was a message from God
 - Joseph knew it, and his brothers feared as much
 - In fact, this is the first dream in the Bible where God isn't speaking in the dream
 - Joseph will be a man who hears from God in dreams
 - This is a departure from the patriarchs' experiences
 - When we look at God speaking in dreams in scripture, we need to notice an important pattern
 - God reveals Himself in dreams to both Jews and Gentiles
 - When God doesn't speak personally, He uses symbols and scenes to communicate some truth
 - When God uses symbols in Jewish dreams, the Jews themselves are always able to understand the dream without interpreters
 - Notice here that both Joseph and the brothers instinctively understand the dream's meaning
 - But when God communicates in symbolic dreams to Gentiles, they must always consult a Jew for the interpretation
 - Joseph interprets for Pharaoh
 - Daniel interprets for Nebuchadnezzar

- As Paul said, the nation of Israel are the people appointed to receive the oracles of God
- And the dreams continue

Gen. 37:9 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, “Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

Gen. 37:10 He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?”

Gen. 37:11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

- Joseph’s second dream communicates a similar idea
 - The symbols have changed from wheat sheaves to the sun, moon and stars
 - But the actions are the same
 - These symbols are bowing down before Joseph
 - Once again, Joseph’s family instantly recognize the meaning of the symbols
 - The celestial bodies represent the members of Jacob’s family
 - These bodies have a pecking order in man’s perception
 - The sun is superior to the moon
 - The sun and moon are superior to the stars in the sky
 - So Jacob makes the correct interpretation without hesitation
 - He recognizes that the sun represents the patriarch of the family, that is Jacob
 - And the eleven stars must represent the sons of Jacob
 - There are only eleven since Joseph himself is the twelfth
 - Finally, the moon is the mother of the family, but which mother?
 - Logically, it would mean Rachel, since Jacob says “your” mother
 - But Rachel was dead by this time
 - So that means we’re looking at something other than a literal fulfillment in Joseph’s day
- This time Jacob is the one upset at the prospect of such an event
 - It’s one thing for the brothers to submit to Joseph’s authority
 - This was the proper thing to expect given that Jacob had placed Joseph over his brothers
 - So while the brothers may not have liked it, it was a proper thing to suggest

- On the other hand, it is another thing for a child to suggest that his father would submit to his authority
 - Jacob drew the line at that suggestion
 - Notice again that Moses is calling him Jacob at this point, not Israel
- The effect of this second dream is much the same as that of the first
 - The brothers hate Joseph all the more
 - Yet his father kept it in his mind
 - Even though Jacob reacted negatively to the suggestion that Joseph would rule over him, he was still willing to consider the possibility
 - He waited to see if it would come to pass
 - But the brothers dismissed it altogether
- We know both of these dreams came from God, so therefore we must conclude that God intended the consequences that followed
 - The brothers were already upset at Joseph, so these dreams were designed to provoke that anger and take it further
 - The Lord is working to expose the sin in the brothers' hearts and turn it to good for His purposes
 - What is that greater good God intends?

**Psa. 105:16 And He called for a famine upon the land;
He broke the whole staff of bread.**

**Psa. 105:17 He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.**

**Psa. 105:18 They afflicted his feet with fetters,
He himself was laid in irons;**

**Psa. 105:19 Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.**

**Psa. 105:20 The king sent and released him,
The ruler of peoples, and set him free.**

**Psa. 105:21 He made him lord of his house
And ruler over all his possessions,**

**Psa. 105:22 To imprison his princes at will,
That he might teach his elders wisdom.**

- The Lord is at work teaching Joseph's elders wisdom
 - Joseph's elders include his father and brothers
 - They will learn important lessons through this experience
- But the good doesn't stop there
 - God is using the brothers' sin to ensure the nation moves into Egypt

- And the time they spend in Egypt will itself be a good outcome designed to address the sin of Israel
 - We'll learn more about why the time in Egypt was a necessary thing in Chapter 38
- Finally, God will use Joseph's account to teach many generations wisdom about the Lord
 - And about the Lord's anointed, Christ
- Here again, Joseph pictures the Father's work through Jesus
 - When Jesus came for Israel, they rejected Him, just as God designed
 - That rejection was the result of their sin, but the Lord took full advantage of that sin to produce good
 - The rejection of Jesus led to the exile of Israel into the nations, like Israel going to Egypt in Joseph's day
 - The rejection of Jesus and the scattering of Israel made possible the salvation of the Gentile nations
 - In Joseph's day, that salvation comes in the form of the provision of bread
 - In Jesus' day the provision will be through the bread of life, that is the gospel going to the Gentile nations
- Some may be troubled at the prospect of watching the Lord stoking the anger of these boys against their brother
 - Is this fair? Shouldn't the Lord work to assuage the brothers' anger rather than provoke it?
 - While this perspective is understandable, it's simply wrong
 - The Lord is not in the business of accommodating or appeasing sin
 - Rather He is in the business, so to speak, of exposing sin and judging sin and bringing an end to sin ultimately
 - He won't accomplish those goals if He makes it easier for sin and righteousness to coexist
 - Neither in the life of a single individual, nor in the world as a whole
 - Instead, the Lord is working at all times to stir up sin, to bring it to light and turn it to good purposes
 - The Lord harnesses sin for His purposes
 - We have to remember that the world became a place of sin after the fall
 - It is the dominion of the enemy and a playground for all manner of depravity and ungodliness
 - When faced with that result, the Lord had two choices
 - To bring immediate judgment and destroy all that deserved that outcome
 - Or forgo judgment for a time, and work with sin to produce a good and righteous outcome

- Thanks be to God that He chose to work with sin, giving us the opportunity to be born and to be saved

Gen. 37:12 Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem.

Gen. 37:13 Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go."

Gen. 37:14 Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

Gen. 37:15 A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?"

Gen. 37:16 He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock."

Gen. 37:17 Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

- From our study a few weeks ago, we might think it's a bit strange that Joseph's brothers would venture back into the region of Shechem
 - Shechem is nearly 50 miles to the north of Jacob's home in Hebron
 - Moreover, this is the place where the nation massacred the city
 - Why would they venture so far away and into a place that holds such bad history?
 - First, traveling long distance to pasture flocks was very common, especially in an arid climate like Canaan
 - Secondly, the brothers appear to be trying to escape Joseph's oversight
 - The very fact that they have gone away with the herds without Joseph indicates they are trying to avoid him
 - Finally, Jacob had owned land in that region, so his sons had grown up there, meaning they would have known the area well
- Jacob becomes concerned for his sons, perhaps because the last time they were in Shechem bad things happened
 - Notice it's Israel that sends Joseph, not Jacob, indicating that this is an act of divine intent
 - Do you think that Joseph had some trepidation in going to find his brothers such a distance away?
 - He will have to travel desert roads alone
 - He will walk at least 2-3 days
 - When he arrives, he will be far from the father's authority, vulnerable to his brothers' hatred

- But as indicated by the name Israel, we know this request was according to God's purpose
 - God has ensured the brothers' anger was stirred up sufficiently
 - And then He placed the brothers in the right place, far away from his father's oversight and on a major trading route leading to Egypt
- And for his part, Joseph accepts his father's request without hesitation, but he probably recognized the dangers involved
 - Joseph accepts the responsibility with all the risks it brings
 - Israel seems to phrase the request in the form of a question
 - And Joseph agrees to the request, saying "I will"
 - In fact, in Hebrew it literally means "Behold I am here"
- There is a beautiful picture of Christ formed in this part of the story
 - Like Joseph, Jesus was sent to the fallen world to rescue His brothers
 - The Bible tells us that before Jesus came to earth, He was with the Father

1John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life —

1John 1:2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us —

- Then Jesus Himself said

Heb. 10:7 "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'"

- He uses the same words as Joseph, behold...
- Joseph left his father in Hebron
 - The term Hebron means fellowship or communion
 - This pictures the Son of God leaving the fellowship and communion with the Father in order to go to His people in the world
- So like Joseph sent to Shechem, Jesus was sent to the fallen, sinful world
 - Shechem represents the sin of the world in this story
 - The name means to shoulder, as in bearing a burden
 - The events in that city were a burden that Jacob had to bear
 - And they represent the burden that Jesus came to bear

Phil. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
Phil. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- Even the detail of the man who finds Joseph wandering in the field forms a picture of Jesus
 - Joseph is wandering about Shechem but finds no one
 - Joseph is without a home or even a family where he wanders
 - Similarly, Jesus came to a world that was not His home
 - He had nowhere to lay His head and no one to receive him

Luke 9:57 As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.”

Luke 9:58 And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

- At the end of John 7, we’re told everyone with Jesus went to their own home, but Jesus went to the Mt of Olives
- Jesus was literally homeless, wandering in this world since His home could not be found here
- And he had no family except those who obey His word

Luke 8:20 And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.”

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”

- Finally, Jesus came for one reason only, to seek and find the lost
 - Just as Joseph has come to Shechem for only one reason, though he will be rejected on that basis
 - Just as it was with Jesus

John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the

world did not know Him.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

- But glory to God that John 1 continues into the next two verses

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 37C

Chapter 37:15-28

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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The children arrived for Sunday school excited to attend the annual church Christmas party. The Children's director had placed a selection of wonderful treats on a long table and lined up the children single file to fill their plates from the table. On one end of the table there was a plate of cookies. There weren't very many of the cookies, so one of the teachers made a note, and placed it in front of the cookie tray. It read:

'Take only ONE. God is watching.'

As the children moved down the table filling their plates, they eventually came to another plate at the other end of the table filled with various Christmas chocolates and candies. Next to this plate, a child had written his own note. It read:

'Take all you want. God is watching the cookies.'

- Sometimes, we think like this child's note
 - We think we can escape the watchful eye of God
 - When we assume God or our boss or our parents aren't watching, we begin to act differently
 - We begin to relax and allow our flesh to rule our hearts
 - Small children demonstrate this principle to us
 - When they want to do something they know they shouldn't do, they will sneak away to a place where no one is watching
 - This is the sin nature at work
- Last week in our study, Joseph had left his father and traveled to Shechem to find his brothers, who were shepherding the flock away from their father
 - These brothers hate Joseph because of jealousy, envy and other sinful passions
 - So long as they were living and working around their father's house, they couldn't act on their hatred for Joseph
 - But now that they have moved so far away, to a remote place outside their father's view and authority, they have their chance
 - Like the child's note says, Jacob and God aren't watching, or so they think
 - And this gives opportunity for the sons to act against Joseph
- But we also studied last week that these circumstances are according to God's plan
 - The Lord is working to bring about Joseph's eventual slavery in Egypt
 - And He is using the sin of his brothers' heart to affect that outcome
 - The Lord has two primary purposes for this plan
 - First, the Lord is in the process of bringing Israel into Egypt as He promised to Abraham
 - The nation will spend their time in Egypt growing into a great nation

- One that is large enough to return to Canaan one day and defeat the Canaanites
 - Secondly, the Lord is protecting Israel from a great sin, one that we learn about in Chapter 38
- And as God does this work, He is also using the nation's experience in Egypt to create a picture of His Son, the coming Seed
 - Joseph is a picture of Christ, as you know
 - His brothers and father form a picture of Israel in the future
 - And many details of the story line up with future details of Christ's first or second coming
- As Joseph enters Shechem, he doesn't find his brothers
 - He's told they have gone another 15 miles further north to Dothan

Gen. 37:15 A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?"

Gen. 37:16 He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock."

Gen. 37:17 Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

- Dothan is an important detail in Chapter 37
 - The meaning of the town's name is obscure, but it's been said to mean either "two cisterns" or "law" or maybe "custom"
 - It was located was on the normal caravan route from Gilead to Egypt
 - The road passes through the Harod Valley to Jezreel, then crosses through Dothan to the coast
 - At the coast, it meets up with the Via Mar, or the Way of the Sea
 - The Via Mar was an interstate highway of ancient times, linking Egypt with the Near East
 - This is the place God wants to draw Joseph and his brothers, because it serve His purposes for Israel
 - The brothers' hatred of Joseph is their own...God didn't inspire their hatred
 - But the Lord is working with it, using it, taking advantage of it for good purposes

Gen. 37:18 When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death.

Gen. 37:19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer!

Gen. 37:20 Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"

Gen. 37:21 But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.”

Gen. 37:22 Reuben further said to them, “Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him” — that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

Gen. 37:23 So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him;

Gen. 37:24 and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

- Joseph approaches from a distance and his brothers notice his arrival
 - It was probably his unique tunic that identified Joseph from a distance, and even before they speak with him, they are plotting against him
 - The word for plotting is *nakal* in Hebrew
 - It means to be crafty, deceitful
 - They are conspiring to kill their own brother, and purely because Joseph’s righteousness convicts them and leaves them jealous
 - Here’s another picture of Christ, since we remember how Jesus’ Jewish brothers conspired against Him and plotted to kill Him
 - The Sanhedrin council plotted to kill Jesus even as Jesus was some distance from Jerusalem
 - And as He approached the city, they sent Pharisees to Him warning Jesus not to enter Jerusalem

Luke 13:31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

Luke 13:32 And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.’”

Luke 13:33 “Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.

- In this way, John writes in his first chapter that Jesus came to His own, but His own did not receive him
- The brothers call Joseph the “dreamer”
 - By their use of this term, we discover the motive in their actions
 - They are set against Joseph’s prophetic dreams
 - The idea that he might rule over them, compels them to act against him
 - Notice in v.20 they ask what will become of his dreams if we kill him?
 - To put it simply, their motive is to stop the dream from coming true
 - And to that end, some in the group suggest killing Joseph and disposing his body in one of the pits in the area, and lying to Jacob

- The pits they mention are empty cisterns
 - A cistern was a cavity dug out of the ground that held water
 - They were deep and the sides were smooth
 - If you fell in a cistern pit, you would die eventually unless someone rescued you
 - So they made an excellent jail cell
 - This may be the origin of the word Dothan, two cisterns
- Reuben, the first born, secretly objects to the plan, and with a few minutes to spare before Joseph arrives, he argues for a better solution
 - Reuben suggests that none of them want to be guilty of the actual murder
 - Instead, they could simply put him in a cistern and let him die of exposure
 - Then, no one brother would be guilty of his murder
 - But Moses tells us that Reuben's true motive was to save Joseph when the brothers weren't watching
 - He would release Joseph and send him home, thus saving him
 - Why does Reuben want to save Joseph, and why does he feel the need to deceive his brothers in this way?
 - Reuben was the oldest son, and therefore he would be held accountable for the welfare of his brothers
 - Reuben knew that if Joseph died on his watch, his father would be crushed and might take his anger and sorrow out on Reuben
 - But it's telling that Reuben couldn't face his brothers and demand they abandon their plotting
 - He was a man who showed moments of strength, like here, but in general he was a man who couldn't bring himself to do the right thing
 - He was tempted by his flesh to take Bilhah
 - And now he's struggling to take a firm stand for his brother
 - In fact, his tribe will share this ignominious future
 - Reuben's tribe never produces any military leaders, judges, kings, or prophets
- As Joseph arrives, they pounce, and the first step they take is to strip him of his symbol of authority
 - They leave him nearly naked, throw him in the pit and leave him
 - Their actions mirror Jesus' treatment, of course
 - Jesus was stripped before enduring the cross
 - And in nakedness, Jesus endured the shame of the cross
 - Fulfilling this picture, Paul tells us that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth after he was crucified

Eph. 4:8 Therefore it says,

**“WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,
HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES,
AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.”**

Eph. 4:9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph. 4:10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

- Joseph’s brothers threw him in the pit to kill him, and Joseph’s time in the pit pictures Jesus’ time in the grave after his death
- Like Joseph, Jesus descended below the earth

Matt. 12:40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- And from his brothers’ point of view, Joseph was dead
- Now they could relax and consider their next steps

Gen. 37:25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt.

Gen. 37:26 Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood?

Gen. 37:27 “Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him.

Gen. 37:28 Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

- The brothers sit down to eat, while their brother languishes in a pit nearby
 - Later in Genesis 42 we’ll learn that during this meal, Joseph is pleading for their mercy
 - Nevertheless, they ignore his pleas
 - In fact, Amos 6:6 tells us that they showed no remorse or grief over what they have done
 - The next time they sit to eat a meal in Joseph’s presence, Joseph will be seated at the head of the table
 - About this time, they watch a caravan of traders approaching Gilead in the east and headed down south toward Egypt
 - The traders are descendants of Abraham

- They are called both Ishmaelites and Midianites
 - Ishmaelites descended from Ishmael, who was born of Hagar
 - Midianites descended from Abraham's third wife, Keturah
 - But the Midianites were eventually absorbed by the Ishmaelites, so the names are used interchangeably here
 - Judah speaks up and suggests a better way to dispose of Joseph
 - Rather than be guilty for Joseph's death, Judah suggests they sell him
 - First, this plan would relieve them from the guilt of murder
 - Secondly, they would profit from selling him
 - The Midianites bought Joseph as a slave for twenty pieces of silver and took him into Egypt
 - This moment gives us another parallel to Christ
 - Jesus was also betrayed by His brothers (the Jewish people) for 30 pieces of silver
 - Since Joseph is merely a picture of Christ, he was sold for a lesser amount than Jesus
- We know Joseph's brothers were intent on blocking Joseph's dreams from ever coming to pass
 - So they turn on their brother and devise this plan to sell him to traders
 - By their actions, they send their brother into Egypt, certain that their plan had put an end to the possibility of Joseph ruling over them
 - Each brother was doing as he saw fit, as he thought best and as his sinful heart directed him to do
 - Each man must have felt he was completely in control of his own actions and decisions
 - Yet we know God promised Abraham that his family would go to Egypt
 - Moreover, in Chapter 38 we will learn that God had good reasons to send Israel to Egypt
 - In other words, God intended for Joseph and his family to spend hundreds of years in Egypt
 - As we consider these events, we inevitably reach what seems a circular conclusion
 - God gave Joseph a dream that told the brothers Joseph would rule over them
 - The dream increased their hatred, leading them to send Joseph to Egypt
 - But because Joseph ends up in Egypt, he is able to rise to a position of power that forces his brothers to accept Joseph's rule over them
 - So the action the brothers took to prevent the dream from coming true is the very thing that caused it to come true
- What was God's role in this chain of events?
 - Did God merely know these things were going to happen, and so He gave Joseph the prediction?

- If so, was it just lucky for God that the sons were willing to sell Joseph instead of killing him?
 - What if they had never done anything against Joseph, how would the dream have come true?
- Where does God's sovereignty end and man's will begin?
 - The God of the Bible has no limit to His power, and yet we often choose to limit Him by how we distort the teaching of Scripture
 - Probably the most common limit we place upon the Lord's power and reach in our life is that of our own will
 - Many of us have been taught that God either can't or won't interfere in our thoughts and actions
 - You may have heard people tell you that God "loves us too much to deny us our free will"
 - This statement is trotted out as an obvious truth, and many of us accept it without questioning
 - But is this what the Bible teaches, and is this what the story of Joseph is teaching us today?
 - In truth, such a view is unbiblical and nonsensical
 - In fact, the only thing the Bible says God can't or won't do is sin
 - It never declares that man has free will in anything
 - Nor does it declare that God is a "hands off" God in the affairs of men...on the contrary, He's a "hands on" God
- The Bible teaches the opposite
 - God is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe
 - He is the potter and we are the clay
 - His power is greater than any man's will, and there is nothing in God's creation that stops His will from being done
 - Furthermore, the Lord is at work in using everything and everyone to accomplish His will
 - The Bible teaches that even the sin and wrath of men will work into God's plan

**Psa. 76:10 For the wrath of man shall praise You;
With a remnant of wrath You will gird Yourself.**

- Every thought and action of every man is a part of God's purpose and plan and under His control
- In the Psalms, we hear that God's plans span generations of men

**Psa. 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The plans of His heart from generation to generation.**

- The Lord then delivers His plans to men so that their hearts are inclined to His ways

Prov. 19:21 Many plans are in a man's heart,
But the counsel of the LORD will stand.

- And then He enacts His plan by guiding and directing the will and actions of men to accomplish His purposes

Prov. 16:9 The mind of man plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.

- And should a man determine to do something other than what God has purposed, God intervenes

Psa. 33:10 The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations;
He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

- In a future day when the Antichrist rules the world in the Tribulation that is to come, we're told in Revelation 17 that the world leaders of that day will all give their power to the Antichrist
 - No world leader would normally give up their power to another, except that God will cause them to do so

Rev. 17:17 "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

- But notice God's method
 - He will put it in their hearts to execute His purpose
 - And together, these men and the Lord will have a common purpose
- The Bible never says any such thing about God loving us too much to interfere with our "will"
 - The Bible's definition of love says exactly the opposite
 - The Bible defines love as that while we were yet sinners, Christ laid down His life for us
 - And that the Father so loved the world that He gave His son for this reason
 - But the Father's love went even further
 - He loved us so much that He determined to override our will
 - Paul says that it was our will and nature to reject the Gospel and to hate God and to be His enemy
 - It was our will to oppose the things of God and to see the Gospel as foolishness and to never seek for God nor to do His will

- So the Bible teaches that the Lord loved us enough to intervene in our lives and change our will and bring us into a relationship with Him by faith
 - Just as the Lord is working to bring Joseph and his family to Egypt as He promised Abraham He would do

- As I promised early in our study of Joseph and the *toledot* of Jacob, the sovereignty of God takes a leading role in the story
 - We're watching Jacob and his sons making decisions, devising schemes, following the sin in their hearts
 - But the real actor driving our narrative forward is the Lord Himself
 - He's fulfilling promises and deciding outcomes to fit His purposes
 - While men plan their ways, God is directing their steps
 - We've also focused on Joseph as a picture of Christ
 - From detail to detail, we find parallels between Joseph's life to the Lord, whether to the Lord's first coming or increasingly to His return
 - And from this point forward in the story of Joseph, these two stories merge in a powerful way
 - Scripture tells us that the Father saw fit to crush His Son, the One He loved, and He did so for the good of Creation

Is. 53:10 But the LORD was pleased

To crush Him, putting Him to grief;

If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,

He will see His offspring,

He will prolong His days,

And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

- The Father crushed His own Son on the cross to bring about a glorious outcome, that is the redemption of Creation from sin
- The suffering of Jesus was a necessary step to that good and proper end
 - Likewise, the story of Joseph is moving in a disturbing direction
 - Joseph will suffer greatly in the cause of righteousness
 - He will do so for no cause of his own, but like Job, he will suffer unjustly for God's good eternal purposes
 - Just as Christ did for all of us
- So let's keep these two truths in mind
 - God is in control, causing all things to happen as He intends
 - And the suffering that results is part of a larger plan to bring good things to Joseph, Israel and the world

Gen. 37:29 Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.

Gen. 37:30 He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?"

- We remember from last week how Reuben was secretly working behind the scenes to manipulate his brothers so he could save Joseph
 - Reuben was the oldest, so he would be held personally responsible for anything that happened to the brothers
 - When he learned that the brothers were intent on killing Joseph, he determined to secretly set Joseph free from the pit and send him home
 - Reuben's decision may have reflected his love for Joseph and for his father
 - But more likely, Reuben was acting to save his own skin
 - There was great potential that Jacob would hold Joseph's death against Reuben
 - But now we learn that Judah and the brothers sold Joseph to the slave traders while Reuben wasn't around
 - So as Reuben returns to the pit to save his brother, he discovers that Joseph was gone
 - Reuben immediately reacts with dismay, tearing his clothes
 - This may seem like a strange tradition to us, but men in the east commonly rip clothing as a display of intense grief
 - Reuben is severely stressed over his discovery and he confronts his brothers
 - They probably related the story to him, of how they sold Joseph while Reuben was away
 - Reuben's first thought reveals his true concerns in this matter
 - Reuben asks what will become of him
 - Not "What will become of Joseph or Jacob"
 - Reuben's real concern is for how it will go for him when Jacob learns that Joseph was sold by his own brothers
 - The story never tells us where Reuben went during the time when Joseph was sold
 - He may have returned to the flock for a time, or went in search of water
 - There are any number of scenarios that could explain his absence for a time
 - Whatever the earthly reason, we know the real cause for his absence was the Lord
 - The Lord, knowing Reuben's heart was inclined to save his brother, stepped in to prevent this from happening
 - He caused Reuben to be gone when the slave traders arrived
 - And then brought Reuben back after it was too late to intervene
- Can you look upon negative experiences in your life with an attitude that acknowledges God will sometimes work in this way?
 - Sometimes, the Lord will allow pain and suffering and disappointment and even heartbreak in our lives when it is the best way to bring about the eternal good He is intent on producing

- While we we may perceive those times as evidence that God doesn't love us or is "out to get us"...
- The truth will always be very different
- Consider Reuben's situation
 - He thought he was doing the right thing
 - He wanted to free his brother so he could save his own skin
 - He might have thought that surely God would support him in that plan, since it was the right thing to do
 - But in reality, it was not God's desire to free Joseph
 - On the contrary, Joseph was destined to go into Egypt
 - And the brothers' evil plan was the mechanism God was intent on using to bring that result about
 - We too may find ourselves working for an outcome we assume is the right thing, the thing God Himself would want
 - But then for some reason the plan falls through
 - Remember, the Lord is still on the throne, which means He hasn't lost touch
 - He has reasons for what happens in each of our lives
 - And acknowledging that reality doesn't mean we've dismissed our circumstances as simply a matter of fate and outside our understanding
 - On the contrary, recognizing God works through difficulties will train us to ask why more often and seek that understanding as God permits
 - Knowing God is at work leads us to align with that work rather than to fight against it
- I believe we can group the opinions of Christians concerning God's sovereignty into essentially one of three groups
 - There are those who believe that God created the world and the universe, and then like someone spinning a top, He now stands back to watch it work itself to conclusion
 - And like the spinning top, God's hand never again touches His creation or intervenes in its course
 - There is a second group who believe that God created the world and He continues to intervene in it to change the course of history from time to time
 - He intervenes in both natural and supernatural ways, and always for good purposes, ultimately to bring events to His desired outcome
 - Implicit in this second view is the principle that some things lie outside God's control – outside His sovereignty
 - For example, this view will see evil as an independent force, one that operates apart from God's desires and intentions and against His will
 - Many would also agree that man himself operates in freedom from the

direct control of God – that God would not intervene to change the mind or will of man

- Finally, our third group are those whose view of God's sovereignty sees no limit; All things were created by Him and are sustained by Him
 - He doesn't just intervene to redirect history from time to time, He writes every page of history
 - He directs all things, controls all things, governs all events on Earth so that everything may happen according to a preordained plan
 - One example of this view can be seen in the 1689 Confession of faith for the historic Reformed Baptist movement in London:

God who, in infinite power and wisdom, has created all things, upholds, directs, controls, and governs them, both animate and inanimate, great and small, by a providence supremely wise and holy, and in accordance with His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable decisions of His will. He fulfills the purposes for which He created them, so that His wisdom, power and justice, together with His infinite goodness and mercy, might be praised and glorified. Nothing happens by chance or outside the sphere of God's providence. As God is the First Cause of all events, they happen immutable and infallibly according to His foreknowledge and decree, to which they stand related. Yet by His providence God controls them, that second causes, operating either as fixed laws, or freely, or in dependence upon other causes, play their part in bringing them about.

- Some might criticize those who hold this view as merely adhering to fatalism, to which Charles Spurgeon, himself a member of this third group, replied:

What is fate? Fate is this – Whatever is, must be. But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, Whatever God ordains, must be; but the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some great end. Fate does not say that. . . There is all the difference between fate and Providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man.

- I believe it is fair to say that most unbelievers today likely fall into the first of these three groups (assuming they are not atheists)
 - They are content to acknowledge the existence of some higher power
 - But their pride and hard hearts will never allow them to concede that this higher power actually has influence over them, much less controls their lives and their future
 - Sadly, even a few Christians fall into this group

- Most Christians, on the other hand, probably fall into Group 2
 - They are aware of God's ultimate control over the larger events of the world and history
 - They believe in His prophecy, but they often attribute it to foreknowledge – His knowing the future – rather than to His providence – His determining the future
 - But their belief in His sovereignty turns to uncertainty when deciding where to draw the line in His control over smaller matters of everyday life, or over our personal choices or over the effects of sin and evil
- Few Christians today, however, are willing to venture into Group 3
 - In fact, few have even heard it suggested that there is no event God *doesn't* control
 - Not even the smallest meaningless events of our everyday lives lie outside His power and plan
 - All personal decisions, whether impulsive or well-considered, operate under God's sovereignty
 - Even our sins, though God is not their author, still fall into an overall plan God is orchestrating
- And yet, when we all consider some great tragedy in our lives or in the world, are not many people, both unbeliever and Christian, tempted to ask “How could a loving God allow such things?”
 - Ironically, when we ask such a question, we have unknowingly placed ourselves – if even for just a moment – into Group 3
 - Even just by asking the question we are implying that we believe God could have changed the course of events to bring about a different outcome
 - That He could have prevented the sons of Jacob from selling Joseph
 - That He could have ensured Reuben was present when the transaction took place so as to stop it from proceeding
 - And of course, He could have done that very thing, because the third viewpoint is the Biblical view of God – the Lord and Creator God
 - And therefore, the fact that the Lord took Reuben out of the way even though Reuben was trying to save his brother simply tells us that the Lord desired something greater than Joseph's freedom
 - Just as Jesus Himself sought for something greater than to preserve His comfort and earthly life
- Reuben hasn't acknowledged this fact yet, so he's crying “woe is me” and trying to protect himself from blame as he discovers his brother's absence
 - Poor Reuben
 - He seems to make the wrong decision at every turn
 - First, he violates his father's trust and honor by sleeping with the concubine
 - Now he tries to do what he thinks is right thing but he's still working against God

- He's an example of a man living entirely out of touch with the Lord and the Lord's work
- There will be only two times Reuben tries to do the right thing
 - And in both cases, it's done out of selfish motives and consequently they are both opposite of what God wants
 - The first example comes here in the selling of Joseph
 - The second comes later in the matter of Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin

Gen. 37:31 So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood;

Gen. 37:32 and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not."

Gen. 37:33 Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"

Gen. 37:34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.

Gen. 37:35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him.

- Because Reuben doesn't want to be blamed for Joseph's disappearance, he concocts a story that Joseph was eaten by an animal before ever arriving to Dotham
 - They slaughter a male goat and dip the tunic in his blood
 - The goal was to make it appear as if Joseph had met with some tragic fate
 - His unique robe is so distinctive, it will serve as conclusive proof for Jacob of Joseph's death
 - And yet it appears to happen without the sons' involvement whatsoever
 - The death of the goat draws an interesting parallel to Christ's own death
 - In Leviticus 16, the Law provides for a certain ritual on the day of atonement
 - Two goats are involved
 - One goat has the sins of Israel placed upon it, and then it is sent outside the city and outside the assembly of Israel
 - The second is killed, and its blood is poured on the altar in the temple
 - Jesus is pictured by both goats
 - Jesus is the One crucified outside the city walls carrying the sin of the world
 - And Jesus is the One who's blood is spilled to atone for the guilt of men and cleanse the altar in Heaven
 - In this scene, we find both goats

- Joseph pictures Christ sent outside the assembly of Israel, carrying the weight of his brother's sin
 - While the other goat is sacrificed in an effort to cover the brother's guilt by means of its blood
- When the brothers get home, they meet their father and send for the tunic
 - When the text says they sent for the robe, it means they asked one of their servants to produce it
 - They act as if someone had come upon it, and they were merely reporting the find to their father
 - Of course, they know Jacob will immediately recognize the robe and notice the blood and draw the obvious conclusion
 - Jacob produces his own lie
 - Jacob concludes that a wild beast has devoured his beloved son
 - No one even has to suggest the storyline...Jacob fills in the blanks for himself
 - Remember how Jacob obtained what he wanted from his father?
 - He presented himself as Esau and deceived his father by use of a goat's skin
 - Now we see him deceiving himself, so to speak, with goat's blood
 - Do you see the hand of God visiting Jacob's sins upon himself? I do
 - Jacob is understandably crushed by the supposed loss of Joseph
 - Like Reuben did earlier, Jacob rips his clothing and cries in distress
 - His mourning goes on for many days, and he refuses to be consoled by anyone
 - He even laments that he will go down to Sheol in his mourning
 - Sheol is a reference to the place of departed souls prior to Christ's death and resurrection
 - Before Christ's death and payment for sin, men couldn't enter into the Lord's presence upon death
 - So they were held temporarily in a place called Sheol, which scripture describes as a combination of two places
 - A good side for the saints and a bad place for the rest
 - Obviously, Jacob would expect to be held in the blessed place
 - So the point of his statement is simply that he is so sad for Joseph that he feels he will die from mourning
- I wonder if the depths of Jacob's mourning surprised his sons?
 - Did his suffering cause regret? Did they have second thoughts about what they did?
 - Jacob's response must have been a powerful reminder to his sons that sin has consequences
 - And those consequences extend far beyond ourselves

- They wanted Joseph gone so that they could feel better
 - But they caused their father untold pain, to say nothing of Joseph's misery
- How did Joseph feel sitting in that caravan in chains as he made the journey to Egypt?
 - How many tears did he shed reflecting on how his own flesh and blood betrayed him in this way?
- Our sins have the potential to bring terrible consequences on us, and others, even many years later
 - We can't begin to understand what kind of seeds we are sowing as we sin
 - And by the time we understand those consequences, it will be too late to reverse them
 - Better to avoid the sin in the first place, in fear of the Lord and in fear of what kind of future misery we are preparing for ourselves and others
- So as we leave Chapter 37 and prepare to enter Chapter 38 next time, let's consider where we stand
 - Joseph is on his way to Egypt, the brothers are guilty of great sin, and Jacob is the victim of the seeds he sowed decades earlier
 - Above everything, God is at work to bring out His promises to Abraham
 - The family is about to be moved into Egypt as God declared
 - But there is a second reason for sending Israel into Egypt
 - The second reason is still an issue of sin in the family of Israel, but sin of a different sort
 - In Chapter 38 we'll discover why the nation must spend centuries in Egypt in slavery
 - And once again, the reason traces back to a promise of God and an eternal work God is intent on accomplishing for the sake of His glory and His Son

- I've been making reference to Chapter 38 since we began the *toledot* of Jacob at the start of Chapter 37
 - At that time, we learned that this final section of Genesis told the story of Jacob's sons, specifically the sons Judah and Joseph
 - These sons are the focus because Joseph will receive the birthright
 - But Jacob will receive the seed promise
 - The birthright will give rights to a double portion of the inheritance and the right to rule over the family
 - The seed promise is that unique aspect of the inheritance that God Himself gave Abraham and his family by virtue of a promise
 - This promise said that through the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the world would be blessed
 - This Seed, Paul tells us in Galatians, was a veiled reference to the Messiah Jesus
 - Obviously, the story of Joseph dominates the section, but Judah's story is no less important
 - In fact, these two stories are closely related
 - The story of Judah makes necessary the story of Joseph
 - The story of Joseph tells us how God sent Joseph into Egypt to obtain the birthright over his brothers
 - First, Joseph earned it through suffering
 - And later he exercised it in glory and power
 - But the story of Judah tells us why God had to send all Israel into Egypt after Joseph

Gen. 38:1 And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.

Gen. 38:2 Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.

Gen. 38:3 So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er.

Gen. 38:4 Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan.

Gen. 38:5 She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him.

- To fit Chapter 38 into the overall narrative of Genesis, we have to appreciate a couple of timing idiosyncrasies
 - First, the events of this chapter last at least 20 years
 - They begin at the same point when Joseph was taken to Egypt, which was when Joseph was 17 years old

- At about this time we're told Judah departs from his brothers, which means he moved out of the house and moved away from Jacob's family
- It's not hard to imagine that after selling Joseph and watching his father's intense mourning that Judah couldn't stand to stick around the house
- So he moves on to help put away the guilt and remove the burden of carrying the secret
- Secondly, this chapter runs concurrently with the events in later chapters of Genesis describing Joseph's time in Egypt
 - Chapter 38's timeline ends roughly at the same point that the seven year famine begins in the story of Joseph
 - That happens when Joseph is 37 years old, 20 years after he is sold into slavery
 - So as we study this chapter we need to appreciate that these events are running concurrently with the years Joseph spent in Egypt
 - His time in Potiphar's house
 - And then in prison
 - And then ruling over Egypt during the seven years of plenty
 - Finally, the stories of Joseph and Judah merge again in Chapter 42
- When Judah leaves his family in the hill country he visited an Adullamite named Hirah
 - Adullam was a settlement in the Shephelah, a plain to the west of the hill country leading to the sea
 - While Judah is living there, he takes notice of a Canaanite woman, who is the daughter of a man named Shua
 - We're never given the name of Judah's Canaanite wife
 - In v.2 we're told he marries this girl and then they begin to have sons
 - This is the first time that a man in the line of the seed promise had dared to marry outside the family
 - We remember that the Canaanites are a cursed people according to the Lord's word through Noah
 - And the Lord reiterated this judgment when He spoke to Abraham declaring that the iniquities of the Amorite would be judged but not until a future day
 - So what does it mean when one of the sons of Israel begins to intermarry with the Canaanite women?
 - Judah is just the first son to make this move, but can the others be far behind?
 - Since Judah will be the son to carry the seed promise of Israel, can the Lord tolerate this intermarrying with a cursed people?
 - Any sons Judah might bear will be cursed as well
 - So this move has the potential to doom the line of the Messiah
 - His three sons to carry this Canaanite curse are Er, Onan, and Shelah

- Er means “watcher”
- Onan means “strength”
- Shelah means “weak”
- They are born in Chezib, which confirms that he has remained in the Shephelah away from his family

Gen. 38:6 Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

Gen. 38:7 But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life.

Gen. 38:8 Then Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother’s wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.”

- After some number of years, the boys reach marrying age, probably in their late teens
 - So Judah arranges their marriages
 - He chooses wives from among the Canaanites as well
 - It’s clear that Judah is fully vested into the Canaanite culture
 - Imagine Judah living among a cursed pagan worshipping people while all the while he is carrying the promise to bring the Messiah
 - The Lord Himself will come through this line
 - But in the meantime the current holder of this promise has become Canaanite and is moving his family toward pagan living
 - The woman he chose for his son was a girl named Tamar
 - Her name means “palm tree” and she was also a Canaanite
 - Within a short time, however, the Lord visits the curse of the Canaanites upon Judah’s Canaanite sons
 - Er, Judah’s firstborn, was evil through and through
 - And as a result, the Lord took his life
 - The wording in Hebrew makes clear that the Lord caused His death directly
 - This is a simple but often forgotten principle of scripture
 - The Lord can – and does – take a person’s earthly life when it suits Him as a result of intense sin
 - I can’t say what criteria God uses to decide when to end an evil man’s life and when to allow it to go longer
 - But scripture tells us that God may take a life to demonstrate that sin has consequences
 - And He will even take this step against believers if necessary

Acts 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of

property,

Acts 5:2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?"

Acts 5:4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Acts 5:5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

- Men cannot sin with impunity, at least not forever
 - God may permit a man to live a long life of sin, but if God does so, it will only be to the person's disadvantage in the long run
 - To the unbeliever, the extra time just means more wrath stored up for the day of judgment
 - To the believer, it means more loss of reward when our works are evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ
 - Instead, the Lord may choose to cut a life short as an example in the case of Ananias
 - His sin was made an example for the early church, so that others would learn to fear the Lord and respect the Apostle's authority
 - On another occasion in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul directs that a man be set outside church fellowship and allowed to experience "the destruction of his flesh" as penalty for a terrible sin
 - And this principle didn't end when the last apostle died
 - Even today there remains the possibility that those who sin showing no fear of the Lord are risking an untimely death **Heb. 10:26** For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Heb. 10:27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

Heb. 10:28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Heb. 10:29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Heb. 10:30 For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

Heb. 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- In the case of Er, we don't know what specific evil prompted his early death by God's hand, but his specific sin doesn't matter
 - We know that it served God's eternal purposes to put an end to his life so he could stand as an example by his death
 - And so that his sin couldn't do damage to the family of Israel and the future seed of Messiah
 - More over, Er was under the curse of the Canaanites, and therefore he simply could not be party to the seed promise
- Er's sin left him dead at an early age and his young bride a widow
 - When a man died leaving his wife without an heir, the law of the day required that the oldest unmarried brother of the deceased man take the man's widow as wife
 - In this new marriage, the first son produced by the woman is legally considered to be the son of the deceased man
 - The child is raised by the surrogate father, but the child takes the name of the deceased man and becomes the legal heir to his inheritance
 - Any future sons belong to the natural father in the normal way
 - Only the first born son belongs to the deceased brother
 - Today, we call this arrangement a levirate marriage, coming from the Latin word *levir* which means "husband's brother"
 - After this time of Jacob and Judah, the Lord included a levirate marriage requirement in the Law
 - Probably the best example of a levirate marriage was the marriage of Boaz to Ruth
 - Obviously, this marriage is taking place prior to the Law of Moses, so it was already a matter of custom in the land
 - This is the expectation that Judah had for his son, Onan
 - Onan was to marry Tamar and the first son that Onan produced would belong to Er
- But Onan had other ideas

Gen. 38:9 Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother.

Gen. 38:10 But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also.

- While Onan gladly took Tamar as his wife, when the time came to produce a son for his dead brother, Onan took action to prevent his new wife from conceiving
 - The Hebrew verb tense in v.9 indicates that this was an ongoing behavior on Onan's part

- Every time he had relations with Tamar, he would prevent Tamar from becoming pregnant
- He was willing to take her and enjoy the fruits of marriage
- But he was unwilling to fulfill his duty to Tamar to the full extent
- Moses tells us exactly why Onan kept up this behavior
 - He knew that any son born of Tamar would not belong to him
 - The son would be considered Er's offspring, and so the son would receive Er's part of Judah's inheritance
 - But the law held that if Tamar never produced a son, then Onan himself would receive Er's part of Judah's inheritance
 - So Onan is preventing Tamar from becoming pregnant to ensure he received not only his portion of the inheritance, but also Er's double portion
- As Moses says in v.10, the Lord was not pleased with Onan's behavior
 - "Not pleased" is an understatement
 - The Hebrew word is *raa*, which means wicked and evil
 - The suggestion is that Onan was working the purposes of evil
 - Perhaps without knowing it, Onan was an agent of Satan, working in concert with the enemy's plan
 - And why would the enemy want to prevent Tamar from giving birth?
 - Judah is the line of the seed promise
 - Should the enemy somehow succeed in stopping the line of Judah, then theoretically the Messiah can never come to defeat Satan
 - Already, Er has been killed
 - And now Onan is preventing his wife from having children
 - Satan sees an opportunity to fight against the Lord in this way
 - And who gave Satan opportunity for this fight in the first place?
 - It was Judah's willingness to bind himself with the Canaanites, who were an evil people destined to judgment by the Lord
 - Remember, the Bible teaches that we are in a war with the enemy

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- The people who obstruct God's purposes are made of flesh and blood, as Paul says, but they are not the source of the fight
 - The fight is a spiritual fight directed behind the scenes by a host of powers that have as their goal disrupting and frustrating the plans of God

- And when we ignore the word of God, we are ignoring orders from the commander of our forces
 - We then may unknowingly play right into the enemy's hands
 - The Lord forbid Abraham's line from intermarrying with Canaanites because doing so meant giving ground to the enemy
 - Once Judah made that mistake, the consequences soon followed
 - Judah has produced three sons who are pawns of the enemy, and they are being directed to act against God's plan
- As a result of Onan's disobedience, the Lord took his life as well
 - While it's clear that Judah's sons died as punishment for their wicked ways, we must also remember that these boys were living under the curse of the Canaanites
 - They could never become a part of the line of Judah
 - Their offspring would likewise carry the curse
 - The children of God and the children of the enemy can never find a common path, according to Scripture

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

- The answers to Paul's questions are clearly "nothing"
 - Judah carries the seed promise, and his line can have nothing in common with the evil Canaanites
 - They do not share the same future
 - One is cursed, one is blessed
 - There simply could never be a successful union between Judah and Shua's family... God would never permit it
- Therefore, we must conclude that God's sovereign power was at work to ensure that Judah's sons were unsuccessful in producing heirs
 - Once again, the Lord harnessed the sin of their hearts to direct their evil behaviors
 - And then the Lord acted to destroy them justly
 - Ironically, the enemy probably thought he was succeeding in stopping the line of Judah
 - In reality, the Lord was working to ensure the seed promise would carry forward in the right way
- So with two sons dead, and one son left, Judah begins to recognize a pattern that concerns him

Gen. 38:11 Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up”; for he thought, “I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers.” So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house.

- Since Er and Onan have died, Judah’s third son Shelah bears the responsibility to raise up sons for both his dead brothers
 - Shelah may have been too young to marry at this point, or perhaps he was just barely of marrying age
 - Regardless, Judah tells Tamar to move into her father’s house and become part of his household because Shelah wasn’t ready to marry
- But v. 11 gives us the real reason Judah delayed in marrying his third son to Tamar
 - Judah sees that two sons died early, and both died shortly after marrying Tamar
 - So he concludes that Tamar is the reason for his first two sons dying
 - Judah had mistaken correlation with causation
 - Tamar didn’t cause their death
 - If anything, it was Judah who caused their death by choosing to marry a Canaanite against God’s counsel
 - The real cause for their death was the Lord acting to preserve the seed promise
- Nevertheless, Judah doesn’t want to take any more chances, so he holds back his last son
 - According to the Law, if Shelah is to marry he must marry Tamar
 - So Judah is simply preventing him from marrying at all
 - Judah is probably planning to wait long enough for Tamar to age past childbearing years
 - Once Tamar is too old to bear children, then Judah would be permitted to marry Shelah to another woman
- So as we end the opening of Chapter 38, Jacob’s fourth son is faced with a sad situation
 - He has broken the family rule to marry a Canaanite
 - He has placed the seed promise at risk
 - And were his brothers to follow suit, the entire family of Jacob would be in danger of coming under a curse
 - But since God has declared that Israel will be blessed, then it follows that this situation simply cannot stand
 - Israel must remain separate from the Canaanites until the day comes for them to conquer these people and take over the land
 - In the meantime, the Lord must act to preserve His promise and His people
 - He has taken the first step in that direction by eliminating two of Judah’s sons,

thus preventing the line from continuing

- But there is still the need to produce a godly heir from the line of Judah

- Joseph has been sent away from his family, and meanwhile his brothers and his father go on with their lives in Canaan
 - It will be 22 years before Jacob leads his family to Egypt to join Joseph
 - And in all those 22 years, we have but one chapter telling us about life in Jacob's household – Chapter 38
 - The focus of the chapter is Judah, the man who now carries the seed promise, the one through whom we know God plans to bring the Messiah
 - Judah is no saint...he has already demonstrated that
 - Like his brothers, he was willing to kill Joseph
 - Ultimately, he was the one to suggest selling him into slavery
 - And so far in Chapter 38 we've seen him take a Canaanite woman as a wife, a woman who is never named and is soon to die
 - Judah's choice was a serious departure from the choices his forefathers made when choosing a mate
 - He has hitched his wagon to the cursed Canaanites, against God's wishes
 - As God has proclaimed, any Canaanite family will bear the curse and must one day cease to exist
 - We were introduced to Judah's three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah
 - As Er reached his teens, Judah found a wife for Er; a woman called Tamar
 - Er's character reflected the Canaanite curse, as he was evil and displeased God
 - So the Lord kills him
 - Likewise, Onan, Er's brother, marries Tamar as part of a levirate marriage or brother-in-law marriage
 - But Onan refuses to give Tamar children since it threatened his desire to receive the birthright
 - So God kills him too
- Judah is to be the tribal line to receive the privilege of birthing kings – he carries the seed promise God gave Abraham
 - Ultimately, this line will bring forth The King, the Messiah
 - But it seems clear that if the Lord is to bring the Messiah through Judah's line, then something must intervene to change the current direction of this family
 - Already, the Lord has intervened to put two sons to death, thus preventing the line of Messiah from tracing through Canaanite descendants
 - But there is still the matter of Judah, now without a wife...he still needs an heir
 - And there's Tamar, a widow living in Judah's house waiting to marry Judah's final son, Shelah
 - But Judah refuses to allow the marriage

- So no one is getting married, no one is having babies
- But as we've seen so many times already, the Lord is steadily moving the storyline in the direction He desires using the sin of this family as His muse
 - The brothers sent Joseph into slavery, but the Lord's hand was clearly evident in that outcome
 - And now as Judah's repeated sins have left his family on the brink of ruin, the Lord intervenes to protect the seed promise that Judah carries

Gen. 38:12 Now after a considerable time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

Gen. 38:13 It was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

Gen. 38:14 So she removed her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.

- At this point in the story, we learn that Judah's unnamed wife dies
 - This resulted in Judah engaging in a period of mourning, as we've seen before
 - After this time is complete, normal routines return
 - And in this case, the time to shear the sheep arrives
 - The shearers were located a distance of about 12 miles from Judah's home in Adullam in the Shephelah
 - So he travels along with a friend
 - The time to shear the sheep was usually a time of great revelry
 - The days were long and filled with hard work, but the evenings were a time to feast and cut loose
 - It was also an occasion limited to men, so boys will be boys
 - As Tamar learns that her father-in-law has decided to attend the shearing, it told her three things
 - First, it indicated that the period of mourning was over
 - Secondly, it told her that he would be in a place and state of mind to celebrate
 - Finally, it told her that Shelah would never be her husband
 - For Judah to leave the family home for this event and not take Shelah with him meant that Shelah was now old enough to watch over things
 - With Judah's wife gone, the only person left in the family to watch over the estate was Shelah
 - And yet Judah hasn't permitted the marriage

- So Tamar decides to take matters into her own hands
 - The thing any woman feared the most was to be made a widow without a son to care for her
 - According to the levirate marriage law, Tamar is betrothed to Shelah
 - This means she can't marry another, but she must wait for Judah to permit the marriage
 - Judah was now sinning against Tamar by denying her the opportunity to have a husband
 - But a woman has one tool at her disposal that she can use to even the odds
 - She can use her body, and use it to steal what she can't obtain legitimately
 - And that's what Tamar does
- Tamar removes her widow's garments and puts on a very unique outfit
 - First, she puts on a veil
 - The mention of a veil is a reference to a wedding veil
 - In this day, prostitution was legal
 - The uniform of a prostitute was to dress up as a bride on her wedding night
 - So when Tamar appears in public in this outfit, she will be advertising herself as a prostitute
 - Of course the veil will also serve a useful purpose of hiding her identity
 - Furthermore, she wrapped herself
 - The wrapping refers to the particular clothing of temple prostitutes
 - Temple prostitutes were a different class of prostitutes
 - Under the law of the time, only certain cultic prostitutes could wear such apparel
 - Finally, Tamar stations herself in the gate of the city of Enaim to await for Judah
 - This city sits directly between Adullam and Timnah, so she is hoping to catch Judah upon his return

Gen. 38:15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.

Gen. 38:16 So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"

- Sure enough Judah sees Tamar and assumes she is a prostitute from the temple, but her covered face conceals her identity
 - Judah stops to secure her services

- And this begins the negotiating process for Tamar's price
- Tamar knows that Judah won't be carrying anything of significant value
- Her intent is to obtain something personal of Judah's, something that will tie him to this night
- Tamar's intent is to become a wife and a mother, and this scheme is her last opportunity
 - She will entice Judah in the hope of being impregnated
 - This will force Judah's hand, requiring him to marry her
 - Technically, this was allowed under the levirate marriage rules
 - If no brother was available to marry the woman, another male relative, including a father-in-law could fulfill the duty
 - But in this case, a brother was available, so Judah could not legally marry her
 - Yet because Judah prevented her from having his son, she takes the next best alternative
 - So she is seeking something from Judah that she has a right to expect, that is a husband and heir
 - But she is going after the right thing in the wrong way
- But if her plan works and Tamar turns up pregnant one day, she will be in a heap of trouble
 - She will be accused of adultery and put to death
 - So she needs something to tie Judah to the moment, which can protect her later in the event she is found with child

Gen. 38:17 He said, therefore, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send it?"

Gen. 38:18 He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him.

Gen. 38:19 Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.

Gen. 38:20 When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her.

Gen. 38:21 He asked the men of her place, saying, "Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?" But they said, "There has been no temple prostitute here."

Gen. 38:22 So he returned to Judah, and said, "I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, 'There has been no temple prostitute here.'"

Gen. 38:23 Then Judah said, "Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her."

- Judah offers to pay with a goat from his herd, but of course his herd is in the field
 - So his promise is to deliver a goat later
 - Essentially, Judah wants Tamar's services on credit
 - Tamar counted on this, and so she is prepared with a response
 - Tamar asks Judah for three things that were intensely personal yet of little value to someone other than the owner
 - She asks for Judah's seal, a ring used to seal documents in wax
 - This was essentially Judah's driver's license
 - Secondly, she asked for his cord, which is the necklace upon which the ring hung around his neck
 - This was essentially Judah's wallet
 - Finally, she asked for his staff, which was the unique tool of a shepherd
 - That was like the keys to Judah's work truck
 - By taking these things, a prostitute would be assured that the owner would return for them as promised, since they were personally valuable
 - But Judah would be willing to let them go temporarily because they had no intrinsic value to a prostitute, so she would be unlikely to run off with them
 - But run off she did
- Tamar took Judah's personal items and fled, returning to her father's house and donning her widow's garments
 - Meanwhile, Judah sends his friend back with the goat as payment
 - He expects to find the prostitute in the city waiting for payment
 - But she is gone
 - Hirah searches in the town asking about the temple prostitute that was working the area
 - But of course no one knew anything about a prostitute
 - Rather than search harder, Judah decides to drop the whole thing
 - Otherwise, he will look the fool
 - But of course now Tamar has the proof she needs to stay alive

Gen. 38:24 Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!"

Gen. 38:25 It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?"

Gen. 38:26 Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more righteous than I,

inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not have relations with her again.

- Nature takes its course, and three months later Tamar starts to show her pregnancy
 - Naturally, everyone assumes Tamar has been fooling around on the side
 - In that culture, prostitution was permitted and accepted if not approved
 - But adultery was punishable by death
 - So when Judah is told of her sin, he reacts in the traditional way declaring she must be put to death
 - As the patriarch living in a patriarchal period of history, he had the authority to do this
 - This is an age before nations and governments as we know them today
 - City states were the largest ruling entities
 - And these were simply large clans ruled by a patriarch
 - So patriarchs were the law
 - But as Tamar is brought out to be burned, she brings Judah’s ring, cord and staff with her
 - She presents them to him and says these belong to the father of the child...do you recognize them?
- Judah’s response is an important moment in the story of this family
 - Judah immediately recognized the items, of course
 - How could he not?
 - And as he stared at them, I imagine a flood of memory and emotion ran through his mind
 - He’s caught up in righteous indignation at the prospect of killing his daughter-in-law over her adultery
 - Then suddenly he’s remembering a night with a prostitute
 - And he connects the dots and understands the situation in a flash
 - This is the moment of truth in Judah’s life
 - From this moment he could go one of two ways
 - On the one hand Judah could react in anger and disgust
 - He could deny the accusation
 - Only his close friend would have known the truth
 - Judah could have killed Tamar anyway and covered up his part in the tragedy
 - He’s done this before
 - After all, Judah was the one to suggest that Joseph be sold into slavery

- He had to sit and eat while listening to his brother's pleas for freedom
 - He had to carry that bloodstained coat to his father and repeat that concocted story with sincerity
- But that episode with Joseph was too much to bear, and it drove Judah out of the house and into the arms of a Canaanite woman
 - Now he's faced with a similar choice
 - Does he lie? Does he let injustice stand? Does he run again?
- Or does Judah take Option #2? Does Judah repent?
 - In v.26 Judah takes the second option
 - He declares that Tamar was more righteous than he was
 - Or said another way, he is declaring that he bears greater guilt than she does for her situation
 - Because Judah has denied Tamar from marrying his last son
 - Notice that Judah isn't just confessing of his sin of laying with Tamar
 - He is also confessing that he was acting in sin when he denied her a husband
 - Judah's turning point reflects a theme common in Genesis
 - Abraham started as Abram
 - Israel started as Jacob
 - And here we see Judah becoming a new man also
 - He is shown his sin, a sin God brings upon Judah for good purposes
 - In fact, notice that Judah was deceived by an outfit, just as he used an outfit to deceive his father
 - Once again, we see God visiting the sin of the person upon himself to teach a lesson on the consequences of sin
 - And it has done its good work in bringing Judah's heart into conformance with God's heart
 - Judah has confessed, repented and been restored
- There is no lesson more important to a successful walk as a Christian than to recognize the opportunities God gives us to confess, repent and restore
 - When He gives us the grace to come face to face with our sin and its consequences, make the most of them; don't waste them
 - Drop your guard, let go of pride, understand that God brings these moments because He loves us and knows what is best
 - Without confession, we never face the reality of who we are by nature
 - We never see our sin honestly
 - Nor do we acknowledge its destructive nature

- It's like having cancer but pretending it isn't something to worry about
- Without repentance, we won't break the grip sin has on our future
 - We may regret our failure in the moment
 - But without repentance, we'll soon forget that regret and return to sin in time
- And without restoration, we never feel the sting of sin nor fully experience the suffering it brings
 - Judah restored Tamar to his home and denied both her and himself the opportunity for future relations
 - He couldn't marry her, since it would be adultery
 - But he couldn't give her to his son either, since that would create an incestuous relationship now that Judah had fathered a child with her
 - Judah paid a price for his sin, as did Tamar for her sin
 - And yet God was able to create good things out of this episode
 - Judah repented, Tamar was saved from unjust death
 - And Judah's line would now continue

Gen. 38:27 It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb.

Gen. 38:28 Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first."

Gen. 38:29 But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez.

Gen. 38:30 Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.

- Tamar's pregnancy turns out to be a birth of twins, making her and Rebecca the only women in the Bible to give birth to twins
 - Since Judah is the line to bring the seed promise, it's even more unsurprising to see her with two sons
 - This has been God's method through every step of the patriarchs to this point
 - Abraham had two sons, Isaac had two sons, and Jacob had numerous sons through two wives
 - Now Judah will have twin sons as well
 - And one of these sons will carry the seed promise
 - As the birth takes place, the midwife waits to see who will be born first
 - It was so important to know who would be the birthright holder, that the first

son is to be noted and marked carefully

- One of the sons put an arm out of the womb, meaning it was about to be born first
- So while the arm was exposed, the midwife ties a red thread around the arm to mark that son as first
- But just then, the arm goes back into the womb
 - And then the other son is born first
 - The second son then comes out, making him the first born
- Once again, the Lord makes a point of reminding His people that He alone decides who will hold the seed promise
 - As the world was ready to declare Zerah the holder of that promise, the Lord intervenes to make clear He was granting it to Perez instead
 - And in fact, Perez will be in the line of the Messiah
 - In fact, exactly ten generations later his family line will produce its first king for Israel, a man named David
 - But Israel's first king came from the tribe of Benjamin, a man named Saul
 - If Judah's line was to be the tribe of kings, why was the first king of Israel taken from Benjamin?
 - Because God's Law says that an illegitimate birth shall prevent a family's descendants from entering the assembly of the Lord

Deut. 23:2 “No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

- Perez is the illegitimate son of Judah
- And David is the tenth generation after Perez
- Most importantly, the Lord has restored the tribe of Judah from the curse of the Canaanites and protected the seed promise
 - None of Judah's three sons could be in the line of Messiah because they were the product of a union between Judah and a Canaanite woman
 - So how did Judah's union with Tamar avoid that same problem?
 - Well remember, we've never been told anything about Tamar's origins
 - All we have is her name
 - The name Tamar means “palm tree”
 - Her name has that meaning only in one language: Hebrew
 - Her name is a Hebrew word, therefore Tamar was a Hebrew
 - She was probably the descendant of Abraham and his third wife, Keturah

- Once again, we see the Lord at work to achieve His purposes in the lives of His people
 - He works through lives in even the smallest details
 - He plans things beyond our imagination
 - He bends wills and turns hearts
 - He guides our steps and ensures that we land where necessary
 - And He uses sin, turning all things to good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose
 - Judah's life was a train wreck, one that threatened to end the seed promise upon which all humanity depends for salvation
 - But God brought Judah conviction, repentance and a son through Tamar to carry the promise forward
 - But through all this soap opera, we come to understand why God needed to bring Israel into Egypt and into captivity
 - For while God is capable of rescuing Judah and his brothers from their own sin
 - The growth and health of the nation depends on a better, long-term solution
 - Next week we turn back to watch what God does next with Joseph in Egypt

- This is the 90th lesson in our Genesis study
 - It is also the second anniversary of the start of our Genesis study
 - We have about 20% of the study remaining, which means about 6 months
- As we enter into Chapter 39, we find ourselves backing up in time
 - As you remember, at the end of Chapter 37 we left Joseph sitting in chains in a Midianite caravan headed down to Egypt
 - His brothers had sold him into slavery
 - Then they reported to Jacob that Joseph had been killed by wild animals
 - Then we moved into Chapter 38, where the focus of the narrative shifted to Judah's misadventures in Canaan
 - Chapter 38 spanned 20+ years of Judah's life
 - When Chapter 38 began, Joseph was about 17 years old
 - When that chapter ended 22 years later, Joseph was nearly 40
- Now we move back to the start of that same 22 year period
 - Only this time we'll learn what Joseph was experiencing during that same 22 year period
 - Chapter 39 begins at the same point that Chapter 38 began, with Joseph at about the age of 17
 - He's arrived in Egypt as a slave
 - He's hurt by his brothers' betrayal, he's frightened, and he has no idea what lies ahead
 - And don't forget the larger story we're also following, that being the *toledat* of Jacob
 - This story follows the question of who receives the privilege of the birthright with the double portion of the inheritance and the patriarchal leadership over the family
 - We learned earlier that the Lord gave Joseph dreams that foretold how Joseph would rule over the rest of his family
 - Those dreams tell us that Joseph will receive the birthright above all the rest of Jacob's sons
 - This would be true despite Joseph being next to last born
 - Though he was the first natural born of Rachel
 - But Joseph's dreams never revealed how the Lord will bring about that outcome
 - But the next chapters in Genesis will provide that answer
- Because Joseph's brothers decided they couldn't allow Joseph to rule over them, they decided to stop the dream from coming true
 - After discussing options, they decide to sell him into slavery, thereby preventing him

from obtaining the birthright

- Did their plan thwart God's purposes or merely ensure God's success?
- Are Joseph's circumstances evidence that men are putting God's promises at risk, or are they proof that God is at work in a marvelous way?
- Finally, we will continue our search for parallels between Joseph's life and the life of Christ
 - Joseph's story is one of the Bible's great shadows of Jesus
 - So many details of Joseph's life reflect details in the Messiah's life
 - And so we want to make note of those connections when we find them

Gen. 39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

Gen. 39:2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

Gen. 39:3 Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

Gen. 39:4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.

Gen. 39:5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.

Gen. 39:6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

- As I mentioned, the story of Joseph picks up from Genesis 37:36, as Joseph is led into Egypt
 - As it turns out, the buyer to purchase Joseph is a man named Potiphar, a servant of Pharaoh
 - The Pharaoh in this case was probably Sesotris, who ruled during the early 19th century BC
 - Joseph has been bought by a man of power and means
 - Potiphar is called an Egyptian
 - You might be saying, well of course he was an Egyptian (this is Egypt, after all)
 - But this wasn't a given in that day
 - The Egyptian empire in that day was ruled by non-Egyptians, a Hamite people

- As we learned in Genesis 9, Africa was settled by the descendants of Ham (which we call Hamites)
- While the eastern lands were settled by the line of Shem, (Semites)
- One of the semitic peoples, the Hyksos, invaded Egypt and conquered the Hamite Egyptians
 - Historically, the Hyksos ruled Egypt during the 16th and 17th Dynasties of Egypt
 - So when we hear that Potiphar was an Egyptian, it means he was a Hamite who had chosen to work for the occupying Semite rulers
 - You can learn more about the importance of the Hyksos dynasties and how they play a role in God's purposes for Israel in our study through the Book of Exodus
- Thirdly, Potiphar is the captain of the guard
 - He was the leader over the personal bodyguards of the Egyptian Pharaoh and the court
 - Since he was an Egyptian, this means he had proven himself to be a man the Pharaoh could trust
 - Potiphar must have been a ruthless man, someone willing to turn his back on his fellow Egyptians to gain the Pharaoh's confidence
 - This is a man who seeks power
 - It also means he was a very tough, perhaps even harsh man, as his position would have required such a person
 - He had authority to put men to death if the circumstances justified
 - So he was a man who must be respected and feared
- Finally, Potiphar was an officer of the Pharaoh's court
 - The word for officer in Hebrew is *saris*, which is literally the word for eunuch, meaning an emasculated male
 - It was common for monarchs to require those who served in his court, especially around his harem, to undergo emasculation
 - Once the person is made a eunuch, they won't pose a threat to Pharaoh's wives
- And so Joseph settles into his new life as a slave in Potiphar's house
 - And immediately Moses tells us that the Lord was with Joseph in his circumstances
 - The effect of the Lord's presence was that Joseph became successful
 - Everything Joseph did turned out exceptionally well
 - And Moses makes clear that this success was the direct result of the Lord giving Joseph favor
 - Isn't this an unexpected way for the Lord to bless His child, Joseph?
 - Since we know Joseph carries the birthright within the family of Jacob, aren't we expecting to see the Lord rescue Joseph?

- If I tell you that Joseph is sold into slavery and then I report that the Lord has stepped in to bless Joseph, don't you assume I'm speaking about God freeing Joseph?
 - Perhaps the Lord strikes Pharaoh with plagues like He did for Abraham and Isaac
 - Perhaps the Lord rescues Joseph by a battle like He did for Lot?
 - Perhaps the Lord appears to Potiphar in a dream and demands Joseph's freedom like He did to Abimelech?
- But these aren't the blessings the Lord brings for Joseph
- Instead, the blessing the birthright holder of the family of God received while serving as a slave in a foreign land is...to be a very successful slave
 - God does nothing to change Joseph's circumstances, at least not yet
 - Instead, everything Joseph does prospers, so that he becomes a successful man, according to v.2
 - Potiphar even takes notice, and that leads to even more responsibility as a slave
 - Joseph eventually takes charge of all the master's house
 - All other slaves report to Joseph
- Keep in mind, Joseph is a young man, probably still a teenager when this happens
 - Self-evidently, the Lord is blessing Joseph in powerful ways
 - Joseph must have had certain natural talents and abilities, but this success is far beyond the natural
 - Moses tells us that the Lord was with Joseph and the Lord caused Joseph's work to prosper
 - This is a supernatural result, a dramatic set of successes that defy explanation and knock Potiphar's sandals off
- Can it be possible to say God "blessed" Joseph while still leaving him in the grip of slavery and oppression?
 - Oh yes, He most certainly can
 - Joseph was a slave for a reason
 - And even though slavery as an institution is repugnant, Joseph's slavery plays an important part in God's plan
 - Therefore, the Lord desires for Joseph to be in his present circumstances
 - Nevertheless, the Lord shows Himself to be faithful to His promises by bringing Joseph prosperity even in the midst of His slavery
 - Here we see the true definition of God's blessing
 - A blessing isn't something we like or want, though we may call such things "blessings"
 - But Biblically speaking, a blessing is anything that demonstrates the Lord's faithfulness and kindness

- It was a blessing when you were brought to your knees in conviction and repentance of your sin
 - But that wasn't a happy moment
- It was a blessing when the Lord was crucified on the cross
 - But it wasn't a moment of joy or happiness for those who experienced it, least of all Christ Himself
- And it was a blessing when the Lord gave Joseph prosperity in slavery
 - Since the Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt
 - But they would not be without the Lord's presence and His faithfulness to His promises
 - And here we see that faithfulness at work
- In fact, Moses goes out of his way to emphasize God's faithfulness in the midst of these circumstances
 - The proper name of God, Yahweh, is used seven times in this chapter but only one other time in the entire *toledat* of Jacob
 - Moses is determined to make clear that the Lord hasn't forsaken Joseph
 - The Lord hasn't forgotten Joseph and the Lord isn't forgetting His promise to bless Abraham's seed
 - Yahweh is the name of God that communicates His covenant-keeping nature
 - It's the name scripture uses when it wants to emphasize how God keeps his promises
 - Seven times in this chapter Moses repeats the Lord's name, emphasizing these circumstances aren't evidence of God failing Joseph
 - On the contrary, God is at work to bless Joseph
 - So when we seek to be blessed by our Father, we're asking to seek the Father's faithfulness and mercy
 - And when we seek these things, consider what the Lord has promised for His people during this age as we await His Son's return
 - He didn't promise sunshine and roses
 - Instead, He promised that a life of faith would be a life of trials, of persecution, of martyrdom in some cases

Matt. 5:10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Matt. 5:12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Persecution is reserved for the blessed, for the righteous
 - And you can know that when such things come upon us because of our faith, it doesn't mean God has fallen down on the job
 - It doesn't mean that God has turned His back on you
 - It means you are privileged to be counted among a cloud of great witnesses
 - It means we are witnessing the faithfulness of the Lord, Who is working through these circumstances to ordain a great and wonderful eternal outcome
 - And should you catch yourself whispering that this isn't fair, then may I suggest we remember the One Who stands ahead of us in any test of unfairness
 - And at the head of that line is our Lord Himself

2Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- And if our Lord was subjected to such treatment for our sakes, then what must we expect for ourselves as we follow Him?

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

- So we're witnessing Joseph suffering for the sake of righteousness, but nevertheless the Lord is blessing him in his suffering
 - How is Joseph blessed? Well, we're told that Joseph is working in Potiphar's house
 - Slaves in Egypt could have the most miserable of lives
 - Slaves built the pyramids, under severe stress
 - Thousands – maybe millions – died from the forced labor
 - Conditions could be cruel and intolerable
 - Slave owners could abuse and kill slaves without fear of retribution
 - Nevertheless, Joseph is placed in perhaps the best of all circumstances – in the house of a very senior aid to the Pharaoh
 - In v.5 we're told that Potiphar had fields to care for as well as the house, reminding us that Joseph could have easily ended up in the fields – much harder labor
 - But in vs.2, 4 and 5 we're clearly told of Joseph's enviable working conditions
 - He is in the house and in charge of the house
 - He doesn't even have to worry about other servants lording over him

- This is a true blessing, a meaningful example of God providing for Joseph even in the midst of his suffering
 - But if we are to walk as mature Christians, we must learn to view our own circumstances this way
 - We need to recognize His faithfulness in blessings that come our way
 - Each small mercy reminds us of His goodness
 - Become accustomed to looking for all ways the Lord brings blessing to us during a time of trial and grief
- Speaking of blessing, there is a second Biblical principle working through Joseph's experience in Potiphar's house
 - A believer can, by our obedience, cause the blessing God brings to us to spill over and impact others around us, including unbelievers
 - We've already seen Jacob becoming a blessing to Laban as a result of God working to bless Jacob
 - On a larger scale, we know the world is blessed by the existence of Israel and the Lord's work through that nation
 - And here we see the home of a pagan Egyptian benefitting from the slavery service of a man blessed by God
 - This phenomenon didn't end with Joseph
 - All believers can be a source of blessing to the world around us as God blesses us for our obedience
 - Our nation receives blessings when men and women of faith lead by seeking His will and obeying His word
 - Companies run by godly men and women often prosper as a result of God's blessings
 - Godly employees bring blessings to their employers
 - And families can be richly blessed when godly parents obey God
 - But some Christians miss the opportunity to be that blessing to others
 - We're too distracted wallowing in self-pity and dissatisfaction over our circumstances
 - We don't get many details about the way Joseph served Potiphar, but we can safely assume that he didn't spend his time whining about why he shouldn't be there
 - Of why he didn't deserve to be a slave and why it was all a mistake
 - Instead, we can be sure that Joseph did his best, worked hard and trusted the Lord to handle the details
 - Which means he had to learn to look past his own difficulties by resting in God's sovereignty
 - Then God could work through him to bring blessing, both to Joseph

and to Potiphar's house

- When we experience suffering and injustice, as Joseph did, and we respond like Joseph, with obedience and diligence, then naturally we should expect our circumstances to improve, right?
 - Certainly, it's reasonable to expect the Lord to respond to Joseph's obedience by bringing good things
 - Do you know the rest of Joseph's story?
 - If you do, then you recognize there is something wrong with that assumption
 - Because Joseph's situation isn't going to get better, at least not in the near term
 - He does everything right, yet he is mistreated
 - The Lord blesses him with great success even as a slave, but then as we'll see next week, Joseph's circumstances go from bad to worst
 - Joseph's story is instructive on so many levels, but one of my favorite ways is how it dispels the myths of blessing and reward in our walk as Christians
 - We're surrounded in our day by shallow and misinformed Bible "teachers" who preach to us about "blessing"
 - They pander to our flesh telling us that God is ready to give us whatever we desire in this world, which is their definition of blessing
 - They argue that if our life is empty and filled with need, it's merely evidence that God is displeased with us
 - And then they sell us snake oil in the form of lies demanding we do or say or donate according to their rules, and only then will the Lord grant us what we desire
 - They reduce our relationship with the Lord to a quid pro quo relationship
 - One where we perform to earn God's favor and receive the payoff we want
 - They reduce God's purposes to punishment and reward
- When you reflect on Joseph, ask yourself what was Joseph's behavior?
 - He was faithful, obedient, patient, long-suffering
 - And how did the Lord respond to Joseph?
 - Tested him by sending him into slavery
 - Then blessed him by making him a successful slave
 - Then tested him again, leading him from slavery to an even worse fate
- Don't settle for simple, trivial, false views of the Lord, the Creator of the Universe
 - Believe in His word
 - Believe that He can bless you in the midst of persecution and trial
 - Believe that obedience brings reward, even when it's not visible in your present circumstances or even this side of Heaven

- Believe that God is present with you even when no one else is, knowing that He is faithful to His promises
- Believe that His pleasure in you isn't measured by your happiness in what you have, but by His happiness in who you are
- Believe that trials and injustice and persecution are the best way to demonstrate who you have become in Christ, to see the power of His blessing



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 39B

Chapter 39:6b-20

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- After a brief pause in our study, we return to Joseph's situation in Potiphar's house
 - He has been made a slave by no fault of his own, but Joseph has evidently thrown himself into the work
 - He has become obedient to his new master just as he was to his father, Jacob
 - We learned last time that Joseph's diligence and obedience was an indication of his trust in God's sovereignty and a willingness to rest in God's promises
 - But then to accept that even negative circumstances are part of God's plan
 - You may have noticed that Joseph's obedience in the face of injustice is a great picture of Christ's obedience to the Father's wishes
 - Like Joseph, the Lord was appointed by God the Father to suffer injustice for the sake of a greater good

Is. 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,

And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Is. 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,

And by His scourging we are healed.

Is. 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,

Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all

To fall on Him.

- What was the good that the Father intended when He crushed His Son on the cross?
 - Isaiah says Jesus was carrying the iniquity of sinners
- Likewise, Joseph is carrying the sin of his brothers, in the sense that his brothers' sin is responsible for placing Joseph in these circumstances
 - Just as our sin was responsible for putting Jesus on the cross
 - Nevertheless, both Jesus and Joseph accepted their situation with an obedient and trusting heart, knowing the Father knew best
- Finally, we also took note that despite obedience, Joseph's situation didn't get better – not at first
 - When we do the right thing, we might assume that only good outcomes will follow
 - But scripture and life tell us differently
 - Jesus' obedience led to a crucifixion
 - Our obedience may lead to great persecution
 - And Joseph's obedience led to further trials
 - We rejoin him at v.7 where he has gained complete authority in the master's house

- But the master's wife has taken notice of Joseph's appearance

Gen. 39:6 ... Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Gen. 39:7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

Gen. 39:8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.

Gen. 39:9 "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Gen. 39:10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

- I read only the last part of v.6 to set the context for the rest of the passage
 - Joseph is described in terms nearly identical to the words used to describe his mother, Rachel
 - Joseph is in his early 20s, we assume, and he is handsome in form and appearance
 - These were the same words used for Rachel, so we must assume Joseph inherited his good looks from his mother
 - We can safely assume that Joseph's good looks were another reason his brothers were jealous of him
 - In Potiphar's house, Joseph's good looks are a distinct disadvantage however
 - Joseph's appearance leads Potiphar's wife to take an unhealthy interest in him
 - We learned earlier that Potiphar is a eunuch, which means he has a greatly reduced interest and capacity for intimate relations
 - This was the purpose of making a man a eunuch
 - It was believed to make a man a safer risk around the Pharaoh's harem of wives
 - Furthermore, a castrated man would have been seen as disqualified to hold a kingly rule over the nation
 - So Potiphar would have been made a eunuch to preclude him from seeking to overthrow Pharaoh and seize the throne
 - But this procedure also probably led Potiphar's wife to lose interest in her husband as well
 - So she has evidently sought other outlets to satisfy her desires
 - Why would a woman marry a eunuch in the first place?
 - Either she married before he took this position
 - Or she married for the money and power of his position
 - Or she had no choice since the marriage was arranged

- In any case, the wife eventually makes an overture to Joseph to commit adultery with her
 - Joseph's response is truly noble
 - He refuses the request, of course, because to do otherwise would have been a great sin
 - But notice the way in which he refuses
 - Joseph doesn't make excuses or try to soothe the woman's feelings
 - Instead, he states the reality of the situation and gives a clear and bold explanation for his choice
 - First, Joseph declares that were he to agree to her request, he would be sinning against Potiphar
 - As Joseph explained to the wife, Potiphar had complete trust in Joseph
 - He gave all that he had into Joseph's hands, making Joseph's authority equal to his own in the household
 - The only thing that has been withheld from Joseph are those things that are reserved to Potiphar, specifically his wife
 - So Joseph declares that he cannot lie with her, or else he sins against the trust of his master
 - Secondly, in v.9 Joseph correctly describes such an act as a great sin against God
 - Not only would his actions harm Potiphar, but they also harm his relationship with the Lord
 - God is also injured, in the sense that God's holiness demands that His people be holy as well
 - Even if it were possible to sin in such a way that Potiphar never knows about it, God will know and He will be angered by Joseph's sin
 - Joseph isn't about to risk offending a holy and just God
 - And neither should we
- Take a lesson here from Joseph, and I'm not referring to avoiding sin (I hope that part of the lesson is already clear to everyone)
 - The lesson we learn is how to understand the impact of sin and how to explain our actions to others
 - First, we must always understand that there is no such thing as a "victim-less" sin
 - Almost without exception, our sin will bring negative consequences to others
 - Just as Adam's choice in the garden enslaved the human race, each sin we commit bears consequences somewhere down the line
 - For ourselves and others
 - But even in those rare cases when we might sin in a way that has no impact on others, we are also always sinning against the Lord
 - Our sin is an offense to the God Who saves us

- To the God Who will judge us
- Imagine if you were scheduled to go before a judge next week for a verdict of some kind
 - And that judge says he will be monitoring your behavior in the meantime
 - And he will take your behavior into account before rendering his verdict
 - How would you behave during that week of waiting?
- How much more should we guard our behavior while we await the day of our judgment before the Lord, the Judge of all?
- Joseph understood his choices would have consequences for himself, for others and for his relationship with the Lord
 - And he wasn't willing to sacrifice those things he cherished for a few stolen moments of pleasure
- Secondly, notice how Joseph explains his choice to Potiphar's wife
 - He doesn't make excuses or try to soften the message
 - He tells her in clear and honest words that he cannot sin with her
 - Remember, she is the wife of the master, and as such she can be a serious threat to Joseph
 - Joseph knows this, of course, so we might expect him to find a diplomatic way to rebuff her
 - He could have used excuses, claimed to be worried about getting caught, or tried to rationalize reasons why it wouldn't be a good idea
 - Instead, Joseph called it like it was: it was sin and he wasn't willing to sin against Potiphar nor God
 - That kind of response is certain to prompt some conviction in Potiphar's wife
 - Joseph's words not only defended his choices but it also indicted her choices
 - And when we turn another person's sin around and allow it to convict them, inevitably it leads to anger and resentment
 - And hell hath no fury like a woman scorned by conviction
- We should endeavor to imitate Joseph, both in saying no to sin but also in the way we say no
 - Don't make excuses for doing the right thing in the hope of avoiding hurting someone's feelings
 - When someone else invites us to sin, they need to have their feelings hurt a little, in love of course
 - When you keep company with people who encourage you to do the wrong thing, you have a choice to make
 - Either help set them straight so you can enjoy their company without temptation to sin

- Or put an end to that company altogether, as Paul and others say, we should flee the enemy and flee immorality and flee youthful lusts
- If we don't follow Joseph in this way, we take great risks with our own walk and sanctification
 - When we negotiate with an offer to sin, we immediately begin to lose any advantage in our battle against the enemy and the flesh
 - Consider how Woman negotiated with temptation in the Garden
 - She debated the merits of the serpent's suggestion
 - She rationalized the benefits of the fruit
 - Eventually, she succumbed
 - What she should have said was what Joseph said
 - I know that this is sin
 - I know this sin will bring ruin to my husband and offends the Lord
 - And then put an end to the conversation
 - This is our best path as well
 - Don't feel any obligation to protect the feelings of someone who invites you into sin
 - Tell them you won't sin
 - Then tell them why you are determined to avoid sin
 - And encourage them to follow your example, in faith
- And of course, when we make these right choices and do the right thing, good things will always follow, correct?
 - Like we saw last time, despite doing the right thing Joseph will not see his circumstances improve
 - In fact, they will get worse
 - Once again, the scripture is calling us to a greater maturity in our understanding of what it means to be a disciple of the Christ
 - We are called to live according to the standards of a Kingdom that has not yet arrived on earth
 - As a result, our holiness offends the residents and powers of the fallen kingdom that surrounds us for now
 - And because we must offend, we must experience persecution, at least until the new Kingdom comes
 - If you feel this deal is unfair, then I must remind you once again of the deal our Lord received from the Father, which is pictured once again by Joseph
 - Jesus was tempted by the enemy just as Joseph was tempted here by Potiphar's wife
 - He was given the chance to have an earthly kingdom, given to Him by Satan
 - Jesus had only to repeat the sin of Adam, by sinning against the Father and giving authority to Satan instead

- As we know, Jesus refused the temptation to sin
- Instead, He called to mind the word of God and declared that Satan was wrong
- Joseph pictures the way Jesus confronted the temptation to sin head on, and declares in clear terms why He wouldn't accept that path
 - Just like Joseph, Jesus received all authority from the Father
 - Jesus had the complete trust and love of the Father
 - And had Jesus agreed to the enemy's temptations in the desert, as Joseph said in v.9, it would have been a great evil and sin against God
 - Jesus' obedience didn't earn an immediate relief from His persecution and trials
 - On the contrary, His unwillingness to meet Satan's demands ensured that Jesus would go to the cross
 - Because by His obedience, Jesus qualified Himself to become the perfect sacrifice necessary to atone for sin
 - Likewise, when Joseph made his declaration to Potiphar's wife, he ensured that his preferential treatment in Potiphar's house would end
 - Joseph didn't know what might happen
 - But his trust in the Lord meant he could rest in the knowledge that whatever might happen was according to God's plan

Gen. 39:10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

Gen. 39:11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.

Gen. 39:12 She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

Gen. 39:13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,

Gen. 39:14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.

Gen. 39:15 "When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside."

Gen. 39:16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.

Gen. 39:17 Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me;

Gen. 39:18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

Gen. 39:19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned.

Gen. 39:20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

- As we expected, Potiphar's wife hasn't given up and she is determined to have her way with Joseph
 - As we read, she times her next advance for a moment when she and Joseph were alone in the house
 - She grabs onto him tightly demanding he agree to her request
 - In response, Joseph follows scripture's demands and literally flees temptation
 - There are times when the Bible's instructions to flee temptation are metaphoric, when flee means resist strongly
 - But there are also times when flee means flee
 - There is no substitute for separating yourself physically from a person, place or influence that causes us to sin
 - When he flees, she is left holding a piece of his clothing
 - Having been made a fool twice by Joseph, the wife decides to seek revenge by making a false accusation of Joseph
 - She uses the clothing to prove her case knowing that her word would not be challenged by the word of a slave
 - She makes up a story of having been sexually assaulted
 - Her accusation takes place in two parts
 - First she makes accusations before the rest of the servants to discredit Joseph in their eyes
 - In v.14 she includes the rest of the servants as co-victims with her
 - And she blames her husband publicly in front of the servants
 - Later when Potiphar comes home, she uses Joseph's clothing again to accuse him to Potiphar
 - And Potiphar's response is to imprison Joseph
 - This was actually a surprisingly mild response given the circumstances
 - More likely, Joseph should have been killed
 - I suspect that Potiphar's grace is an indication that he has some doubts about his wife's accusation
 - Or at the very least, it is evidence of God's grace in preserving Joseph in the midst of this trial
- So once again, Joseph does the right thing, yet his upright behavior lands him in greater trouble
 - But here again, the Lord is working through Joseph's circumstances
 - One small piece of evidence to indicate the Lord's work is the role Joseph's clothing played in this event
 - Remember that it was Joseph's coat that caused his brothers to have anger against him
 - And the coat became the tool they used to cover up their sin
 - Once again, Joseph's clothing has become the reason for Potiphar's wife to falsely accuse him

- And it became a tool to cover up her sin
- This detail is more than coincidence...it's God's signature in a way
 - It shows that Joseph's circumstances are part of a pattern that God created to reveal His presence
- In the same way that time and time again the birthright has been assigned to the younger over the older
 - The clothing is a clue telling us that God wants Joseph to experience more trials even as Joseph continues to act in obedience

- By his obedience and godliness, Joseph finds his situation changing from bad to worse
 - The Lord is testing Joseph by leading him through a series of circumstances
 - In each case, Joseph does the right thing
 - But the sinful world heaps more misery upon him
 - Joseph is persecuted for his righteousness
 - But we know the Lord is at work in these outcomes
 - He is allowing the troubles to pile up so He can create an opportunity for Joseph to develop his testimony
 - A testimony before the world, represented by Egypt
 - And a testimony before the family of Israel
 - These things are happening to Joseph because he has been appointed as the birthright holder within the sons of Jacob
 - His earlier dreams told us that Joseph was appointed to become the patriarch in the family
 - And he would receive a double portion of the inheritance
 - While Judah would receive the seed promise to bring forth the Messiah
 - We've already seen how unrighteous Judah was rescued by the Lord's hand from corrupting the seed line
 - Judah's story reveals that the salvation promise comes through men but is made possible by the grace and power of God
 - For certainly, Judah added nothing of value to the process
 - But the story of Joseph tells the opposite story
 - As a picture of Christ, Joseph's story teaches us that God will bring salvation to the world and to Israel through the life of one man
 - This man will be righteous and obedient
 - He will suffer for his righteousness yet will pass every test the world and enemy throws at him
 - And in the end, by his obedience, he will be elevated to a position of power and authority over the world and over Israel
 - This is the story of Joseph and of Jesus Christ
 - One pictures the Other, and in that picture we come to understand the reason Joseph is called to suffer in these ways
 - Joseph has been appointed to bring this picture to us through his life, but what a challenge this must have been for the man Joseph
- Today we cover the final verses of Chapter 39 and then move into Chapter 40
 - Joseph has been accused of rape and imprisoned by Potiphar
 - He enjoyed great success as a slave, but now he's starting over

- And he's moved into an even more challenging set of circumstances

Gen. 39:21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

Gen. 39:22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it.

Gen. 39:23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

- Even as we see Joseph's situation deteriorating, we hear that the Lord continues to extend His grace to Joseph
 - Once again, take note of the way scripture melds Joseph's negative circumstances with a testimony of God's favor and kindness
 - These two things are not in conflict
 - The measure of God's goodness or kindness is not whether our life is carefree or easy or without suffering
 - Joseph's descent into prison didn't mean God was displeased with him
 - It didn't mean Joseph had done anything wrong
 - It wasn't unfair
 - On the contrary, the Lord was with Joseph, was extending kindness to him and giving him favor
 - The word for favor in Hebrew is *chen*, which simply means grace
 - Joseph received grace from God
 - But that grace came in the context of prison, not freedom
 - Given the option of a trial-free life without God's grace or a trial-filled life accompanied by God's grace, we should always seek for the latter
- In this case, God's grace came in the form of a jailer who took notice of Joseph's superior leadership qualities
 - Like what happened in Potiphar's house, the jailer places Joseph in charge over all the other prisoners
 - Clearly, a pattern has emerged in Joseph's life
 - Everywhere he goes, he quickly establishes himself as the authority figure over others
 - He ruled over his brothers
 - He ruled over the slaves
 - Now he rules over the prisoners
 - This is an outcome of God's grace in his life

- He has determined that Joseph will be the one to lead people
 - No matter where Joseph lands, this outcome repeats itself
- At this point in the story, a fascinating parallel to Jesus' life begins to emerge, in keeping with Joseph as a picture of Christ
 - Joseph's time in prison is the low point in his life
 - It represents the point where he is tested to the greatest extent
 - It also represents the end of his testing
 - From this point forward, Joseph begins to increase in stature and power
 - If we draw a parallel to Jesus' life and ministry, then we could draw a parallel to the time He hung on the cross and descended into Hell for a time
 - That point represented the low point in Jesus' life
 - It was the greatest test and trial
 - And it made possible Christ's exaltation
 - So as we move forward in this chapter, we'll look for more evidence of those parallels between Joseph's time in the prison and Jesus' time on the cross and in the grave

Gen. 40:1 Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

Gen. 40:2 Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

Gen. 40:3 So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned.

Gen. 40:4 The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time.

- Joseph gets some company in prison
 - The cupbearer and baker of the Pharaoh are thrown in prison for what we will soon see is a capital offense
 - These officials of the court shared the same feature of Potiphar – they were eunuchs
 - The same word for “official” used here was also used to describe Potiphar
 - What did these gentlemen do to anger the Pharaoh?
 - Scripture doesn't say
 - But we can make an educated guess
 - A cup bearer and baker were positions that served Pharaoh directly
 - A cup bearer wasn't merely responsible for holding a cup
 - He acted like a Secret Service bodyguard to Pharaoh

- He was responsible for ensuring that Pharaoh's entire food chain was kept safe
 - He would oversee the food bought in the market
 - He would inspect all food brought into the Pharaoh's kitchen
 - And to ensure the food was safe, the cupbearer would sample all the food before the Pharaoh ate of it
 - This way the cupbearer had a strong incentive to ensure it was poison-free
 - He got his title from his role of sampling the drink before giving the cup to Pharaoh
- The baker had a subordinate role, preparing the meal in the kitchen
 - He shared responsibility for ensuring the food was safe
 - So between these two men, the Pharaoh's protection from his enemies was their highest duty
- Since they were each responsible for the Pharaoh's bread and drink, perhaps Pharaoh had reason to suspect one of them was trying to poison him
 - Remember, that the Pharaoh was not an Egyptian (he was a Hyksos)
 - He must have feared regularly for his safety
 - Since there was apparently some doubt about which one of the men was guilty, they were both placed in the prison with Joseph
 - They were awaiting the Pharaoh's decision for who to hold responsible
 - The jail the three of them are in is attached to the captain of the guard's house
 - That's Potiphar's house – he had a jail attached to his home
 - As court officials, they would have received special handling
 - The fact that the court officials were sent to this prison while awaiting judgment says this was not an ordinary prison
 - Joseph was sent to the same prison, a jail in the best of circumstances
 - So God continues to protect Joseph even though He is sending Joseph through these trials
- We're told in v.4 that Joseph spent "some" time in this prison
 - The Hebrew word for some is the word *yom*, which literally means a day
 - But in this case, the word is used in a secondary meaning of an age
 - As in an extended period of time
 - We learn later that Joseph will leave prison and be elevated by Pharaoh when Joseph reaches the age of thirty
 - Remember, Joseph went into Egypt at seventeen
 - So Joseph was in Potiphar's house and that jail for a combined total of 13 years
 - And based on the opening verses of 41, Joseph must have been in the jail

for at least 2 years and probably several more

- We've already understood that bad things happen to good people when God chooses to work in us through trials
 - But are you prepared to accept how long a trial may be required in God's plan to test us?
 - Remember, Noah was called to suffer 100 years during the years he devoted to build the ark in keeping with the Lord's command
 - To say nothing of the 14 months he spent living inside the ark?
 - Talk about a prison!
 - And do you think Daniel suffered during Israel's 70 years of captivity?
 - To say nothing about his experience in the lion's den?
 - And what about Joseph?
 - His circumstances required he spend 13 years suffering
 - We read about it in just a chapter or two of Genesis, but it took more than a decade for Joseph to rise above his trials
 - That's almost as long as we've been studying Genesis
- So why must Joseph suffer for so long?
 - The writer of Psalms tells us

**Psa. 105:17 He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.**

**Psa. 105:18 They afflicted his feet with fetters,
He himself was laid in irons;**

**Psa. 105:19 Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.**

**Psa. 105:20 The king sent and released him,
The ruler of peoples, and set him free.**

**Psa. 105:21 He made him lord of his house
And ruler over all his possessions,**

**Psa. 105:22 To imprison his princes at will,
That he might teach his elders wisdom.**

- Joseph is being prepared to teach his elders wisdom
 - That preparation involves 13 years of learning the ways of Egypt
 - Consider that when Joseph arrived in Egypt, he didn't know the language
 - He didn't know the customs
 - He didn't understand Egyptian laws or traditions
 - But the psalmist says Joseph was appointed to become a lord over the house of

Pharaoh

- To demonstrate wisdom, to execute God's purpose in Egypt
- Ultimately, he comes to picture Jesus in all these things
- But if Joseph is going to fulfill this purpose, he must spend time learning Egypt inside and out
 - So the Lord puts Joseph in the house of a servant of Pharaoh
 - In that place, Joseph learns the language and etiquette of royal society in Egypt
 - He learns the names and functions of court officials
 - He becomes familiar with law and customs in Egypt
 - Then he goes to prison, but not just any prison, the king's prison
 - And here Joseph comes into contact with more court officials
 - And through one of these court officials, Joseph begins to make inroads to reach the most powerful man in the world – Pharaoh himself

Gen. 40:5 Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream and each dream with its own interpretation.

Gen. 40:6 When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected.

Gen. 40:7 He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

Gen. 40:8 Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please."

- After some time together in the prison, Joseph notices both men looking particularly sad
 - Only someone like Joseph could look upon two men sent to prison and ask why are you so dejected
 - But Joseph evidently knew these two men well enough by now to sense something was different
 - They had both experienced dreams, dreams that troubled them greatly
 - But since they were in prison and had no access to the Pharaoh's official dream interpreters, they were without a way to understand the dreams' meanings
 - Egypt, like Babylon, employed sorcerers who used the black arts to divine spiritual knowledge
 - We see similar men working (or trying to work) in the book of Daniel
 - And also serving Pharaoh in the story of the Exodus

- But these men felt helpless because there are no interpreters nearby
 - Or so they think
- Joseph tells them that interpretations of spiritual messages come from the Lord, so it does not depend on certain men
 - It simply requires the Lord to grant the proper spiritual equipping, and any man can serve Him in interpreting
 - This truth is so powerful, and it remains every bit true today
 - Spiritual truth and godly counsel aren't the privilege of a few men
 - On the contrary, these things are God-given, and all God's children have access to the same spirit
 - So we don't depend on a man to hear from God or to serve Him
 - On the other hand, scripture also tells us that God equips His children in different ways with different spiritual gifts to serve the needs of the body
 - So if the Lord appoints certain gifts to certain people with the Church, we do well to take full advantage of these giftings wherever we find them
 - Let gifted teachers, teach; gifted prayer warriors, pray; gifted healers, heal; gifted hearts of service, serve
- In Joseph's case, he was gifted to lead and to interpret dreams
 - In all the Bible, only Joseph and Daniel were gifted in this way, and both share some interesting similarities
 - Both interpreted while captive in a foreign land
 - Both serviced foreign monarchs who worshipped pagan gods
 - Both interpreted dreams given by God that no one else could interpret
 - Both speak in bold ways, sharing the interpretation without fear
 - Both were elevated into positions of authority by their interpretations
 - Clearly the Lord is working in these dreams to bring Joseph to a new and better place

Gen. 40:9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream, behold, there was a vine in front of me;

Gen. 40:10 and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, and its clusters produced ripe grapes.

Gen. 40:11 "Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

Gen. 40:12 Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days;

Gen. 40:13 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer.

Gen. 40:14 “Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.

Gen. 40:15 “For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.”

- Each man relates his dream to Joseph
 - The cupbearer’s dream concerned a vine with three branches
 - As the grapes ripened, the cupbearer took the grapes and squeezed juice into Pharaoh’s cup
 - And placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand
 - Joseph tells the interpretation of the dream
 - The three branches reflect three days more of suffering in jail
 - But at that point, the cupbearer will be restored
 - At this point, Joseph sees an opportunity to help himself
 - Knowing a positive result is assured for the cupbearer, Joseph realizes that this man will soon be in Pharaoh’s presence again
 - Once he reaches that position, he will be able to influence Pharaoh concerning Joseph’s situation
 - Certainly, the king would have use for a man like Joseph who can interpret dreams
 - So Joseph asks for his help
 - Notice how Joseph describes himself
 - He was from the land of the Hebrews
 - That’s a statement of faith and political savvy on Joseph’s part
 - In this day, the land where Jacob lived was not the land of the Hebrews
 - It was the land of the Canaanites
 - But Joseph knew it had been given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by God by way of a promise
 - So even now he’s referring to Canaan as the land of Hebrews
 - But Joseph has also learned that the Pharaoh is a Hyksos king, not a Hamite ruler
 - And Hyksos were also Semites, like the Hebrews
 - So by mentioning his origins, Joseph hopes to persuade Pharaoh to take an interest in his case
- Here we have the complimentary lesson to our earlier focus on learning to accept trials and sufferings as part of serving the Lord
 - Joseph may have understood that God was working in his circumstances and so he remained obedient in the meantime

- But that doesn't mean Joseph had to be passive in his circumstances
- Obedience during a trial doesn't require we abandon all hope for a rescue
- And it certainly doesn't mean we can work in appropriate ways to improve our circumstances
- Joseph used his God-given talents and abilities to improve his situation everywhere he went
 - In Potiphar's house, he worked hard and showed trustworthiness
 - And the result was a better situation as a slave
 - In prison, he did the same, and gained the benefit again
 - Now he has a chance to win his freedom or so he hopes
 - So he makes the most of it
 - But he does it by relying on the gifts God has given him
 - And he gives all credit to the Lord in the process
 - And then he waits to see what the Lord will do with his hopes and his service
- Don't forget Joseph's example in the midst of your personal trials of faith and endurance
 - Know God is working in your circumstances
 - Trust that the Lord has a good purpose in your circumstance
 - Continue to obey and serve diligently without discouragement
 - And use every God-given talent and gift and brain cell to find your way out of your circumstances
 - And pray for Him to make the most of your efforts

- Last week we were in the midst of watching Joseph interpreting the dreams of two royal prisoners
 - Joseph was accompanied by the chief cupbearer and chief baker
 - Both men had been accused of something worthy of death, perhaps they were suspected of poisoning the Pharaoh
 - And both were desperate to know their fate
 - As it turns out, the Lord gives each man a dream that foretold their destiny
 - We know that God can work through dreams to reveal things to men
 - And occasionally He will obscure the meaning of dreams so that He can connect the dreamer with an interpreter
 - And of course, the Lord does this so that they might seek out someone to interpret
 - And in this case, the Lord has given Joseph the ability to interpret dreams
 - Interpreting dreams is a unique skill in scripture
 - We only know of two men who have that gift: Joseph and Daniel
 - Many people can interpret their own dreams, as God permits
 - Or at least they think they can
 - But interpretations don't always turn out the way we expect or prefer...

There was an international incident recently (in 2013) when the president of Iran visited the United Nations in New York to give a speech. Before he was scheduled to speak, the president met with our US ambassador to the United Nations and told her:

"I had this incredible dream last night. I could see all of America, and it was beautiful and on top of every building, there was a flag. And on every flag there was writing, and the writing said: 'Allah is God, God is Allah.'"

The ambassador replied: "You know, Mr. President, that is remarkable, because last night I had a dream too. I could see all of Tehran, and it was more beautiful than ever, and on every building there was a flag. And every flag had something written on it as well."

The Iranian president asked, "So what was written on the flags?"

The ambassador replied: "I really don't know. I can't read Hebrew!"

- So an interpretation of our dreams may not be as we hoped
 - And such was the case for the second prisoner, the baker

Gen. 40:16 When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also saw in my dream, and behold, there were three baskets of white bread on my head;

Gen. 40:17 and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.”

Gen. 40:18 Then Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days;

Gen. 40:19 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you.”

Gen. 40:20 Thus it came about on the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

Gen. 40:21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand;

Gen. 40:22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Gen. 40:23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

- Last week we learned that the cupbearer’s dream foretold his release and restoration to serving Pharaoh
 - This gave Joseph cause to ask the cupbearer to remember Joseph
 - Joseph’s hope was that the cupbearer could bring Joseph’s case before the Pharaoh and win his release
 - But there was still the matter of the baker’s dream
 - As we read, the baker’s dream foretells a very different, and no doubt disappointing, outcome
 - The baker would not be released
 - The baker’s dream has birds devouring bread even before it reached Pharaoh
 - Birds were viewed as spiritual creatures by Egyptians, and they were protected
 - So they were frequent nuisances and scenes like the one in the bakers dream would have been common
 - The baker’s responsibility was to keep the food protected and undefiled until it reached Pharaoh
 - His failure to keep the food safe may have been the issue which landed him in jail to begin with
 - So by that imagery, Joseph confirms this will be his undoing
 - He will be hanged and impaled on a tree to be eaten by birds
 - Egyptians thought this a fate worse than death since the soul could not proceed to the after life
 - There is an interesting play on words in Joseph’s statements to the two men
 - In the case of the cupbearer, Joseph said the Pharaoh would “lift up” the man’s head

- Meaning, he would return to his high position of power
- But in the case of the baker, Joseph says the Pharaoh will “lift his head up” in the sense of taking his head off
 - This is a reference to the man’s head being removed by the hanging
- Thus we learn an important lesson:
 - The baker should have kept his dream on a “knead the dough” basis
 - And I’m sure Joseph’s interpretation got a rise out of the baker
 - And he probably thought it was half-baked
- If you remember from last week, I alluded to a picture of Christ found in this passage of Joseph in the prison with these two men
 - The picture began with the observation that these days in the prison represent the lowest point in Joseph’s life
 - This is the greatest test Joseph will face
 - And this is also the trial that proved Joseph’s worthiness to be elevated
 - And then compare this period in Joseph’s life to the time in Jesus’ life when He hung on the cross and went to the grave
 - Clearly, this was Jesus’ darkest moments
 - The point at which Jesus accepted the sin of the world upon His shoulders
 - He felt the sting of death in a most cruel way
 - And He suffered the separation from the Father
 - And if you remember that moment on the cross, Jesus wasn’t alone
 - On either side of Him were two other condemned men
 - The two thieves who happened to find themselves crucified on either side of the Lord of the Universe
 - These two men are represented prophetically by the baker and the cupbearer
- Those two thieves demonstrated two very different responses to Jesus and His predicament on that Roman cross
 - The first thief mocked Jesus
 - He challenged Jesus that if He were truly the Messiah, then He should get Himself off the cross
 - How could Jesus claim to save Israel if He couldn’t even save Himself
 - Without a doubt, this man was a man who held no faith in Jesus
 - And though he was only hours away from his own death, nevertheless he still fought against the inevitable
 - He was about to face judgment for sin
 - And he had no hope, no solution, no rescue
 - He was as condemned in the spirit as he was in his flesh

- But then we have the second thief crucified on Jesus' other side
 - This thief objects to the first thief's statements
 - He comes to Jesus' defense
 - Listen to the exchange that takes place

Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

Luke 23:40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"

Luke 23:41 "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

Luke 23:42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

Luke 23:43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

- The second thief is destined to die just as assuredly as that first thief and Jesus Himself, for that matter
 - But in the face of death, the man seeks a source of hope
 - He turns to Jesus and in faith seeks Jesus' mercy while acknowledging Jesus' lordship as Messiah
 - He declares that Jesus will one day come into His kingdom
 - And this man seeks to be there on that future day
 - In a few words, the man expresses the essence of the Gospel
 - That Jesus was the Messiah
 - That He would be resurrected following His death
 - That He will return to rule a kingdom
 - And that He offers that kingdom to all who seek it from Him in faith
 - As Paul said:

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

- What's even more remarkable is this thief was willing to acknowledge this truth while staring into Jesus' blood soaked eyes as He hung next to him on a cross
 - How much faith did it take to believe the claims of Jesus knowing He was soon to die Himself?
 - To accept that the One whose own body is soon to fail is the same One Who can save

this thief from hell

- So in the story of Joseph we also find two men on either side of Joseph, in a sense
 - Each had a moment to seek an answer from him concerning their future
 - One learns that he will be restored and will have his life returned to him, in a sense
 - Furthermore, that man is asked to remember Joseph before Pharaoh
 - But the second man faces a very different outcome
 - He is set to lose his life
 - He has no more to say concerning Joseph
 - The connection is clear to see
 - The cupbearer is a picture of that believing thief
 - While the baker is the picture of the unbelieving thief who had no hope after his encounter with Jesus
- Moving into Chapter 41, we discover that Joseph isn't finished interpreting dreams

Gen. 41:1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile.

Gen. 41:2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass.

Gen. 41:3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.

Gen. 41:4 The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

Gen. 41:5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good.

Gen. 41:6 Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them.

Gen. 41:7 The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

Gen. 41:8 Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

- The Pharaoh of Egypt receives a dream from God, designed to be unexplainable except by Joseph
 - We know the Lord is working in all these circumstances, both in the dreams in the prison and now with Pharaoh
 - Joseph proves himself before the cupbearer while he sat in prison
 - And this gives opportunity for the cupbearer to learn of Joseph's abilities and

apply that knowledge at a later time

- And now that later time has come, when the Lord gives Pharaoh a dream no one can interpret
 - But first, did you notice once again that it required two more years before the opportunity arrived for Joseph?
 - I won't repeat the lessons on this point that we learned last week except to simply reiterate the main point
 - God's movement in our lives often takes much longer than we expect and desire
 - But that waiting is a period of testing and maturing that brings spiritual benefit that can't be accomplished any other way
 - So in His wisdom, the Lord determined that Joseph needed to spend two more years in prison after meeting the cupbearer
 - God had laid the seeds for Joseph's elevation, yet those seeds required time to grow and produce fruit
 - So it is in the way God uses our trials, to face them with patience, as James teaches

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- The Pharaoh's dream has two versions, and this is a pattern worth noting by itself
 - The dreams that Joseph interpreted from the cupbearer and the baker also had two version or two outcomes
 - This is a distinct pattern throughout the story of Joseph
 - It is a story with a recurring theme of "pairs"
 - For example, Joseph had two versions of the dream for his family and parents
 - The wheat and the celestial objects
 - He is betrayed twice with his garments
 - Joseph interpreted two dreams in prison
 - Joseph is in prison two years before hearing Pharaoh's dream
 - The Pharaoh had two dreams with different images
 - Cows and stalks of grain
 - There will be two seven year periods in Egypt
 - Later, we'll see Jacob's family take two trips to Egypt during the famine and appear before Joseph twice

- Why does the story of Joseph often revolve around pairs in this unique way?
 - Well, here again, we find a subtle but unmistakable picture of Christ in the life and story of Jesus
 - And so through the pairs in Joseph's story we find a foreshadowing of an important aspect of the ministry of Christ
- The Messiah's role is a two-fold role
 - First, Jesus is our perfect sacrifice paying a price for sin – a price we couldn't pay ourselves and live
 - Secondly, the Lord will triumph over sin and death and come in glory to reign as King of the world
 - Jesus has a first coming to save men from their sin
 - And He has a second coming to judge and reign
 - He is the Lamb of God and the Righteous King
 - And so the pairs in Joseph's story is leading us to understand that Christ's ministry is split into two parts as well
- In these two dreams, God uses symbols that held special importance to Egyptians and to Pharaoh
 - The dream included the Nile, cows and grain
 - The Egyptians associated the Nile with life
 - The water from that river made the difference between a hopeless desert and a lush oasis
 - So watching fat cows emerge from the river would have been especially significant to the Pharaoh
 - Cows were the symbol of Isis, the Egyptian goddess of fertility
 - So this dream was designed to stir Pharaoh's heart concerning the future prosperity of his kingdom
 - And the stalks of wheat were a national symbol for Egypt, which was the grain basket of the ancient world
 - As Pharaoh experienced the dreams, he watched the seven ugly lean cows come out of the river
 - The scene must have become disturbing and bazaar
 - And then the lean cows consume the fat ones
 - The word for eat is *aka* which means chewed, a strange scene no doubt
 - And then in the second dream, he sees a similar parallelism, with one set of stalks, fat and ready to eat, with another lean and inedible
 - Even stranger than the cows, here the stalks eat each other
 - The word for eat here, *bala*, means swallow
- I don't know about you, but I usually don't remember my dreams very well

- It takes a pretty special dream to stick in my mind 10 minutes, much less the next day
 - But in Pharaoh's case, each of these dreams stick out in a profound way
 - He is disturbed to the point of seeking out an answer
 - It's as if life can't go forward for the man until he finds an answer to the questions posed by his dreams
- In fact, throughout the Bible, when God gives a man a dream, it will leave a profound and lasting impression like with Pharaoh
 - Men remember it and ponder it
 - They search for answers
 - And of course, this is God's purpose in His revelations to men, regardless of the form
- The Lord doesn't reveal Himself to sinful flesh for nothing
 - His purpose is always to cause fallen men to seek for Him
 - But that seeking always begins with God making a revelation of Himself to men first
 - We cannot seek what we do not know
 - Nor can we find what we are not seeking
- Pharaoh wasn't seeking for Joseph, much less for the God of Joseph
 - But by this revelation of God, Pharaoh will have cause to seek
 - And by the Lord's provision in Joseph, sitting in prison, the Pharaoh will have cause to find what he seeks
- Praise the Lord that He is a God Who speaks, Who reveals Himself, and Who allows Himself to be found by sinful men!

- After a brief break, we're back to studying the story of Joseph's rise
 - He is now at the lowest point of his life
 - Joseph is languishing in Egypt having spent 13 years in slavery and now prison
 - But two years ago, he encountered a man who God will use to change Joseph's life
 - That man was the cupbearer, whom Joseph helped by interpreting his dream
 - As we learned in that prior week, Joseph has been gifted by God to interpret dreams, which is a rare gift in scripture
 - And Joseph has used the gift whenever the Lord gives opportunity
 - And the Lord is about to give Joseph another opportunity, in keeping with His purposes
 - The Lord has given the Pharaoh a dream that the black arts cannot discern
 - Of course, God is at work here to bring Joseph and Pharaoh together
 - He has gifted Joseph with a spiritual ability to serve God through interpretation of dreams
 - And the Lord has brought a need into Pharaoh's life that only Joseph's divine ability can satisfy
 - What a simple and beautiful picture of how the Lord works through spiritual gifts
 - In a sense, they are divine solutions to divine problems
 - God places spiritual gifts in the body of Christ specifically to address spiritual needs
 - These gifts serve to build up believers and strengthen them for further ministry
 - And at other times they serve to direct an unbeliever in the plan of God
 - Whether that connection is intended to bring saving faith
 - Or other times it merely directs the unbeliever's steps in accordance with God's plans
 - That's what we see happening with Pharaoh here
- So having received the dream, Pharaoh now seeks for an interpretation
 - And this gives opportunity for that cupbearer to step forward with a God-inspired solution

Gen. 41:8 Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Gen. 41:9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my own offenses.

Gen. 41:10 “Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker.

Gen. 41:11 “We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream.

Gen. 41:12 “Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream.

Gen. 41:13 “And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.”

- Pharaoh appeals to his wise men, which would have included diviners and magicians, but none could give the interpretation
 - These wise men relied on the black arts to obtain their spiritual insight
 - Diviners seek to predict the future, while magicians seek to control the future
 - And the enemy has power to a degree to give these powers to men who seek them from him
 - But his power is limited to insight and power related to Satan’s own plans and works
 - The enemy can only share with men his own plans and activity
 - And to the extent the Lord permits the enemy to act according to his desires, then Satan can empower men to “predict” the future, so to speak
 - But that power cannot extend to predicting God’s plans
 - Because Satan can’t know what God will do
 - So that’s where Pharaoh’s men come up short
- It’s been two years since the cupbearer met Joseph, but only now he remembers Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams
 - That makes sense, since once the cupbearer had been restored, the last thing he would have wanted to do was remind Pharaoh of his past displeasure
 - In fact, notice that the cupbearer begins his testimony by making an apology for bringing up that unpleasant episode
 - So this was the first logical opportunity for the cupbearer to make mention of Joseph, since it was spoken in an effort to help Pharaoh
 - The more important question we should consider is why the Lord waited two years to bring this dream to Pharaoh
 - The Lord could have initiated this next phase of His plan at any point after the cupbearer left the prison
 - Joseph’s additional two years in the prison was made necessary entirely because the Lord waited that long to bring the dream to Pharaoh
 - How do we explain Joseph’s additional waiting in prison?
 - Glance ahead to v.46 in this chapter

Gen. 41:46 Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

- God's plan was for Joseph to wait until he had reached the age of thirty before he could stand before Pharaoh and begin to rule
- This age is another picture connecting Joseph and Jesus
 - Jesus was thirty years of age when He began his public ministry
 - And this was also the age in the Law when a priest of God was to begin serving in the tabernacle
- So Joseph is elevated into a place of ruling at this same age
 - From this position he will rule over not only Egypt but also Israel
 - In other words, Joseph will become a ruler for both Jew and Gentile, the picture of Christ
- It's lessons like this that help us maintain perspective in the experiences of our lives
 - Have you been required to wait for something to change in your life?
 - You wanted release from a burden
 - You wanted relief from an illness or a trial
 - You asked God to solve a problem, bring a blessing, intervene in some way
 - But the answer didn't come, at least not at first, and perhaps never in our understanding
 - How do we relate to these disappointments?
 - Joseph's story teaches that men can't see enough of God's work nor fully understand God's purposes apart from what He reveals to us
 - So we don't have enough data to make conclusions
 - Like Joseph suffering in prison, we wait and wait wondering where God has gone
 - So where do we turn when our knowledge and understanding fails? When our data is incomplete and our insight is lacking?
 - We stop focusing on the data, on our experiences and emotions and ignorance
 - We turn to God's word and we rest in what He says
 - We know He says He never leaves us nor forsakes us
 - We know that it testifies that even if the Lord takes our life, there is glory to be found in it

Gen. 41:14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh.

Gen. 41:15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

Gen. 41:16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

Gen. 41:17 So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, “In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile;

Gen. 41:18 and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass.

Gen. 41:19 “Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt;

Gen. 41:20 and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows.

Gen. 41:21 “Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke.

Gen. 41:22 “I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk;

Gen. 41:23 and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them;

Gen. 41:24 and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

- So the Pharaoh, having heard about Joseph’s amazing abilities, calls for Joseph to be brought before him
 - The ancient historian Herodotus reports that the Egyptians were renown for cleanliness
 - They associated body hair with uncleanness
 - So men would shave all body hair
 - Accordingly, we can be sure that Joseph didn’t appear before Pharaoh with any body hair showing
 - And the Egyptians probably didn’t have the Schick super smooth close razors of today
 - To make matters worse, the scripture says they hurriedly brought him before Pharaoh, since the king was impatient to receive an answer
 - No doubt the process would have been uncomfortable for Joseph, to say the least
 - They dressed him in fitting apparel and put him before Pharaoh
- As Joseph appears before Pharaoh, the king reveals he wants Joseph to interpret a dream
 - Even before Joseph hears the dream unfold, he declares that he is not the one interpreting but it will be God doing the work

- Another shining moment for Joseph
- We can't overstate how awesome it would have been to appear before Pharaoh in that moment
 - Joseph was standing before the most important man on the entire earth
 - The aroma of power and opulence would have been overwhelming, especially to a man plucked up from prison
 - And the king is turning to him for answers
- Joseph knows he can interpret dreams, so he answers the king in confidence
 - But his response makes no attempt to claim any credit for himself
 - His modesty is simply honesty, as we know, but it's still a remarkable show of humility and strength
 - He could have laid claim to the glory for himself assuming it would lead to something good for Joseph
- But instead, Joseph gives all credit to the Lord
 - Let's all emulate this example
 - In the way the Lord gifts us, we seek to serve Him
 - But as we serve, let's never allow the results to be credited to us
 - Let's tell people at every opportunity that our service and any good results it obtains are the direct result of the Lord at work through us
 - Like Joseph, we are vessels but God is the supply
- Then Joseph hears Pharaoh's dream again
 - Of the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows
 - Of the good ears and the scorched ears of grain
- There are a couple of new pieces of information not previously revealed to us
 - The thin cows were the worst Pharaoh had ever seen
 - And the thin ears of grain consumed the fat but still looked gaunt even after the consumption
- So then Joseph offers the interpretation

Gen. 41:25 Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

Gen. 41:26 "The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same.

Gen. 41:27 "The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine.

Gen. 41:28 "It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

Gen. 41:29 “Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt;

Gen. 41:30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land.

Gen. 41:31 “So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.

Gen. 41:32 “Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

Gen. 41:33 “Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Gen. 41:34 “Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.

Gen. 41:35 “Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh’s authority, and let them guard it.

Gen. 41:36 “Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.”

- Joseph begins the interpretation by announcing that the two dreams are speaking about the same thing, so he need only provide a single interpretation
 - These dreams were given to Pharaoh because the Lord wants to reveal to him what is coming to Egypt
 - There will be seven years of severe famine in the land of Egypt
 - But before that time, there will be seven years of abundance
 - In fact, the Lord gave the dream in a repetition to Pharaoh to ensure that he knew it was from God and it would be coming quickly
 - And knowing the famine is coming, Joseph says the Pharaoh must use the seven years of plenty to prepare
 - The abundance must be a time of storing for the future need
 - But this famine will be so severe that it will consume the entire storage of the years of plenty
 - So Joseph tells Pharaoh that it will be important that someone manage this storage process carefully
 - The abundance must be husbanded with great care if the nation is going to survive the famine
 - I find Joseph’s story helpful to remember when making decisions about our own personal resources and the way we make plans for the future
 - Scripture teaches that the Lord will also make a provision for His children, as Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount

- But God's willingness to provide doesn't eliminate our responsibility to take opportunity in times of plenty to store up
- God's provision for a future lean year may have been provided to us in an earlier year of plenty
- Joseph gives Pharaoh a specific plan of action that would take advantage of God's advanced warning
 - He tells Pharaoh now is the time to act
 - Appoint a leader and empower that person with the authority to tax, and store up and protect the abundance
 - Then once the hard times come, the nation will have a reserve it can draw upon
 - Notice that these suggestions do not follow automatically from the dream
 - The dream said nothing about how to respond to the coming situation
 - Nevertheless, Joseph knew what to do because he was drawing upon a second spiritual gift God had given him
 - Joseph has always demonstrated two gifts working in unison
 - He has the ability to interpret dreams and thereby demonstrate great insight and wisdom
 - And he has always demonstrated an ability to lead others and thereby become their ruler
 - And he's putting both of these gifts together in his appearance before Pharaoh
 - And these two qualities provide yet another picture of Christ in the story of Joseph
 - In His first coming, Jesus demonstrates the power of God in His teaching and wisdom
 - Jesus speaks of spiritual truths and gives knowledge concerning the future
 - He acts as a prophet speaking truth
 - But in His second coming, the Lord will demonstrate His authority and power to rule over the earth
 - The reemergence of Joseph's ability to lead is the clue we need to recognize that the story is turning toward pictures of Jesus' Second Coming
 - Just as Jesus' reign at the right hand of the Father begins after Jesus is resurrected from the grave
 - Now Joseph's rise from prison leads him to be elevated to second in charge under Pharaoh

Gen. 41:37 Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

Gen. 41:38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?"

Gen. 41:39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this,

there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.

Gen. 41:40 “You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.”

Gen. 41:41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

Gen. 41:42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.

Gen. 41:43 He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, “Bow the knee!” And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

Gen. 41:44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”

Gen. 41:45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

Gen. 41:46 Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

- Pharaoh shows his own wisdom as he immediately decides that Joseph spoke truth
 - Moreover, Pharaoh decides that Joseph is the man for the job
 - He declares that no one could be as well suited for the role he himself defined
 - He says Joseph has a divine spirit, which was a pagan point of view
 - But it pictures the way Jesus had the Spirit come upon Him at the time He came into public ministry
 - And Pharaoh places Joseph at his right hand, second only to the Pharaoh
 - Here again, a picture of Christ seated at the right hand of the Father
 - Ruling all creation under the authority of the Father
 - Why would the Pharaoh suddenly have so much confidence in Joseph?
 - It goes back to the issue of the Hyksos ruling over a Hamite people
 - The Pharaoh was a Hyksos, a semite people foreign to the Egyptian Hamite culture
 - But Joseph is a semite like the Pharaoh, so he naturally feels more trusting of someone like Joseph than any Hamite
 - Here again is another piece of evidence of how the Lord has laid all the necessary ground work to bring Joseph the success God wanted in the day
 - In the thirteen years Joseph spent in Egypt, he would have learned the language, how to write the Egyptian hieroglyphics

- He would have learned the culture, the government (from Potiphar), and the customs
- He also would have been very familiar with Pharaoh's elite guard and court officials
- Without these skills, he never could have succeeded in his new role
- Thirteen years may have felt like God delaying, but it was actually God preparing
- Never lose hope in God's power to accomplish great things through your patience and obedience
 - Instead, take hope in understanding that the Lord has been at work making preparations for you to serve Him in some way even before you were born
 - The details will come together in His timing
 - Just stay the course, remain obedient and faithful
- Let's finish this morning by looking at all that Pharaoh did in elevating Joseph
 - We already mentioned that Joseph was elevated to the right hand of the king
 - He is given the role of vizier, which means prime minister
 - And in that position of power, Joseph will represent the Pharaoh to the nation and the world
 - Joseph receives Pharaoh's ring, which allowed Joseph to issue decrees sealed with the Pharaoh's seal
 - Then he receives a robe typical of the kind of garment traditionally worn by men in Joseph's position
 - Third, he receives a gold chain and royal chariot in which to take a victory lap around the nation
 - The Hyksos introduced chariots into Egypt, and it was the most advanced weapon of combat in its day
 - And everywhere Joseph would go, every knee in Egypt will bow
 - And even though Pharaoh is the reigning authority, nothing in the land can be done apart from Joseph's word
 - Then, Joseph's name is changed to an Egyptian word meaning "God has spoken and he shall live"
 - The sense is that the word of Joseph brings life
 - Finally, Joseph is given an Egyptian wife
 - By marrying an Egyptian Joseph effectively becomes a naturalized citizen in Egypt, which was the purpose in this gesture
 - The girl was daughter of a prominent priest
 - Joseph's marrying of a Gentile wasn't a problem, as God had obviously brought about these circumstances
 - This was different than marrying the Canaanites, a people to be destroyed

- In these last details are one more picture of Christ
 - Like Joseph, Christ has earned His right to rule over the Creation by His righteousness and sacrifice in obedience to the Father
 - He was exalted and has been given all authority by the Father
 - He will reign over all Creation
 - And in that day, every knee will bow
 - As Paul wrote

Phil. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
Phil. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
Phil. 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
Phil. 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- And in that day, Jesus will not be alone
 - He will bring His Gentile bride with Him, a bride that His Father will have given Him
 - The New Testament church of saints will accompany Christ in that rule
 - You and I who have been joined to Christ by our faith
 - We can look forward to that coming day every bit as much as Christ Himself does

- Joseph has officially become “the man”
 - He is second in command in all of Egypt
 - This makes him the second in command of all the world, essentially
 - Though Pharaoh is technically more powerful than Joseph, the Pharaoh has delegated all day-to-day power to Joseph
 - Nothing can happen in Egypt without Joseph’s approval
 - The Pharaoh has reduced himself to the role of figure-head monarch for the sake of Joseph
 - This is remarkable power for a man who spent the last thirteen years in prison and in slavery
 - We also noted how this rise to power is a wonderful picture of Jesus, ruling under the authority of the Father

**Psa. 8:4 What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?**

**Psa. 8:5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!**

**Psa. 8:6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,**

- Psalm 8 reminds us of the dominion of rule God gave to Adam originally
- And it alludes to the rule the Father assigns to the Son as the New Adam
- Joseph’s rise to world power is a result of God’s promise to deliver Joseph the birthright
 - And when God makes a promise, He delivers
 - The birthright holder is entitled to a double portion of the family inheritance, which has yet to be given to Joseph
 - But he is also entitled to become the ruler over Jacob’s sons, to become the new patriarch
 - And according to the dreams God gave Joseph, his power to rule would extend over not only his brothers but even over his father
 - And now we see how the Lord intends to accomplish that plan
 - Joseph has reached a point of power in which he can command anyone to bow to him
- While Joseph has become a powerful ruler, he has also become a husband to a member of the royal household
 - So Joseph is officially an Egyptian citizen
 - And this will be his home until he dies
 - And this will be where he raises his family

Gen. 41:47 During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly.

Gen. 41:48 So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields.

Gen. 41:49 Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

- So immediately Joseph begins to enact the plan he described to Pharaoh
 - And we can assume what Joseph did during those seven years using the skills he obtained in the years of his captivity in Egypt
 - Joseph would have spent his time organizing and preparing for the storage of the grain
 - He institutes a system for taxing at 20% and collecting the grain and storing it
 - He formed armies of men to build the store houses, collect the tax, and guard the storage
 - The seven years of plenty are so abundantly fruitful that Egypt has lost track of it all
 - It was like the sea of the sand
 - It's important to remember *why* this abundance has come upon Egypt
 - The purpose was to prepare Egypt and the world for the coming famine
 - Without this abundance, the famine that followed would be enough to wipe out Egypt and many other nations
 - So this provision was a means of protecting Egypt in the future
 - But that answer just begs a larger question of why create the famine at all?
 - Why does God bother to produce the famine if He was willing to bring this excess to compensate for the coming lack?
 - It's like asking someone to dig a hole in the ground so they can turn around and fill it back up
 - The answer is centered on God's work in Israel
 - The Lord is working a plan – through Joseph – to bring pressure upon Jacob and his sons
 - And by that pressure, the family of Israel will be forced to enter into Egypt, just as the Lord promised Abraham
 - Furthermore, by these circumstances, Jacob's family will be reconciled to Joseph
 - We're going to continue watching this story closely
- While Joseph is building up the storehouses of Egypt, he is also starting a family

Gen. 41:50 Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph,

whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him.

Gen. 41:51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.”

Gen. 41:52 He named the second Ephraim, “For,” he said, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

- Joseph’s wife bears two sons for Joseph
 - The first son is called Manasseh
 - It is a Hebrew name that means forgetting
 - Joseph declares that the Lord has made all His suffering to be forgotten
 - Furthermore, Joseph says he has forgotten his father’s household
 - This would explain why Joseph hasn’t taken an opportunity to seek out Jacob and his brothers
 - Now that he has reached this place of power, you might expect Joseph to at least be curious of his family back in Israel
 - In fact, lessor men would have sought revenge for what was done to him by his brothers
 - But Joseph is content to let it go, to forgive the slight against him
 - And that’s the sense of “forget” here
 - Joseph has let go, forgiven, and released the hurt
 - And the kindness of God has led Joseph to this point
 - Here is yet another picture of Christ’s ministry found in the life of Joseph
 - Our salvation in Christ is the product of God’s forgetfulness concerning our sins
 - As the Lord said to Israel through Isaiah:

Is. 43:24 “You have bought Me not sweet cane with money,
Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices;
Rather you have burdened Me with your sins,
You have wearied Me with your iniquities.

Is. 43:25 “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake,
And I will not remember your sins.

- And through the Psalmist

Psa. 103:8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

Psa. 103:9 He will not always strive with us,

Nor will He keep His anger forever.

**Psa. 103:10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.**

**Psa. 103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.**

**Psa. 103:12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

**Psa. 103:13 Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.**

- The Lord's kindness to forget our sins brings about our reconciliation with Him, through the sacrifice of His Son
- As Jesus bore the guilt of our sins, we no longer need to bear it ourselves
- But what is our obligation to the Lord in response to His willingness to forgive us unconditionally?

Matt. 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

Matt. 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matt. 5:45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matt. 5:46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Matt. 5:47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Matt. 5:48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- The expectation the Lord places on all His children is that we imitate His perfection in forgiving others who offend us
 - Joseph had much to hold against his family
 - Can we say that anyone has injured us as much as Joseph's family injured him?
 - I guess it's possible, but I doubt it's common
 - Nevertheless, Joseph was able to say honestly that the Lord's kindness in his life allowed him to forget his family's sins
 - In this way, Joseph becomes both a picture of Christ's forgetting of our sins and a model for how we are to live as Christians
- Can you honestly say you have set the offenses of others against you?
 - A Christian is called to forgive others according to the same manner in which we

received the Father's forgiveness

- The Bible commands us to constantly reflect on how much sin we have so that we can remain mindful of how much forgiveness we have received
- And then reflecting on how much we have done wrong and how much mercy we have received, then we will be in the right state of mind and heart to forgive others
- As Jesus taught

Luke 7:47 “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

- When a Christian lives with a judgmental attitude or a heart that struggles to forgive and forget, it means that the person has lost sight of how much Christ had to forgive them
 - Lack of forgiveness is almost always associated with self-righteousness
 - We think ourselves better than we are, which then allows us to feel justified in holding other people's offenses against them
 - Jesus says that those who have been forgiven little will love little
 - His point is not that some people have less sin to be forgiven
 - His point is that when someone thinks they have less sin to be covered, then they begin to feel superior to others
 - And that exaggerated view of self inevitably leads to a judgmental attitude and a failure to forgive
 - And if there was ever a person who might have said they had a right to withhold forgiveness, it was Joseph
 - Yet he let it go easily
 - Which is a beautiful picture of Christ
 - Because Christ was sinless
 - Yet He was terribly mistreated
 - And yet He forgives those who persecuted Him
 - Are you one of those who say I can forgive but I can never forget?
 - If we will be honest with ourselves, then we will admit that such a statement is merely an excuse for not forgiving
 - Remember, the Bible uses forget to mean forgive, as we can see in Joseph's case
 - So if you are not willing to forgive in the way God does – by forgetting the injury – then you are not imitating the Father
 - We are called to let go of others' offenses against us, to put them in our past
 - To separate them as far as the east from the west

- East and west never meet on the globe
 - North and South do, but not East and West
- What permitted Joseph to release these sins against him?
 - His understanding of God's sovereignty
 - Joseph has recognized that whatever injury came upon him by the hands of his brothers was something God intended
 - So how could Joseph hold it against his brothers?
 - We learn this later in the story when Joseph confronts his brothers and declares:

Gen. 50:19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place?

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

- Have you ever stopped to consider that the injuries you’ve suffered at the hands of other people were injuries God Himself inflicted through that person’s sin?
 - That God had some good purpose in mind for you, and He worked through the sin of others to build you up?
 - The sin of Joseph’s brothers became a vehicle to build up Joseph and prepare him to rule the world
 - So who’s to say how the Lord was working to build you and me through the sin of others?
 - Trial and persecution are some of God’s most powerful tools, and as He wields them in love, He can accomplish much
- Turning to the second son, Joseph names him Ephraim
 - Ephraim’s name means “doubly fruitful”
 - Joseph’s forgiving attitude was also made possible by a recognition that the Lord was more than making up for what Joseph’s brother took from him
 - Joseph has been restored well beyond what he lost, and so he has been made content to forget the past
 - Here is another picture of God’s work in Christ
 - When we have endured like Christ and suffered in justice through no fault of our own, then we can expect a reward scripture says

Luke 6:35 “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

- So our willingness to forgive and forget the sins of others is modeled after the

experience of Christ, which is pictured in the story of Joseph

- We forgive because the Father has already forgiven us far more than He is asking us to forgive
 - And we are called to be perfect as He is perfect
- And we rejoice despite the injuries we receive from others because we know the Lord will reward us in Heaven for our patience and forgiving attitude
- But by that same token, if we harbor resentment and fail to forgive others, then we are only injuring ourselves
 - We are losing reward, according to scripture
 - And we are failing to live up to the standard the Lord established for us
 - And we are overlooking the Lord's sovereignty in life to use all things for our good, even the sin of others
- In fact, if we struggle with forgiving others, wouldn't it make sense to expect the Lord to bring even more injuries and offenses upon us?
 - Just so that we might have plenty of opportunities to practice how to forgive?
 - Because that's how we learn
- So after the times of plenty, the famine sets in

Gen. 41:53 When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end,

Gen. 41:54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

Gen. 41:55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do."

Gen. 41:56 When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

Gen. 41:57 The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

- Right on cue the famine the Lord promised appears, and it is very severe
 - Egypt has long been a source of relief in times of famine, due to the reliability of the Nile river flooding
 - That flooding pattern permitted the Egyptians to plant and harvest even in times without regular rain
 - So other nations would flock to Egypt in times of drought
 - But this famine is different

- Even Egypt is affected just as the dream predicted
- The only reason Egypt is able to have bread is because of Joseph's storage of grain
- And at a point when the people's own provision ran out, they came to Pharaoh begging for help
 - But Pharaoh wisely pointed the people to Joseph
 - Since he had trusted Joseph to prepare properly during the times of plenty, he is also content to allow Joseph to rule over the times of want
- And so Joseph implemented the second half of the plan
 - He begins to open the storehouses and sell Egypt's stock to the people of Egypt
 - And eventually, people from the other nations also begin to flock to Egypt and to Joseph seeking bread
 - And Joseph sells to them as well
- Here's another piece of evidence of God's sovereignty bringing difficulty upon the world when it suits His good purposes
 - Undoubtedly, there was great suffering in the land
 - We can probably assume some people died of this famine
 - And its severity forced people to make radical steps to find food, including going into Egypt
 - Does your understanding of God and His ways leave room for this kind of work?
 - Have you considered God's words in Isaiah?

Is. 45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun

That there is no one besides Me.

I am the LORD, and there is no other,

Is. 45:7 The One forming light and creating darkness,

Causing well-being and creating calamity;

I am the LORD who does all these.

- God is working to produce a good outcome for His people in Israel, and this outcome will depend on bringing trial and tribulation upon the earth
 - We'll look at this purpose again later in our study of Joseph
- In the meantime, do you see a remarkable picture of Christ forming in this scenario?
 - Joseph pictures Christ's power to draw the nations of the world to Himself
 - We're told that all Egypt and all the world begin to stream to Pharaoh for bread, bread to sustain their very lives
 - But what does the Pharaoh say?

- If you want bread to save your life, you need to come to Joseph
- I have appointed Joseph as the one to give you bread
- You must go through him to find your bread
- So because of the famine God has brought upon the world, the world is compelled to seek for a solution, one that can only be found in Joseph

John 6:27 “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”

John 6:28 Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

John 6:30 So they said to Him, “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?”

John 6:31 “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.’”

John 6:32 Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

John 6:33 “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

- Joseph pictures Christ in offering the bread of life to the world
 - And the Lord is willing to bring great stress and trial upon the world if necessary to bring the world to Christ
 - He is doing that here in the form of famine and through the picture provided in Joseph
 - But He did it spiritually through the provision of His Son, Jesus, the Bread of life
 - And individually, the Lord will bring trial to individuals as He determines so that those trials leave us seeking for Christ
 - When calamity brings a man to eternal life, how can we judge the Lord’s methods?
 - Who are we to say that a famine or earthquake or war was unjustified if it became the tool God used to bring faith and save a life for eternity?
- This is the work God is doing in Israel
 - And in coming weeks we will see an even more remarkable picture forming of a future work God intends to do in Israel
 - As Joseph draws his family back to himself and reveals himself to them, we will learn God’s plan to draw Israel back to Himself

- And we will see a beautiful picture of the end times

- The Old Testament prophets tell an intriguing story about Israel
 - They told of a day when Israel would behold their Messiah
 - But the people for whom He was sent would reject Him
 - They would persecute Him
 - They would betray Him
 - And they would put Him to death
 - Then for a time Israel would be judged by being set aside in God's program of salvation
 - And during this time of hardening, the Messiah's offer of the Kingdom would go out to Gentile peoples
 - And the Messiah would rule over their hearts, bringing blessing to a foreign people
 - And this blessing for Gentiles would become cause for provoking jealousy among those hardened Jews
 - But the story doesn't end there, for the Lord is faithful even when His people are faithless
 - And so one day to come, the Lord will bring great trial and stress upon the world
 - And in the midst of the trial and tribulation, the people of Israel will be stirred to call upon the very Messiah their fathers rejected
 - And that Messiah they assume to be dead and gone will return for them, bringing relief from the tribulation
- This is the story the Bible teaches about Israel and their Messiah, Jesus Christ
 - It's a story that has yet to play out entirely
 - The first act of this drama has come and gone
 - The second act is currently running its course, as we experience the Lord working with the Gentile church
 - But the world is still waiting for that third act to begin
 - Did you know this storyline of Christ and Israel is pictured by the story of Joseph and His brothers?
 - Joseph has been persecuted and rejected by his brothers, who are the sons of Israel
 - He was sold into slavery and assumed to be dead (look at v.13)
 - Meanwhile, Joseph has risen to a position of power and blessing over a Gentile people
 - He has a Gentile bride and a Gentile following that call him lord
 - He is dispensing bread of life to all who call upon his name
 - And the people of the nations are streaming to Egypt to see this Joseph
 - So like our world today, the story of Joseph has completed the second act

- And now we're ready to study the third act in Chapter 42
- The stress and trial of the worldwide famine is severe that even prosperous Jacob will be forced to seek support from Egypt
 - And in the process the Lord will be working in Joseph's brothers to bring about the good He has purposed

Gen. 42:1 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?"

Gen. 42:2 He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die."

Gen. 42:3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.

Gen. 42:4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him."

Gen. 42:5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.

- As the land withered and the crops died, Jacob and his family found themselves searching for options
 - Apparently, the brothers had become idle because the famine had left the ground unworkable and unprofitable
 - Father Jacob finally chastises his sons for sitting on their hands while the family starved
 - He asks why do you sit around staring at one another doing nothing?
 - Sounds like something a father would say
 - I wonder why the brothers haven't proposed this solution themselves?
 - Could it be that they had no desire to walk Joseph's footsteps?
 - Were they worried of how they would feel entering the country where they sent their brother so many years earlier?
 - Was their guilt playing on their judgment?
 - Since the sons have no plan of their own, he gives them a plan
 - He says he's heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt
 - In fact, Jacob says that if they don't go to Egypt, the family is at risk of dying of starvation
 - The trial of the famine will be enough to put an end to Israel
 - As I said in the introduction, the famine in our story is a picture of the coming stress the Lord will bring upon the whole world for the sake of Israel
 - This coming future time of stress is called by various names, but the most common name in the New Testament is Tribulation
 - Tribulation will be a period of unprecedented worldwide calamity

- And the Lord has designed it to be so terrible for a good reason
- It causes Israel to seek for a savior, someone who will bring them relief from persecution, war and trial
- Jesus described this period to His disciples

Matt. 24:21 “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

Matt. 24:22 “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

- The nation of Israel are the elect, as Jesus calls them
 - And the times will be so stressful that had the Lord not provided a source of relief, even Israel would have been wiped out
 - And so it would be for Jacob and his sons were it not for Egypt and Joseph
- As Jacob sends his sons to buy grain in Egypt he holds one back
 - Benjamin isn’t allowed to travel with his brothers
 - Jacob’s reason is simple and revealing
 - Having lost Joseph, Jacob isn’t about to lose the only other son of Rachel, his beloved wife
 - Jacob’s decision shows us that he still hasn’t overcome his tendency to show favoritism within his family
 - And that tendency is probably still creating some animosity within the sons
 - Jacob’s decision to withhold Benjamin adds two important details to our picture of Israel in Tribulation
 - First, removing Benjamin reduced the number of the brothers to ten
 - And ten is an interesting number in scripture
 - It carries a meaning of testimony or witness
 - So the ten brothers will travel as a witness or testimony of God’s work among His people
 - The movement of these men and their eventual encounter with Joseph is a testimony to the Lord’s might and wisdom and sovereignty over the lives of His people
 - Secondly, the removal of Benjamin from the family will literally make it impossible for the other brothers to be reconciled to Joseph
 - Without all the sons of Israel present at the same time, Joseph cannot reconcile with his family
 - But the absence of Benjamin will also become the tool Joseph uses to create the reconciliation
 - And all of this will build into a stunning and perfect picture of the last days of

tribulation...to be seen in Chapters 43-45

- So the brothers join in the crowds flocking to Egypt to buy grain

Gen. 42:6 Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

Gen. 42:7 When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

Gen. 42:8 But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him.

- Now we entered into easily one of the most remarkable stories in all human history
 - I believe it is so remarkable because it foreshadows literally the most important and intriguing story that will ever occur in this age
 - The tables have been turned
 - Joseph is now in the position of ruling over his brothers, just as he dreamed
 - And as Joseph stands over his brothers, can we even imagine what thoughts must have flooded through his mind?
 - Which one of us wouldn't have been tempted to bring revenge upon these brothers in that moment?
 - Or perhaps the more generous among us might have simply revealed ourselves to the men without seeking even the least evidence of repentance
 - Why don't Joseph's brothers recognize their brother?
 - After all, Joseph recognizes them, so shouldn't they recognize him?
 - Well first, Joseph was much younger when they last saw one another
 - Joseph was only 16 while his brothers were older and wouldn't have changed as much in the intervening 20 years
 - Secondly, and more importantly, Joseph's appearance would have been highly altered by his position in Egypt
 - He would have been shaved bald
 - And he would have been wearing the traditional face and eye makeup of the ruling class of Egypt
 - And Joseph's brothers wouldn't have spent much time studying Joseph's features, since they were required to bow before him
 - Thirdly, Joseph would have been called by his title or his Egyptian name
 - No one would have called him Joseph
 - Finally, in v.23 we learn that Joseph spoke through an interpreter

- Obviously, this obscured him even more to his brothers
- So Joseph has the upper hand over his brothers, but he doesn't reveal himself in the moment
- Joseph wisely restrained himself and played his cards carefully
 - We can safely assume that Joseph would have liked to reconcile with his family
 - But what does reconciliation look like under these circumstances?
 - If Joseph revealed himself as he stood before them, ruler over Egypt, what kind of reaction could he have expected?
 - We know his brothers would have expressed sorrow and would have bowed before Joseph
 - But they had to do that, regardless of whether they truly felt any repentance or not
 - And if they hadn't truly repented of their past hatred and rejection of Joseph, then any relationship they might have had going forward would have been meaningless
 - True loving relationship could only be possible if the sons demonstrated they were truly sorry for their past hatred and had changed their perspective on Joseph
 - So the only way Joseph can ever truly know his brothers' true feelings is to conceal his identity while devising some way to search their hearts concerning their shared past
 - So Joseph will remain veiled and unrecognized
 - And in the meantime, he will bring increasing pressure against the brothers until they confess their past sin
 - And what better way to force that outcome than to place another favored son of Jacob in the crosshairs
- Joseph notices that Benjamin is missing, and he must have quickly determined that Benjamin's absence was due to Jacob's favoritism for Rachel's children
 - This gives Joseph the opportunity he needed to test his brothers

Gen. 42:9 Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, "You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land."

Gen. 42:10 Then they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food."

Gen. 42:11 "We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies."

Gen. 42:12 Yet he said to them, "No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!"

Gen. 42:13 But they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers in all, the sons of one

man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.”

Gen. 42:14 Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you, you are spies;

Gen. 42:15 by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here!

Gen. 42:16 “Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is ruth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.”

Gen. 42:17 So he put them all together in prison for three days.

- Joseph begins by remembering the Lord’s vision concerning ruling over the family
 - What a great example of God’s sovereignty
 - The brothers’ decision to place Joseph in Egypt was intended to stop him from ruling over the family as patriarch
 - And by that decision, the brothers made possible the fulfillment of the dream
 - We might ask what would have happened had the brothers never taken that step, but asking that question misses the very point
 - The point is that no matter what the brothers did, God’s will was going to be served
 - One way or another, the Lord gets His way, and even when His enemies strive against Him, they only succeed in confirming God’s plan
 - Just as when Satan indwelt Judas in an attempt to stop Jesus from ruling, yet by his actions Satan assured that Jesus would conquer him in the end
 - So now Joseph sees God’s purpose in this meeting as he remembers the dream
 - Joseph understood that the dream was a sign from God that Joseph would have the birthright in the family
 - This told Joseph he would be the patriarch and leader over the family of Israel
 - Joseph never forgot that dream, but perhaps he hadn’t given it much thought lately, what with running Egypt and all...
 - Now the memory of the dream returns to hit him in the face, and he sees the truth of it all over again
 - Joseph is going to be reconciled with his brothers
 - He is going to rule over them, not as the prime minister of Egypt, but as their brother and patriarch
 - So Joseph begins to enact a plan to bring about the repentance of his brothers through a testing of their hearts
- So Joseph accuses the men of being spies, intent on learning about Egypt’s weaknesses
 - This was a plausible claim

- The Egyptians and Canaanites fought numerous battles, with each conquering the other at various times in history
 - During this period, the Egyptians were the stronger, having conquered Canaan
 - But each side feared the other
- So when Joseph hears that his brothers identify themselves as Canaanites, it gives him an opportunity to make his accusation
- Joseph's accusation immediately causes fear among the brothers, because they know such an accusation is punishable by death
 - They defend themselves by claiming to be a separate tribe
 - They are not Canaanites but instead they are a single family living in the land
 - They tell Joseph they have a father and another brother
 - But one brother has died, referring to Joseph
 - They are still lying concerning Joseph, both to Joseph and probably to themselves
 - That doesn't look like true repentance
 - So the plan moves forward
- Joseph repeats his accusation and then tells the brothers that he will test their claims by demanding to see the younger brother
 - If they can produce a younger brother, then they will have validated their claims
 - Joseph tells them that one must return to retrieve the remaining brother or else the charge of spying will stand
 - And then to ramp up the pressure even more, Joseph puts all the men in prison for three days
 - I wonder if Joseph wanted his brothers to experience a little of what he experienced because of their sin
 - More likely, Joseph is simply just increasing the fear of him among his brothers in pursuit of repentance
- So while the brothers sit in prison, they have no idea when or even if they will be released
 - Their own imaginations produced a far worse punishment than anything Joseph could have said
 - For three days they languished
- Is Joseph being cruel?
 - Some in the world today might consider Joseph's harsh treatment of his brothers as unfair and unkind
 - But that mindset is simply evidence of a culture that has lost an understanding of discipline and consequences for sin

- It's a good thing when the Lord visits our sins back upon us as a means of producing repentance and a resolve to stop sinning
- The question is will we accept the Lord's chastisement and learn from it, or will we take steps to reduce the pain and buffer the trial?
 - Our culture works very hard to remove any pain or inconvenience associated with sin
 - There's always a pill or excuse or exception or special case for everyone and every circumstance where sin has caused a problem
 - Therefore, where is there a place for repentance and spiritual growth?
- Christ will do the same with those He is intent on bringing to repentance
 - They say there are no atheists in foxholes, and regardless of whether that is true or not, the sense is correct
 - God often brings repentance in the midst of trials and difficulties, because when we reach the end of ourselves, we are better prepared to hear from the Spirit

Rom. 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

- This is Joseph's desire with his brothers
- Next week we watch Joseph advance his plan further, leading his brothers to an eventual reconciliation under the right conditions

- Joseph is on a mission to bring reconciliation with his brothers
 - Last week he met them for the first time in 20 years
 - When they bowed down before him, Joseph immediately recognized what he had to do
 - He was to rule over his family
 - But he determined to rule over them as a brother deserving of their love and devotion
 - Not as a despot commanding their obedience
 - Under even normal circumstances, it would be difficult for one brother among 12 to receive the love and devotion of his siblings
 - How much more difficult will it be for Joseph to manage this outcome
 - Especially given their history together
 - But as these brothers go, so goes the nation of Israel
 - If the nation is to survive as a single unit, Joseph must succeed in his task of reconciliation
 - There is a story of two brothers who reflect the importance of working together

The chief of staff of the US Army decided that he would personally intervene in the recruiting crisis affecting all of our armed services. He directed a nearby base to be opened and that all eligible young men and women be invited. As he and his staff were standing near a brand new M-1 Battle Tank, a pair of twin, well built, neatly kept brothers who looked like they had just stepped off an Army Corps recruiting poster walked up to them.

The chief of staff walked up to them, stuck out his hand and introduced himself. He looked at the first young man and asked, "Son, what skills can you bring to the best Army in the world?"

The young man looks at him and says, "I'm a pilot!" The general gets all excited, turns to his aide and says, "Get him in today, all the paper work done, everything, do it!"

The aide hustles the young man off. The general looks at the second young man and asked, "What skills do you bring to this man's Army?"

The young man says, "I chop wood!"

"Son," the general replies, "we don't need wood choppers in the Army, what do you know how to do?"

"I chop wood with my brother!"

"Young man," huffs the general, "you are not listening to me, we don't need wood choppers, this is the 21st century and our battles are fought with our minds as much as with our bodies! Your brother is going to be a pilot."

The young man rolls his eyes and says, "Well, I have to 'chop it' before he can 'pile it'!"

- So Joseph has accused his brothers of being spies and put them in prison for three days
 - Joseph has done this to bring them under pressure and stress while giving himself time to consider his next steps
 - Building this pressure against his brothers is an important part of Joseph's plan
 - By this trial and tribulation, Joseph's brothers will have added reason to consider their past mistakes and repent of their sins
 - We also noted last week that this story teaches a beautiful picture of another time of stress for Israel, the Tribulation of the last days
 - In that future time, the nation will experience great tribulation precisely for the same reason we see the brothers suffering in the story of Joseph
 - So that Israel might repent of past sins toward Christ
 - And by that repentance, they will become reconciled to Christ
 - So as we move forward in the story, we'll continue to look for those parallels

Gen. 42:18 Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

Gen. 42:19 if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for the rest of you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households,

Gen. 42:20 and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die." And they did so.

Gen. 42:21 Then they said to one another, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us."

Gen. 42:22 Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood."

Gen. 42:23 They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.

Gen. 42:24 He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

- Joseph devises a plan to bring all the brothers together
 - Benjamin is still back at home with Jacob because Jacob wanted to protect his favored son
 - But Joseph is intent on reconciling with all his brothers
 - As we discussed last week, Joseph must conceal his identity if he hopes to know their hearts truly
 - And so he must have all brothers present for that moment
 - His plan to bring Benjamin is to test their claims by demanding they produce the missing brother they claim to have at home
 - Previously, Joseph said he would hold all the brothers while sending one back to claim Benjamin
 - After leaving the brothers in jail for three days, Joseph has changed his approach
 - He will hold only one son while sending the rest back to Jacob to claim Benjamin
 - Joseph gives his reason for the change in plans in vs.20
 - First, by sending back multiple brothers, the story they tell Jacob can be verified by the voice of multiple brothers
 - If only one brother were sent back, Jacob might not believe the story
 - Also, Joseph knows these brothers have a history of coming back to their father with bad news in the form of a lie
 - Joseph wants Jacob to believe the story and allow Benjamin to leave
 - Secondly, Joseph says that this will ensure they do not die
 - Sending a single brother alone was a dangerous trip
 - He could easily fall prey to robbers and fail to make it back safely
 - And his return trip with Benjamin would be less likely to succeed as well
- Upon hearing Joseph's command, the brothers immediately begin to lament to one another over their misfortune
 - The boys begin to associate this situation with the one they put their brother Joseph through years earlier
 - They conclude in v.21 that this is "payback" for their earlier misdeeds
 - Reuben takes the opportunity to remind them that he hadn't agreed with the plot
 - He reminds the brothers that he warned them against taking action against Joseph
 - Though Reuben has participated in the cover up
 - Joseph can understand the conversation, though the brothers don't realize this
 - So Joseph learns, perhaps for the first time, that Reuben was not in favor of the

plot

- This knowledge will influence which brother Joseph holds ransom
- Upon hearing the boys lamenting their fate, Joseph turns to weep, feeling their pain and perhaps re-living his own distress from those years ago
 - The boys are lamenting their situation, but this is worldly sorrow, not repentance
 - They are sorry that they are experiencing these circumstances, though they see them as connected to their earlier misdeeds
- Among the unbelieving world, the word used to describe this viewpoint is “karma”
 - Karma has its origins in Buddhism and other Eastern pagan religions
 - The concept has many variants and forms, including reincarnation, but the basic concept is simple
 - The choices a person makes will come back upon him in a similar way
 - Karma teaches that if a person does “good” things, then good things will be returned
 - Conversely, if a person does bad things in life, then they will see bad things returned to them
 - Believers in karma may or may not recognize the involvement of a deity in this cycle
 - Obviously, these teachings are man-made concepts lacking spiritual truth, but there is a Biblical parallel to this teaching
 - First, the Bible teaches that sin has consequences, which is similar to the notion of karma
 - If we live a life of sin, whether believers or unbelievers, then we can expect to see consequences sooner or later
 - As believers we are promised to see the discipline of the Lord as we walk with Him
 - Secondly, the covenant God made with Israel provided for cause-and-effect outcomes for the people of Israel
 - If the nation obeyed God’s commandments, they would see blessing
 - If the nation disobeyed the covenant, they would see His wrath
 - This was a national covenant, so these consequences played out over generations within the nation
 - Again, this is similar to the concept of karma
- But the key difference between karma and the Bible’s teaching is the involvement of the Creator God
 - Karma and other new age notions attribute this cause and effect relationship to ambiguous, impersonal cosmic forces, not to a personal God
 - But the Bible teaches that the Lord always remains in control of all outcomes,

- not some cosmic role of the dice
- And those outcomes will lead the world to an appointed end, while holding all guilty accountable
- And yet the Lord makes a way of escape for those who accept the provision made available in Christ
- Those who believe in karma never stop to ask the obvious question: how did the “cosmic forces” arrive at their rule of “right” and “wrong”?
 - Where do these definitions come from?
 - If there is no Law-giver and no judgment, then what dictates the consequences of karma?
 - Karma as a concept can only work if there is some higher standard of right and wrong guiding the process
- Only the Bible offers an answer for the origin of right and wrong
 - It teaches that the holiness of God and the perfection of His law define good
 - And any departure from God’s law is by definition sin
 - Unless we equal God’s holiness, we are 100% bad

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

- This is the essential difference between the truth of scripture and the lies of the enemy found in false religion ideas like karma
 - Our outcomes are not determined by our works or cosmic law of chance
 - There is an eternal Creator Who will judge us according to His Law
- And we cannot stand that test by our own merit
 - And the only hope we have to escape a certain judgment is to have the covering of Christ’s blood
- So, Joseph presses forward with the plan, devising a clever scheme for testing the brothers’ hearts
 - Their past failure was to forsake a brother in need, turning their backs on him
 - So their test would be whether they would come to the aid of a brother in need this time around
 - Simeon would be held back while the rest are released
 - Joseph wisely skipped over Reuben and held Simeon instead
 - By allowing Reuben to return, Joseph ensured that the oldest was able to represent the brothers in meeting with Jacob
 - So the test is whether they will forsake Simeon to save their own skin?
 - Or would they voluntarily return to Egypt with Benjamin to rescue Simeon?

- They may weep over their past mistake with Joseph, but will they show true repentance by their actions?
- As the boys depart, Joseph decides to increase the pressure on them even more
 - He wanted to be doubly sure that the brothers' return would be motivated entirely by love and not merely by the need for grain or anything else
 - So Joseph gives his brothers even more incentive never to return to Egypt

Gen. 42:25 Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.

Gen. 42:26 So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there.

Gen. 42:27 As one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack.

Gen. 42:28 Then he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack." And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

- Without the brothers knowing, Joseph orders that the brothers' money be returned to them in their sacks
 - The brothers brought the money to pay for the grain they bought
 - The money would have been paid to Joseph's attendants at the point when the grain was delivered
 - So obviously, the brothers never expected to see the money again
 - By returning the money, Joseph was giving the brothers additional reasons to never return to Egypt
 - It wasn't merely a matter of the money itself
 - It was the implication that they had stolen the grain from Pharaoh
 - Notice in v.28 when the brothers discover their money returned their hearts sank
 - The point is they realize that if they return to Egypt, there is a good chance they will be accused of stealing the grain
 - And then they will be put to death
 - Now the question has become whether they are willing to risk their own lives to save Simeon?
 - Joseph has increased the pressure on these boys 100 fold
- This is the same pattern we will see in Israel during the waning days of Tribulation
 - The entire time of Tribulation is a pressure cooker designed to bring Israel to repentance and to acceptance of their Messiah
 - In fact, Daniel teaches that the last days of Tribulation are merely the final part

of a long period of judgment reserved for Israel as penalty under the Old Covenant

Dan. 9:24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- In Daniel 9:24 we’re told that a period of seventy weeks, or seventy “sevens” are decreed for Israel
- This period is intended to accomplish several goals in Israel
 - To finish the transgression of Israel under the Old Covenant
 - To put an end to sin in Israel
 - To make atonement for their sin under the Old Covenant
 - To bring in a period of everlasting righteousness
 - To bring an end to vision and prophecy
 - And to anoint a new temple
 - All of these events are accomplished through the chastisement of Israel, culminating in the events of Tribulation and the arrival of the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ on earth
 - These outcomes are the result of a period of great trial and stress upon the people of Israel
- Zechariah describes this coming period of trial

Zech. 13:8 “It will come about in all the land,”

Declares the LORD,

“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
But the third will be left in it.

Zech. 13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire,

Refine them as silver is refined,

And test them as gold is tested.

They will call on My name,

And I will answer them;

I will say, ‘They are My people,’

And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

- Israel will feel the heat of the Lord refining His people
 - Two thirds of the Jews on earth will not survive this period of trial
 - But one third will survive

- And in the end, that remnant of Israel will call upon the name of Jesus, leading to their salvation
- We'll study this more in coming weeks as we see it play out in the picture created in the story of Joseph and his brothers

Gen. 42:29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying,

Gen. 42:30 “The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country.

Gen. 42:31 “But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies.

Gen. 42:32 ‘We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.’

Gen. 42:33 “The man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take grain for the famine of your households, and go.

Gen. 42:34 ‘But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”

Gen. 42:35 Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man’s bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed.

Gen. 42:36 Their father Jacob said to them, “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.”

Gen. 42:37 Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, “You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.”

Gen. 42:38 But Jacob said, “My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”

- After the sons reach Jacob in Canaan, they relate all that happened to them
 - They explain of how they met the Lord of the land
 - But this powerful man claimed they were spies
 - And how they defended themselves by explaining they were 12 brothers
 - And how one of the brothers was forced to remain as a ransom
 - Furthermore they explained that they had discovered their money had been returned
 - Then it was Jacob’s turn to speak
 - He says his sons have bereaved him of first Joseph, now Simeon and now they

would have him lose Benjamin as well

- This is an interesting thing to say
 - It's even more interesting when you learn that Jacob's statement is phrased in the form of a question
 - It's as if Jacob suspects that his sons are responsible for Joseph's and now Simeon's loss
 - And they want to take Benjamin too
- Why would Jacob suspect this?
 - Well, consider that twice now the brothers have returned from long trips with one fewer brother but with more money than they had when they left
 - When they came back from Dothan, they lacked Joseph
 - But they had twenty pieces of silver from selling him
 - Now they return from Egypt
 - They have one less brother
 - But they have all the grain and they have all their money
 - It seems Jacob is beginning to doubt the brothers' stories, which is going to make it even more difficult to get the entire family to Egypt
- Jacob denies the brothers' request, leaving the family devastated
 - Reuben tries to convince his father to let him take Benjamin
 - He offers to let Jacob kill Reuben's own two children if Reuben fails to come back with Benjamin
 - This is a foolish and rash vow
 - And it was unhelpful to Jacob, for certainly Jacob wouldn't want to kill his own grandchildren
 - Reuben's point was to emphasize how seriously he took the responsibility to bring Benjamin back alive
 - Predictably, Jacob refused Reuben's offer and leaves Simeon for dead
 - Jacob's favoritism for Rachel's sons is so strong he is willing to forsake another son to preserve Benjamin
 - But the famine is not over, and the pressure is only going to increase on Israel
 - Just as the Lord will increase the pressure in Tribulation until the Jews of that time are left with no alternative but to seek for Christ
 - Which we will see in the next several weeks of our study in Genesis

- Joseph has devised a plan to reunite and reconcile his family through a test of their hearts
 - Years earlier, the brothers had heartlessly sold Joseph into slavery
 - They showed no pity on Joseph when he asked for it
 - They have continued to go astray, as Judah showed in Chapter 38
 - Now they face a true test of their love for one another
 - Joseph sends them home to get Benjamin and bring him back to save Simeon
 - He also puts their money back in their sacks making their return all the more difficult
 - Joseph's test is also going to place his father in the spotlight
 - Jacob's favoritism for the sons of Rachel over the sons of Leah has been a source of tremendous strife in the family for many decades
 - This family is destined to become a nation of people, so it's essential the family remain united and strong
- Now the test Joseph has devised is going to hit both the brothers and their father in their weakest places
 - The brothers are returning to confront their past hatred for the sons of Rachel by facing their own deaths for the sake of Benjamin and Simeon
 - Jacob will come face to face with his favoritism and selfishness by being forced to allow his favorite son to leave & perhaps never to return
 - And yet despite these pressures, neither Jacob nor the brothers are truly ready to repent and yield to God
 - In fact, Jacob's heart is so hardened that it requires God to bring a worsening of the famine to drive the family back into Egypt
 - And these worsening conditions provide a reminder to us of the beautiful picture developing in our story of Joseph
 - The prophetic picture is of the last days of Tribulation, when the world will be suffering under God's judgment
 - And that judgment is merely a backdrop to an even greater work the Lord will be doing in that day
 - A work to bring stubborn unbelieving Israel to its knees and to a reconciliation with the One Joseph pictures, that is Christ

Gen. 43:1 Now the famine was severe in the land.

Gen. 43:2 So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

Gen. 43:3 Judah spoke to him, however, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'

Gen. 43:4 "If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

Gen. 43:5 “But if you do not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.’”

Gen. 43:6 Then Israel said, “Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had another brother?”

Gen. 43:7 But they said, “The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?’ So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’”

- After Jacob refused the brothers’ request to return for Simeon, they begin to live off the grain they received in Egypt
 - The grain they bought only lasts so long
 - Naturally Jacob hopes that the grain will bring them through the drought
 - So they will never have to go back to Egypt and risk Benjamin’s life
 - But the Lord brought this famine for a reason
 - And until that purpose has been met, the famine isn’t going to stop
 - In fact, this is only the second year of a seven year famine, but of course Jacob doesn’t know that yet
- When the grain runs out, Jacob tells his sons to go back to Egypt for more
 - But his fourth son, Judah, tells Jacob it’s not that simple
 - The man (Joseph) said they could not return until all the brothers were present
 - If they don’t return with every member of the family, they will not see Joseph’s face
 - The point being that they won’t even get an audience with Joseph much less be able to buy grain
 - So Judah tells dad if you don’t give us Benjamin, there will be no point in going back, so they won’t even bother going
 - To this Jacob utters one of the most revealing, self-centered comments in all scripture
 - It’s right up there with “...this woman You gave me” and “...am I my brother’s keeper?”
- Jacob’s comment reveals his focus and perspective
 - First, it’s a ridiculous statement
 - As Judah points out in v.7, how did he expect the brothers to anticipate that a mention of the number of brothers in the family would have resulted in Joseph’s demands?
 - They couldn’t have seen that coming
 - Secondly, even if they could have seen that, how could Jacob have expected his sons to perpetuate their father’s favoritism for Benjamin?

- He had no reason to expect that
- They are the ones hurt by his unfair preference for Rachel's children, so they can hardly be expected to make it easier for dad to continue in this pattern
- This is the problem that Joseph is working to correct
 - To put an end to the brothers' rivalry created by his father's selfish behavior
 - And this is God's desire as well
- Notice in v.6 Jacob is being called Israel again
 - We remember that whenever Jacob is beginning to turn in the direction of God and to live according to God's call upon his life, his name will shift
 - The name Jacob describes a man moving away from the Lord
 - While the name Israel, his new God-given name, indicates a heart change is taking place and Jacob is moving back toward God
 - Wouldn't it be helpful if we had two names like Jacob?
 - One name could represent my life in obedience when I'm walking in God's will and hearing His voice
 - While the other name would represent my tendency to live according to my flesh, following my own desires rather than the Lord's
 - Then when I notice everyone calling me by my godly name, I know I'm on the right track with the Lord
 - But when I'm off track, everyone starts calling me by my worldly name
 - The truth is we have something even better already
 - We have the Holy Spirit living in us, and He is always talking to us
 - He reveals God's desires and convicts us when we stray
 - And above all, we have the word of God providing us all the instruction we need to be obedient
 - The problem in our following God has never been our ability to discern God's will or know His desires
 - The problem has always been our willingness to listen and do what we hear
 - Though Jacob's words still sound selfish and desperate, the use of the name Israel is our clue to know that his heart is softening
 - Jacob is beginning to move in the direction of God, and hence Moses begins calling him Israel
 - But notice, it's not a joyful turn...Jacob is being dragged by God kicking and screaming in the direction of obedience
 - And the famine is the blunt instrument God is using to provoke that turn
- Jacob's unwillingness to allow Benjamin to join his brothers creates another part of the picture of Tribulation and end times contained in this story
 - Joseph has stated flatly that he will not show his face to the family of Israel until all

of Israel has come before him according to Joseph's instructions

- They must appear as one family, all of them present and willing to submit themselves to Joseph's authority
- If even one is missing, then the family will never see Joseph
- We know already that Joseph is a picture of Jesus, and the brothers collectively picture the Israel of the future in Tribulation
 - After Israel's leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus spoke to them in harsh terms
 - Jesus told Israel what would be required for them to ever see Jesus come to them again as their Lord
 - Jesus spoke these words at a point in His earthly ministry, recorded at the very end of Luke 13

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

Luke 13:35 "Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

- Jesus declared to Israel that after He departed the Earth the Jewish nation would not see Jesus come to them again until they take a certain step
 - The nation must reverse their sin of rejecting Jesus as Messiah
 - Jesus is the Messiah sent to Israel as promised in the covenants
 - And though the nation was unfaithful, the Lord remains faithful to His promises
 - And in accordance to the promises God gave Israel through Abraham, the nation will have their Messiah one day
 - But that future day depends on the people of Israel coming to accept the Messiah they earlier rejected
- Notice in v.35 Jesus says He will not return for Israel again until they declare "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!"
 - This is a quote from Psalm 118 (*incorrectly stated in the audio as Psalm 119*), a Messianic psalm that tells of Israel receiving their Messiah
 - Jesus says until Israel declares Jesus as their Messiah, Jesus will not return
- This truth is pictured by Jacob's sons submitting to Joseph's authority
 - The sons must stand before Jesus and seek him according to Joseph's standards, or else they will never see Joseph's face
 - But when that time comes, it must be the whole of Israel to make this declaration

- It cannot be that only some of Israel come to this view
- If all the brothers return to submit to Joseph's authority, but even one brother is missing, the meeting will never happen
- Likewise, Paul tells us that when the day comes for the Lord to show mercy on Israel, the entire nation on earth will be included in that work of mercy

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Rom. 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

**“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”**

Rom. 11:27 **“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”**

- In a future day, when the plan of God for His Gentile church has run its appointed course, then the Lord will bring mercy to a disobedient and stubborn Israel
- On that future day, the hardening of Israel will be lifted
- And notice in v.26 Paul says “all Israel” will be saved by the return of their Deliverer, the Messiah
 - Every single member of the nation of Israel on earth in that day will be included in this rescue
 - As the Lord returns to the Earth, He brings salvation to all Israel
 - And if the Lord has returned, it means all Israel has called out for Jesus as Jesus required in Luke 13
 - What will bring about such a miraculous reversal of the Jewish nation?
 - Certainly today they are not moving in the direction of faith in Jesus?
 - As we move further through the story of Joseph and his brothers, we'll see this picture develop even further
 - And the rest of the picture will fill in gaps for how and when the Lord brings Israel back to Himself in such a dramatic way
 - But already we know it begins with a worldwide distress so severe it pressures Israel just as this famine is pressuring Jacob to let Benjamin join his brothers

Gen. 43:8 Judah said to his father Israel, **“Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones.**

Gen. 43:9 **“I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.**

Gen. 43:10 **“For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned**

twice.”

Gen. 43:11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Gen. 43:12 “Take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake.

Gen. 43:13 “Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man;

Gen. 43:14 and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

Gen. 43:15 So the men took this present, and they took double the money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

- After sensing his father’s heart softening to the prospect of sending Benjamin, Judah puts an offer on the table
 - He declares that he will take personal responsibility for Benjamin’s safety
 - Judah doesn’t make the foolish offer to allow Jacob to kill his own children as Reuben had done earlier
 - Instead, Judah puts his honor on the line, which means he is offering to forgo his right to any inheritance in the family
 - And in that culture, this was the greatest thing Judah could offer his father
 - And it’s only appropriate that Judah should be the one to lead Israel in reconciling with Joseph
 - First, Judah was the instigator of Joseph’s slavery
 - He suggested that the brothers sell Joseph
 - So Judah redeems himself to a degree by taking responsibility to bring the other favored brother back safely
 - Quite a turn around for Judah
 - Secondly, it’s very important symbolically that Judah be the one to lead the delegation back to Joseph
 - Remember that Judah was fourth in line in this family
 - But he had become the leader by virtue of his three older brothers disqualifying themselves in various sins
 - Reuben slept with one of the concubines
 - Simeon and Levi destroyed Shechem against their father’s will
 - So Judah was the most favored of Leah’s sons
 - And Joseph is the one holding the birthright, and with it the double portion of

the inheritance and authority in the family

- So reconciling the seed promise holder and the birthright holder is critical to family unity
 - The seed will come from Israel and Israel will be a single nation at that time
- What is also interesting about Judah's insistence that the brothers return is the complete lack of concern about finding the money in their packs
 - It seems the brothers have set that fear aside in consideration of their brother
 - Despite the possibility they might be accused of stealing from Pharaoh, they are determined to return for their brother
 - This is another good sign for the family
- So Judah tells Jacob we could have been there and back twice in the time we've delayed
 - A journey from Canaan to Egypt's capital was about two weeks in each direction
 - So assuming Judah isn't exaggerating, the time since they returned from Egypt has been about 2 months
 - For 2 months Simeon has been languishing in prison in Egypt
 - In v.11, Israel moves in God's direction, agreeing to allow the sons to go with Benjamin
 - And he tells the boys to take the best the land has to offer as a gift to the Pharaoh's representative
 - What's noticeable about this list is the relative low value of these items as produce of the field
 - If this is the best the land has to offer in this day, it is truly a devastating famine
 - No grains, no succulent fruits, no dairy products, just some nuts, a little honey, and some simple spices
 - It was similar to the widow giving her mite
 - Then Jacob tries to address the issue of the money
 - He says take double what you took the first time
 - Plus, take the money that had been returned to you
 - So the brothers are returning with three times the money they took the first time
 - And Judah says perhaps the money was returned by mistake, a hopeful point of view on his part
 - Remember, there were 10 brothers traveling the first time, and each returned with money in their sacks, so they returned with 10 sacks of money
 - Now again, there are ten brothers traveling, but this time with 2 times the money, or we could say 2 sacks of money each
 - It's fascinating how God brings our mistakes full circle to impress upon us how our wrong choices have consequences

- While the brothers first sold off their brother to Egypt for 20 pieces of money, now they are returning to ransom a brother from Egypt with 20 sacks of money
- The repayment for a sin that God requires will often exceed the value of the sin itself
- Then Israel allows Benjamin to travel with the brothers
 - He says take Benjamin and go to the man, that is Joseph
 - And then Jacob places the boy's welfare in the hands of God
 - Jacob appeals to the Lord for protection
 - He says may the Lord have compassion on his family
 - But if the sons are taken from him, then so be it
 - In other words, Jacob was willing to trust in God for the outcome, a step of faith
 - These tactics are similar to the ones Jacob tried during a previous crisis
 - Remember he tried to buy off Esau with gifts, which proved unnecessary in the end
 - And yet Jacob wrestled with God begging God for a blessing in the face of his approaching foe
 - It's as if Jacob wants to always cover his bets
 - Here Jacob does something similar
 - He gives his sons something of value to appease the anger of the man
 - But he also appeals to the Lord for mercy in case the appeasement doesn't work
- This is the story of Israel the nation
 - Resting in their works, but if that fails, resting in the Lord as their backup strategy
 - But the Lord isn't content to be our backup strategy
 - He is no strategy at all...He is the One Who saves by His mercy
 - The Lord stands ready to offer mercy, but only to those who humble themselves
 - To those who acknowledge their weakness and inadequacy to meet God's standard
 - Not only is Jacob moving in the right direction, so are the brothers showing positive signs
 - But Joseph isn't done testing them
 - A third test is coming

- Joseph's brothers have returned to Egypt, and this time they've brought Benjamin
 - They need to buy more grain and then there's the issue of Simeon still in prison
 - Of course they don't know the Pharaoh's prime minister is actually Joseph in disguise
 - So they fear his response when they return with the money they found after they returned home from their original visit
 - Joseph has his own plans
 - He is waiting for the brothers to return so he can move them closer to reconciliation
 - At this point we might ask what would Joseph have done if the brothers never returned for Simeon?
 - Jacob was insistent that they wouldn't go back if it meant taking Benjamin
 - But Joseph never considered that option
 - He knows his family will return
 - The dreams the Lord gave him confirmed that one day his family would bow down before him
 - Joseph's faith in God's promises leaves him no doubt that the brothers would return sooner or later
 - And therefore, the Lord prolonged the famine to ensure Jacob would relent
- The brother's return to Egypt means they passed Joseph's second test...they are willing to return for Simeon even though it means they place themselves at risk
 - This is progress, but it doesn't fully address their sinful hearts
 - They are coming back for Simeon, but how can Joseph know if they want to save their brother or because they need grain
 - Joseph needs to test them further to yield repentance
 - The next test won't be one of stress and trial, but of kindness, as we'll see today
- Finally, we've been observing that there is a larger story pictured in the account of Joseph
 - As Joseph pictures Christ, the brothers picture the nation of Israel
 - And just as the nation rejected their own Messiah, Joseph's brothers rejected him
 - But in a future day the nation will reconcile with their Messiah
 - And the Lord will work through trial and tribulation to bring about the environment where repentance can take place
 - So as we watch Joseph work his plan, we look for clues of how this story foretells how the Lord will bring Israel back to Himself in the last days

Gen. 43:16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward,

“Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon.”

Gen. 43:17 So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph’s house.

Gen. 43:18 Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph’s house; and they said, “It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys.”

Gen. 43:19 So they came near to Joseph’s house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house,

Gen. 43:20 and said, “Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food,

Gen. 43:21 and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man’s money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand.

Gen. 43:22 “We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.”

Gen. 43:23 He said, “Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.

Gen. 43:24 Then the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder.

Gen. 43:25 So they prepared the present for Joseph’s coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

- As the brothers arrived in Egypt, they stand before Joseph again
 - And Joseph sees Benjamin among them and realizes they did as Joseph required
 - So then Joseph begins the next part of his plan
 - Joseph commands that the men be assembled at Joseph’s house to prepare for a meal at noon
 - The prospect of going to the home of such a powerful man scared the brothers to death
 - Normally, it would be a high honor to receive such an invitation, but since they worry about the money switch, they fear the worst
 - They say to one another that the reason for the invitation is so that Joseph can take them as slaves in his home
 - This is an absurd assumption really
 - If Joseph had wanted to make them slaves, he could have done so with any pretense
 - No need to drag them all to his house and pretend to serve them a meal

- He would have just ordered them bound in chains
- Nevertheless, they can't imagine this is a good sign and they are terrified
- As they approach Joseph's house, they see a servant standing outside
 - So they think this must be a chance to plead their case before it's too late
 - Imagining the scene, it's a little comical to me
 - Imagine ten men in a mild panic all speaking quickly over one another pleading with this powerless servant
 - They tell the story of having paid for the grain but then opening their sacks to find the money was returned
 - They say they have brought the money back to prove they were honest men
 - Furthermore, they have brought new money for more grain
 - And they have no idea how the original money was returned
 - We can sympathize with the brothers' panic
 - We know they are guilty of far greater things than stealing, but in this case they're innocent of any crime
 - Still, they understand that justice is blind and a judge like Joseph would be unforgiving
 - So the fact that they were found with the money would be reason enough to presume their guilt and punish them
 - Because they had no choice but to return, they're hoping they can convince someone of their innocence
- They're seeking mercy from Joseph, and they're hoping the slave will plead their case for them before they are dragged off in chains
 - After they finish telling their story, the slave says something completely unexpected
 - First, he tells them to be at ease
 - The word for ease in Hebrew is *shalom*, which means peace
 - He tells the men to be at peace
 - Or another way to translate shalom is to be complete or to be well
 - He says you are complete
 - Secondly, the slave says do not fear
 - This slave knew his master to be a good and fair man
 - So he could confidently tell these ten men they had no reason to fear Joseph's judgment
 - Third, the slave says the money was returned by their God and the God of their father
 - This is quite a thing for an Egyptian to say
 - This man has obviously been introduced to the God of Israel, probably by

Joseph

- We can't be sure if he was God fearing, but he seems to know that Joseph is working in union with the Lord
- But what he says is exactly true
 - The Lord is working in these circumstances
 - The brothers have been viewing the situation from a negative point of view
 - The mysterious return of the money was a terrible thing in their eyes
 - Who knows how many nights they've lost sleep because the money was returned to them
 - Yet from the beginning it was simply God blessing them, albeit to teach them a lesson
 - When we get right down to it, they got their grain for free
 - What a great blessing, yet because they were so far from the heart of the Lord, it never crossed their minds to consider that this was a blessing from God
 - They only considered that it was a curse and a calamity
 - Certainly, Joseph was working to prick their conscience
 - But he also wanted to bless his family by returning the money
- Finally, and most surprisingly, the slave says that he already has the brother's money
 - That phrase in Hebrew doesn't translate very well into English
 - His statement is better translated "I received your money"
 - In other words, someone else had paid the price for their grain
 - The someone was Joseph, obviously
 - Joseph paid the price for them
- With that, the servant brought the men into Joseph's house, brought Simeon to them and refreshed them with water, washed their feet and fed their donkeys
 - The brothers aren't recorded as having said anything more, so we must assume they were stunned by what was happening
 - They were being comforted in the house of the second most powerful man on earth
 - They have learned that someone else paid the price for their grain, and they must have assumed it was Joseph who made the payment
 - They are not being treated as honored guests
 - And they have learned that a feast has been prepared in their honor
 - In fact, at noon Joseph will appear to eat with them
 - These are a turn events that would have been unimaginable a short time earlier
 - Their heads must have been spinning about now

- Let's take a closer look at the story of Jesus and Israel pictured in this story
 - First, we know the brothers have been brought to this point so far because of great trial and stress
 - The famine alone made Jacob so desperate he was willing to place Benjamin in jeopardy
 - But then the capture of Simeon put added pressure on the brothers
 - This is exactly how the nation of Israel will be brought closer to a reconciliation with Jesus
 - Israel's reconciliation with the Lord begins with calamity and difficulty brought about by a worldwide Tribulation that God brings
 - Then in Tribulation, life for Israel is made even worse by the activity of the lawless one, as Paul calls the Antichrist
 - The Antichrist seeks to destroy Israel as a means of ending Christ's return
 - As we learned in our last lesson, the enemy knows that were Israel to cease to exist on Earth, then the Messiah could not return, according to Luke 13
 - And during this time of persecution, the nation will retreat to safety in Jerusalem to prepare for the Antichrist's attack
 - But as the pressure of their ordeal seemed ready to bring the brothers to a breaking point, Joseph's kindness begins to bring them along
 - First, the brother's hear that their debts were paid
 - Then they receive the kind treatment of Joseph's servant
- Similarly, as the pressure of Tribulation reaches its height, the Lord will begin to show His kindness to His people, even before He reveals Himself to them
 - The Antichrist will attack Israel and cause them to retreat to Jerusalem for a final battle
 - But while Israel is under attack, they are supernaturally protected by the Lord in the city of Jerusalem
 - We read this account in Zechariah

[Zech. 12:1](#) The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,

[Zech. 12:2](#) "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.

[Zech. 12:3](#) "It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

[Zech. 12:4](#) "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of

Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

Zech. 12:5 “Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of hosts, their God.’

Zech. 12:8 “In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

Zech. 12:9 “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

- Notice that Israel is living in Jerusalem in this future day
 - The time of Tribulation has drawn the nation back to the city God gave them
 - We also know from Revelation that the nation will have opportunity to rebuild the temple during that time
 - So we can say the nation will once again return to God’s house in the city of David
- This is pictured by the way the brothers are invited back to Joseph’s house
 - Joseph pictures Christ, and therefore his home can be said to be a picture of the temple in Jerusalem
 - The brothers have been brought back to their Lord’s house to prepare for a reconciliation
- And their first understanding of Joseph is provided by Joseph’s servant
 - The brothers don’t know Joseph’s identity yet, but through Joseph’s servant they’re beginning to learn more about his heart
 - They’re learning he’s kind even to ungrateful men
 - This pictures how the Lord will begin to make Himself known to Israel in a future day
 - He will begin to reveal Himself by means of His servant, the Holy Spirit
 - And the Holy Spirit will testify to Israel that the Lord is a good and gracious Lord
 - As Jesus said

Luke 6:35 “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

- Because of the servant’s testimony, the brothers begin to rethink their assumptions about Joseph
- Furthermore, Zechariah says the nations of the world under direction of the Antichrist attack Jerusalem, putting Israel at great fear
 - Notice that the attack is actually something God is orchestrating for His purposes in Israel

- It may be the Antichrist leading the nations into battle
- But it is the Lord causing the war
- Then at a point near the end, when Israel is at their breaking point, the Lord begins to show His kindness to the nation from behind the scenes
 - He fights for them, giving them an advantage and causing them to withstand the enemy's attacks
 - But throughout the fighting, they don't see the Lord
 - They can sense He is working to strengthen them
 - They say they recognize that the Lord of host, their God has acted upon their behalf
- Likewise, though Joseph has yet to reveal himself, his brothers are even now experiencing the kindness of Joseph in an unexpected ways
 - They are being treated with honor, an honor they do not deserve
 - They have not earned Joseph's favor
 - If anything, they have earned his judgment
 - Nevertheless, they are receiving grace
 - The servant, who pictures the Holy Spirit, declares to them that the price for their grain was paid already
 - Then he washes their feet, gives them refreshment
 - He takes care of the brothers in Joseph's absence
 - And what is the basis for the brothers receiving grace?
 - We don't see the rest of the world receiving this grace as they come to Joseph for grain
 - No, it is only Joseph's family of Israel that receives this special grace in the time of difficulty
 - Joseph is one of their brothers and he is determined to win them back to himself
- Joseph suffered a penalty because of their sin against him, a penalty of 20 years
 - But now Joseph is determined to turn his suffering into an advantage for his family, as a means of reconciliation
 - Likewise, Jesus suffered the penalty of Israel's rejection when He hung on the cross for their betrayal of Him
 - But His penalty also becomes the means for Jesus to forgive Israel's sins
 - And that forgiveness is coming, just as Joseph is preparing to reveal himself to his brothers

Gen. 43:26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him.

Gen. 43:27 Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, “Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?”

Gen. 43:28 They said, “Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.” They bowed down in homage.

Gen. 43:29 As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, he said, “Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?” And he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.”

Gen. 43:30 Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there.

Gen. 43:31 Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, “Serve the meal.”

Gen. 43:32 So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians.

- Joseph arrives at noon, the brothers bring the present that Jacob had asked them to deliver
 - It must have looked so pathetic to Joseph
 - He had the best of the world at his disposal, and the gift that the brothers bring would have been very meager by comparison
 - Still, the mention of their father’s gift leads Joseph to ask of Jacob’s welfare
 - Joseph is told that Jacob is well
 - Then Joseph sees Benjamin again and the sight of the entire family gathered before him causes him to leave the room overtaken by emotion
- After composing himself, Joseph returns to eat with the men
 - They are seated for a meal but in a particular manner
 - Joseph eats by himself
 - To the brothers, Joseph was an Egyptian, so they wouldn’t eat with him
 - And to the Hamite Egyptians, Joseph was a Semite, so they wouldn’t eat with him
 - So then his brothers sit at another table
 - And the Egyptians by themselves
 - The Hyksos rulers were Semites, and the Hamites refused to eat with Semites
 - Even in this moment we see another picture of Jesus in the days of Tribulation
 - The world will reject Jesus and are offended by His message
 - So Jesus is not embraced by the world
 - Likewise, Christ’s own people, the nation of Israel, don’t receive Him until the end of Tribulation, though Christ is one of them

- Nevertheless, Joseph knows these men far better than they could ever imagine
 - And so at the meal, Joseph takes the opportunity to devise yet another test

Gen. 43:33 Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment.

Gen. 43:34 He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

- The men are seated around a table in an order that Joseph assigns
 - The order is based on birth order, so that they are arranged around the table according to age
 - These men are all old enough now that it would have been impossible to discern their birth order by appearance
 - They were all born within a few years of one another
 - And the odds of guessing their birth order correctly was 40 million to one
 - They look around at each other and realize that they are seated in a perfect birth order
 - They are amazed because they can't see how Joseph would have known this
 - Yet they know it can't be coincidence...their positions were selected intentionally
 - Then the test came...Joseph showed Benjamin much more honor than his brothers
 - Benjamin receives 5x the portion of the brothers
 - A double portion might have been overlooked or dismissed as a sloppy servant
 - But five times was obviously intentional
 - Joseph's test is whether Benjamin's favored position still causes discontent in the brothers
 - Do they resent it or can they accept their brother regardless of how the father treats them all?
 - Do they revert to their old behaviors and attitudes?
- The Lord calls us to leave behind our old nature and old habits and old grudges when we come to dine with Him
 - We have been given an eternal inheritance and forgiveness from all our sins
 - We have been given so much more than we deserve
 - So we are told to leave behind our old nature as a show of thanks and obedience

- And the Lord may test our hearts from time to time to see if we have moved beyond the old nature
- The Lord was testing these brothers through Joseph, and we're told they ate and drank freely
 - It would appear the animosity is fading
 - The brothers are acting in love despite favoritism
 - They are willing to forgive and forget injustices
- And this sets the stage for Joseph to forgive them as well

- As we open Chapter 44, Joseph sits at a table a few feet from his eleven brothers
 - And as he watches them eating and laughing together, he ponders silently what to make of them
 - The last time Joseph sat in the company of his brothers dining, the situation was eerily similar
 - The brothers ate together without Joseph
 - Joseph was sitting alone in a pit left for dead
 - Now once again they eat alone, without Joseph at their table
 - But now Joseph wonders if their hearts have changed
 - Are they the same men who possessed so much hatred for him?
 - Have they truly changed?
 - Are they treating their younger brother Benjamin well because they love him
 - Or have they been on their best behavior out of fear of Joseph and a need for his grain?
 - Have they experienced the sorrow God produces leading to repentance?
 - Or have they simply experienced worldly sorrow?
- While Joseph contemplates his brothers' hearts, he considered this was only the second year of a 7-year famine
 - He knew his family couldn't survive outside Egypt for that long
 - After just a little more than a year, they were already dependent on Egypt's grain
 - They've come twice and they'll keep coming
 - But they don't know this yet
 - Joseph also understands that God has produced these circumstances to bless Israel
 - The famine will soften hearts and bring the family of Jacob back together again
 - Eventually, they will all be in Egypt, just as the Lord promised Abraham
- So Joseph chooses his next step carefully
 - He has already applied two tests on his brothers
 - The first test was placing the money in the sacks to test the brothers' love for Simeon (and Jacob's willingness to release Benjamin)
 - The second test was whether the brothers continued to harbor resentment for Benjamin when they saw him receive five times the food
 - The brothers and their father passed these tests
 - But still Joseph wants to push harder against their hearts
 - If needs to know if their hearts remain stoney cold or whether they've come to life

- So he begins the third and final test

Gen. 44:1 Then he commanded his house steward, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack.

Gen. 44:2 “Put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph had told him.

Gen. 44:3 As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys.

Gen. 44:4 They had just gone out of the city, and were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, “Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good?’

Gen. 44:5 ‘Is not this the one from which my lord drinks and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.’”

- Joseph’s plan this time is similar to his second test, but with a twist
 - In the last test, Joseph returned each man’s money back in his sack
 - This caused the men to fear they would be accused of stealing
 - Now as before, Joseph places the money back in each man’s sack
 - Since they’ve seen this once before, this maneuver isn’t the test
 - By now the men won’t be surprised much less bothered to receive a refund
 - Joseph continues to give their money back because he doesn’t want to take his father’s money
 - This time, however, Joseph instructs his servant to place a special possession in Benjamin’s sack – a silver cup
 - In v.5 Joseph instructs his servants to say this cup is used for divination
 - In ancient times, magicians attempted to discern future events using cups filled with water
 - They scattered small particles of gold and silver on the surface of the water and watched the patterns form
 - Demonic spirits would act on these particles to create messages
 - The pattern gave answers to yes or no questions
- What do we make of the fact that Joseph had a divining cup?
 - Are we to assume that Joseph actually practiced divination?
 - We know God’s word strongly condemns divination
 - So we must assume Joseph would have known it was off limits to God’s people
 - From the sense of the story, it seems clear Joseph wasn’t a diviner
 - First, the cup isn’t called a divining cup when Joseph first mentions it

- Quite specifically, Joseph calls it just a silver cup
- But then when he instructs his servants, he tells them to call it a “divining” cup
- Joseph is playing a role as part of his test for his brothers
 - Joseph’s power wasn’t merely in his position
 - It was also in his knowledge and insight
 - It was his ability to interpret dreams that gave him his position of power in the first place
 - And he has used his knowledge of his brothers to impress them, particularly at the table when they ate
 - So Joseph has been working all along to leave the impression he can divine knowledge
 - And the brothers would naturally accept his claim
 - So he continues to play that part in this test
- A diviner’s most prized possession would be his instrument of divination, whether a cup or some other tool
 - So when Joseph tells his servants to accuse Benjamin of taking his diving cup, it was a very serious charge
 - Like someone stealing Tim Duncan’s sneakers
 - Like stealing Tiger Woods’ putter
 - Like stealing Mick Jagger’s chapstick
 - The penalty would almost certainly be death
- And that’s the key difference with this third test
 - Only Benjamin is placed in jeopardy in this situation, so the test becomes whether his brothers will abandon him in his time of need
 - They could leave him behind to face Egyptian justice
 - They have an easy way to rid themselves of the last son of Rachel
 - And this time it would be through no fault of their own
 - They could legitimately claim innocence before Jacob and blame it on Benjamin
 - So Joseph is testing the brothers’ hearts to discover whether they will act differently this time when a son of Rachel is in jeopardy
 - He even arranges to have the cup discovered while the brothers are still on the road
 - This places the brothers far from their father’s influence, just as it was in Dothan nearly 15 years earlier
 - Joseph has constructed a test perfectly matched to the moment when the brothers sinned against him

Gen. 44:6 So he overtook them and spoke these words to them.

Gen. 44:7 They said to him, “Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing.

Gen. 44:8 “Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house?

Gen. 44:9 “With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord’s slaves.”

Gen. 44:10 So he said, “Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and the rest of you shall be innocent.”

Gen. 44:11 Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack.

Gen. 44:12 He searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack.

Gen. 44:13 Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

- The servants catch up to the brothers and speak all the words that Joseph commanded them to deliver
 - Naturally, the brothers are shocked at the accusations leveled against them
 - They defend their honor with a simple observation about their past behavior
 - They remind the servants that when they had discovered their money returned after the first trip, they brought it back from Canaan
 - Certainly anyone willing to bring back so much money wouldn’t be tempted in the theft of a single silver cup
 - Such a crime would make no sense
 - The brothers were so sure of their innocence, they offer a test of their innocence
 - In Egypt (and throughout the ancient east), an accused could propose his own test of innocence so long as he also named his own punishment in advance
 - If his offer was accepted, then justice would be determined according to his own word
 - In this case, the test the brothers offered was that a search could be conducted of their belongings
 - If the cup was found, then the guilty one would die and the rest become slaves
 - So in v.10 the servant agrees to the test, though he chose to modify it in the brothers’ favor, which was allowed by law
 - So if the cup was not found, then the matter would end there and the brothers would be free
 - But if the cup was found, then the one holding it would become a slave of

Joseph

- Obviously, the servant understood what Joseph was trying to accomplish, so he modified the agreement to support Joseph's purpose
 - First, he reduced the penalty for the guilty one to enslavement rather than death
 - If the penalty had remained death, then Benjamin would have been killed on the spot
 - Certainly this would have defeated Joseph's plan, for he had no intention of placing Benjamin's life in danger through this test
 - Secondly, the servant rejects the notion of making all the brothers slaves
 - This condition also supports Joseph's plan, because the point of the test was to put distance between Benjamin and the rest of his brothers
 - By placing only Benjamin in jeopardy, the brothers will be forced to decide whether they stand by him or abandon him
 - So the search is held, and of course the cup is found in Benjamin's sack
 - Immediately, the brothers are mourning their situation, which is evidenced in their tearing of clothes
 - The scripture doesn't record any conversation among the brothers at this point, but we can imagine Benjamin was trying to plead his innocence
 - Perhaps the other brothers were questioning him for why he took the cup
- But the most interesting part of the moment is found in v.13
 - It says that every man loaded his own donkey and returned to the city
 - Only Benjamin was required to return at this point, according to the oath that was taken
 - The other brothers could have continued home
 - But instead, they accompany their brother back to Egypt
 - We're not told why they return, at least not at this point
 - But the reason becomes clear soon enough
 - They will not return to their father without Benjamin in their care
 - They have made that trip once before, when they sold Joseph into slavery
 - And they aren't interested in repeating that mistake again, it seems

Gen. 44:14 When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him.

Gen. 44:15 Joseph said to them, "What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?"

Gen. 44:16 So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the

cup has been found.”

Gen. 44:17 But he said, “Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father.”

- In v.14 we’re left with a peculiar sense of timing
 - We’re told Joseph was “still” at his house
 - This suggests that this scene is happening later in the same day when the brothers ate with Joseph
 - The meal was at noon, so this moment is likely happening later in that afternoon
 - Joseph has chosen to act quickly to conclude the test
 - As the brothers arrive, they fall on the ground before Joseph
 - This is another fulfillment of the dream given to Joseph
 - Could the brothers have ever imagined themselves doing such a thing?
 - Actually no, since they themselves said to Joseph back in Chapter 37:

Gen. 37:8 Then his brothers said to him, “Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- Joseph begins the encounter by asking the men how they thought they could get away with taking his cup, since he is a man who practices divination
 - Clearly, this comment was intended to make the men worry all the more and keep them off balance
 - Once again, Joseph is playing a part to create an impression with the brothers
 - He is not actually a diviner, but it helps his cause if they believe he is
 - Joseph’s seemingly limitless power of discernment leaves the brothers assuming they can hide nothing from him
 - The effect is to cause them to be transparent
 - To not play games with him
 - Then we’re told Judah leads the brothers in the conversation
 - The fact that Judah has taken this prominent role tells us that he is the leading brother in the family now
 - And it’s perfect justice, since Judah was the one leading the effort to sell Joseph
- Judah begins the brothers’ defense with no defense at all
 - The facts were undeniable, and yet they are exactly wrong
 - The men are not actually guilty of this crime and they likely knew it

- Judah must have believed his younger brother's denials
 - It's likely that Judah suspected the cup was planted, like the money had been before
 - But interestingly, he doesn't try to make that argument
- Instead, Judah simply confesses the brothers' sin, and in doing so he uses some interesting words
 - He says, how can we speak? How can we justify ourselves?
 - The Hebrew word for justify is *tsadoq*, which means to acquit to declare innocent or righteous
 - Judah is asking a rhetorical question, because the answer is clear
 - They have no way to acquit themselves
 - They cannot stand before Joseph in righteousness
- Of course, Judah could not appreciate at this moment that his words were even truer than he realized
 - Not only were the brothers unable to acquit themselves over the theft of the cup
 - They couldn't stand before their brother Joseph in righteousness given their past sin against him
 - Judah's moment of confession may have been prompted by one situation, but it opens a much larger conversation
 - Joseph's brothers could never hope to acquit themselves of their offense done to Joseph
 - Only if Joseph shows mercy and offers the brothers grace will they be able to stand his judgment
- In the face of their apparent guilt, Judah offers for all the brothers to become slaves in Egypt
 - This was his original offer, and Judah continues to demand that all the family remain together
 - Once again we see him working to protect Benjamin
 - This is very different to Judah's behavior with Joseph
 - In response, Joseph continues to play his part, by stating that it would be unfair to take the entire family as slaves
 - Instead, only Benjamin will be left behind
 - So now comes the climactic moment for Judah and his brothers
 - In the past, Judah used his power of persuasion and leadership skill to rally his brothers against Joseph
 - What will he do here?
- Joseph's test gives its result...Judah shows his new heart, giving the longest speech recorded in Genesis

Gen. 44:18 Then Judah approached him, and said, “Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh.

Gen. 44:19 “My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’

Gen. 44:20 “We said to my lord, ‘We have an old father and a little child of his old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.’

Gen. 44:21 “Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me that I may set my eyes on him.’

Gen. 44:22 “But we said to my lord, ‘The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’

Gen. 44:23 “You said to your servants, however, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.’

Gen. 44:24 “Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

Gen. 44:25 “Our father said, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’

Gen. 44:26 “But we said, ‘We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’

Gen. 44:27 “Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons;

Gen. 44:28 and the one went out from me, and I said, “Surely he is torn in pieces,” and I have not seen him since.

Gen. 44:29 ‘If you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.’

Gen. 44:30 “Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad’s life,

Gen. 44:31 when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow.

Gen. 44:32 “For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.’

Gen. 44:33 “Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

Gen. 44:34 “For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me — for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?”

- Judah’s speech is as powerful as it is unexpected
 - Judah approached Joseph to speak with him in a semiprivate manner
 - He informs Joseph of why they cannot leave Benjamin with him
 - This is not a defense for Benjamin’s behavior

- Judah doesn't try to acquit himself or anyone else
 - Instead, Judah simply explains why he can't leave Benjamin behind
 - He tells the story Joseph doesn't know, the story of what transpired back in Canaan when Jacob allowed Benjamin to travel to Egypt
- Judah begins by reminding Joseph of the moment when he asked the brothers if they had a father or brother
 - Judah explains that the younger didn't travel the first time because his father favors him as the last son of his mother
 - Judah's story confirms to Joseph that his father is still showing favoritism to Rachel's children
 - But because Joseph insisted that Benjamin return, their father had no choice but to allow it
 - Joseph had already assumed this much of the story, but then he hears about the deal Judah made to convince Jacob
- Judah tells Joseph that he himself gave his own life as surety to his father to guarantee the life of Benjamin
 - If the youngest son did not return, Judah knows that Jacob would surely die in sorrow
 - He says it would cause Jacob to go to Sheol
 - Sheol is the Old Testament name for the place God held all the departed souls of mankind until the death of Jesus on the cross
 - Jesus relates the nature of Sheol in a story in Luke 16
 - So to comfort his father, Judah promised he would give his life to save Benjamin's if need be
- From the beginning Joseph has wanted proof that the brothers' hearts have changed
 - In fact, Joseph has been working with the Lord through the famine and through his tests to actually produce that change
 - And now with the third test, he finally has the proof he was seeking
 - It was 15 years ago that Judah callously turned his back on his brother
 - And now Judah has placed his own life above Benjamin's
 - And 15 years ago Judah and his brothers gave no thought to how Joseph's disappearance would impact their father
 - If anything, they probably enjoyed the thought of inflicting some pain upon him after years of suffering for his favoritism
 - But now Judah is working hard to protect his father
 - Where do we go to explain this change? The answer isn't found in the circumstances of the famine or in Joseph's tests
 - These events merely served to expose the brothers' true nature
 - The engine for this change was the Spirit of God working to keep the promises

of God

- Which is the only power in the Universe with the potential to take cold, dead hearts and bring them to life
- To foster love and compassion where only hatred, spite and jealousy can be found
- To take a man like Judah, who would sell his own brother into slavery one day
- But then offer his own life as a slave in place of another brother on a later day
- This is the God we serve as well

- Today comes the moment we've been waiting to see for the past several weeks and chapters...the moment when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers
 - And if you think you've been anticipating this moment, just think how much Joseph must have longed for this moment
 - He spent 21 years separated from his family, wishing to embrace them and to tell them that he forgave them
 - Then one day he watches incredulously as 10 of his brothers walk right up to him
 - Perhaps for a split second he considered revealing himself at that first moment
 - But instead he stops and recognizes he must act judiciously under the circumstances
 - The famine and his knowledge of the future give him a decided advantage in seeking out his brothers' hearts
 - Joseph realized this remarkable encounter was a part of God's plan to fulfill Joseph's dream and to reconcile his family
 - Joseph knew he must test their hearts
 - While the Lord brought to mind their jealousies and hatred
 - And they will be given the opportunity to repent
- So for nearly a year now Joseph has kept his secret, all the while working with God to produce the repentance that would be a prerequisite to any reunion
 - God has tested the brothers and the father, Jacob
 - The brothers were forced to place themselves at risk to save a brother
 - They did so not just once, but twice
 - Jacob was forced to relinquish his selfish favoritism for Rachel's children, allowing Benjamin to return to Egypt under duress
 - And Judah, the man whose double sin led Israel into exile, has been tested as well
 - Remember, it was Judah's sin of marrying a Canaanite woman that prompted the Lord to move Israel into Egypt
 - Then later it was Judah who advocates for Joseph to be sold into slavery, thereby triggering the mechanism to lead Israel into the exile
 - So the Lord places a special emphasis on Judah's repentance, because Judah was central to the sins of Israel
 - And his tribe will be central to God's solution for sin, in delivering the promised seed
 - Then in our last lesson, we saw the tests producing good fruit, as Judah begged to be taken in Benjamin's place
 - Instead of advocating for his brother's slavery, Judah offers to become a slave himself

- Instead of dishonoring his father through an ungodly marriage, he tries to save his father through an act of love and compassion
- Now we return to the climactic moment in the story, when Joseph comes clean and reveals his true identity to his brothers

Gen. 45:1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, “Have everyone go out from me.” So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Gen. 45:2 He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

Gen. 45:3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Gen. 45:4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” And they came closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

- In v.1 Joseph is described as no longer being able to control himself
 - The Hebrew word translated control is *afaq*, which means restrained or held back
 - Joseph reaches a point where he can no longer hold himself back from disclosing his true identity
 - Judah’s confession gives Joseph the opportunity he wanted to reveal himself, since now he knows his brothers’ true hearts
 - Joseph does three things
 - First, he orders all Egyptians to leave Joseph and his brothers alone
 - So only Jacob’s sons are present at the moment of the revealing
 - Second, Joseph weeps so loudly that the Egyptians, those who were ordered to leave the room could still hear the crying even through the door
 - In fact, even the rest of Pharaoh’s household could hear it
 - So although the Egyptians were not taking part in the revealing, they were aware it was happening
 - Finally, Joseph shows himself to His brothers truly
 - The brothers had always been aware of Joseph, of course, but everything they thought they knew about him was wrong
 - They thought their brother was dead but they were wrong...he was alive
 - They thought this ruler was their enemy, but they were wrong...he was their brother
 - They thought the prospect of Joseph’s rule over them was an unbearable joke, but they were wrong...it was to be their salvation
- Then Joseph speaks the last three words his brothers could have ever imagined hearing

in that moment: I am Joseph

- And before the brothers even have a chance to respond, Joseph adds a declarative statement, though it's phrased as a question in our Bible
 - Verse 3 records the statement as "Is my father still alive?"
 - This isn't truly a question in Hebrew
 - In Hebrew it literally reads "Does my father yet live?"
 - But Joseph knows that Jacob is still alive
 - Joseph just heard Judah plead for Benjamin to go back to Jacob so that Judah can keep his promise to his father
 - So Joseph knows Jacob is alive
 - The better way to phrase Joseph's words might be "I am Joseph, and my father lives too!"
- Joseph spoke these words in Hebrew
 - Remember, until now Joseph would speak through an interpreter, pretending to only know the Egyptian language
 - But at this moment he has sent all the translators out of the room, so the only way Joseph can communicate with the brothers was in their own language
- Then we have the reaction of the brothers
 - We're told they are dismayed, which is a classic Biblical understatement
 - The text tells us the brothers were dismayed, but the Hebrew word is *bahal*, which is usually translated terrified
 - What would we give to have seen the expressions on the brothers' faces as Joseph's words began to sink in?
 - In fact, the brothers heard the words, but they don't make sense
 - "This man is an Egyptian prime minister, yet he is suddenly speaking in Hebrew"
 - "He knows the name of our missing brother, but we've never told him the name of our missing brother's name"
 - "He says he is our brother, but surely our brother is dead by now"
 - "And he looks nothing like Joseph"
- Recognizing their confusion and fear, Joseph begins to speak tenderly to his brothers
 - In v.4, he says come closer to me, but in the Hebrew it's even more tender
 - Literally, it reads "come near to me, I pray"
 - He wants them to get a better look at him, to look into his eyes
 - Remember, these brothers would have been looking down or avoiding eye contact with Joseph up to now as a matter of protocol
 - Then he adds once more, I am Joseph, the brother you sold into slavery

- That last part must have really knocked them for a loop
 - In all likelihood the brothers had never told anyone what they had done to Joseph
 - They never told Jacob, of course
 - They never told anyone else in the family
 - And they certainly never told Joseph
 - Yet now they hear Joseph repeating back to them their sins which they committed against him
- When someone confronts us with secret knowledge of our past mistakes, it's usually not a good moment
 - Usually, it's a prelude to retribution or justice in some form
 - As when you're confronted by a parent or supervisor
 - Or when an agent of the law exposes your mistakes
 - But in this case, Joseph has no interest in retribution
 - Joseph heard Judah's confession and desires reconciliation, not retribution
- To reassure his brothers, Joseph gives his well-known words of comfort and wisdom

Gen. 45:5 “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Gen. 45:6 “For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

Gen. 45:7 “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

Gen. 45:8 “Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

- Rather than being angry with his brothers, Joseph is worried that they might be grieved or angry with themselves for their past mistakes
 - Joseph acknowledges that his brothers sold him into slavery, yes, but it was actually God Who placed the brothers in Egypt
 - We know this is true, because we remember the words God spoke to Abraham many years earlier
 - The Lord said He would send Israel into Egypt to preserve them
 - And we learned in Chapter 38 what God was protecting Israel from: themselves!
 - So the brother's rejection of Joseph and their eventual decision to rid themselves of Joseph were events ordained by God's providence
 - In v.6 Joseph connects the brothers' actions with the famine they've been experiencing

- The famine was a part of God's plan to drive Israel into Egypt, but someone in Israel needed to go before Israel to make a way possible for them
- Without Joseph in Egypt, the nation of Israel would never be welcomed to settle in the land
- In v.7 Joseph says the Lord sent me ahead of you to preserve a remnant in the earth and to keep Israel alive for a great deliverance one day
 - Israel needed someone to blaze a path into Egypt
 - Someone who would suffer at the hands of his brothers, experiencing shame and misery
 - Someone worthy to overcome these things and rise to a position of power where he could ensure their acceptance into the land
 - A man who could preserve a remnant during the trial of the famine on earth
 - Someone who would one day welcome Israel into his kingdom in Egypt
- In verse 8, Joseph says that man was me
 - The brothers didn't send Joseph to Egypt, though they thought they were doing that very thing
 - Instead, Joseph says it was God the Father who brought Joseph to Egypt in the way He did
 - And in the process, the Father made Joseph more respected than even Pharaoh
 - And lord of all of Pharaoh's household
 - And the ruler over all the land
 - What a powerful statement of God's sovereignty and the inseparability of God's will from the circumstances of our everyday lives
 - Whatever we see happening in our life lies under God's control
 - Even the worst of circumstances fall under the sovereignty of God and fit into His plan
 - Our circumstances are often tied to our sinful choices, but like the brothers here, man's sin can't explain all outcomes
 - In fact, a believer's sin explains virtually nothing in our lives...consider
 - For though we are all sinners and are due God's judgment and wrath, we receive none it because of faith in Christ
 - Meanwhile, the enemy and sinful men may work to destroy the church or the word of God, but their schemes will come to nothing
 - In the end, we come back time and time again to Romans 8:28

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

- For those who love God and have been called into His family will see all things in history work for good...how can we explain that?
- Our passage this morning also reveals how the Lord will work for the good of the Jewish people in a future day – one of the most powerful pictures in the Bible
 - First, let me take you back to some things we learned in prior weeks regarding the picture of Christ and Israel and Tribulation visible in the story of Joseph
 - We learned how Joseph pictures Christ while his brothers picture Israel
 - We remember that Israel rejected Jesus, selling Him to the Romans and calling for His death
 - Just as the brothers hated Joseph and sold him into Egypt
 - And we remember that after Jesus died, He humbly spent time in the lower parts of the earth
 - Just as Joseph spent years in slavery and prison showing himself worthy to rule
 - Later Jesus rises in glorious ascension to the right hand of the Father
 - Just as later Joseph rises to become second in command of all Egypt
 - Then at an appointed time, the Lord will bring a great stress and trial upon the earth, called Tribulation, causing Israel to come seeking for relief
 - Just as God created a worldwide famine to cause Israel to go into Egypt seeking after Joseph for the bread of life
 - Now we see the final pieces of this remarkable picture falling into place, so let's revisit the key details of this story but with an eye toward the future
 - In Genesis 45 we witness the trial of the famine and Joseph's three tests working as intended to lead the brothers to repent of their sins and confess to Joseph
 - This outcome was truly miraculous
 - The brothers' hearts were transformed leading to the reconciliation of the family of God
 - Only now as we look back upon the circumstances since Genesis 37, we can finally make sense of all that God ordained and see that it was good
 - These events picture a similar result the Lord will orchestrate through the Tribulation that is yet to come upon the earth
 - In that future time, the nation of Israel will be brought to their knees under supernatural disasters and persecution by the Antichrist
 - And in that moment all remaining Jews alive in that day will confess the nation's past sins against Jesus

Zech. 13:8 “It will come about in all the land,”

Declares the LORD,

“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;

But the third will be left in it.

Zech. 13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire,
 Refine them as silver is refined,
 And test them as gold is tested.
 They will call on My name,
 And I will answer them;
 I will say, ‘They are My people,’
 And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

- We can read of how this extraordinary moment will unfold in Zechariah 12

Zech. 12:7 “The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.

Zech. 12:8 “In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

Zech. 12:9 “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

- This entire chapter describes events of Tribulation, at the end of the period, when the Antichrist is bearing down on Jerusalem and the Jews see themselves nearing destruction
 - Much like the brothers in Joseph’s house, they sense they don’t have much longer to save themselves
 - But then the rescue of Israel will begin with the tents of Judah
 - Judah will be the start of the Lord’s work to rescue and protect Israel
 - Just as the confession of Judah was the beginning of the turn for the brothers
 - Then the Lord will move to the second stage when he will bring repentance to the rest of the family of Israel

Zech. 12:10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

- The Lord turns the hearts of Israel by the outpouring of His Spirit
- The Spirit leads the hearts of the people of Israel to repent, just like the brothers of Joseph
 - Notice they mourn the knowledge that their fathers put their Messiah to death, the

One they pierced

- Just as Judah confessed to Joseph concerning the brothers' sins against Jacob
- And this weeping is bitter, like the weeping of the brothers when they were accused by Joseph and felt the jeopardy of their sins
- As Israel experiences this new awareness of Jesus as their Messiah and mourns their fathers' sin of crucifying the Lord, they realize that the Lord has been hiding Himself from them for generations
- Isaiah records their words in Chapter 64

Is. 64:5 You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,
Who remembers You in Your ways.
Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,
We continued in them a long time;
And shall we be saved?

Is. 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Is. 64:7 There is no one who calls on Your name,
Who arouses himself to take hold of You;
For You have hidden Your face from us
And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.

Is. 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father,
We are the clay, and You our potter;
And all of us are the work of Your hand.

Is. 64:9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,
Nor remember iniquity forever;
Behold, look now, all of us are Your people.

Is. 64:10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.

Is. 64:11 Our holy and beautiful house,
Where our fathers praised You,
Has been burned by fire;
And all our precious things have become a ruin.

Is. 64:12 Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O LORD?
Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?

- Notice that Isaiah records that the Lord has restrained himself because of the sin of Israel
 - As they come to this realization, Isaiah says the people will confess their sin and acknowledge their iniquities

- And they call out for the Lord to reveal Himself to them now and save them
- Joseph's decision to hide himself and test the brothers' hearts is a beautiful picture of this future day
 - Joseph hid his face from them
 - Then the brothers came to realize they had sinned against their brother and their father
 - And now through Judah they sought forgiveness
 - And in that moment Joseph revealed himself to them
- And so it will be for the Lord as well
 - He will reveal Himself to Israel, in His Second Coming, once Israel has confessed their sin

Zech. 14:3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

Zech. 14:4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

Zech. 14:5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!

Zech. 14:6 In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.

Zech. 14:7 For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

Zech. 14:8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

Zech. 14:9 And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

Zech. 14:10 All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.

Zech. 14:11 People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.

- Thinking back through the details of Joseph's story, we can see the parallels to this event
 - As Jesus returns to Earth and rescues Israel, He destroys the armies that have come against the nation and sets the nation free in the land

- The Lord's return is a blessing for Israel
 - He reveals Himself to them as a friend and brother and Lord of Israel
- But the Gentile armies will not see the Lord in this way, though they will know of His revealing
 - Notice the return of the Lord is described as a bright light in an otherwise dark universe
 - Everyone will see the Lord's return, though not everyone will profit from it
- This mirrors Joseph's revealing of himself to Israel while they are alone
 - Only the brothers are to enjoy the revealing of Joseph
 - The Egyptians hear the weeping and know that something is happening, but they are not a party to it
- There is a great deal more we could say about these events and the way Joseph's story reflects them, and you can learn them by studying Revelation and the end times
 - For today, it's enough to see that the Lord has not forsaken Israel
 - Though Israel lives in disobedience and ignorance to the Messiah, they will one day know the truth
 - The Lord will be faithful to His promises, both His promise to test and to bless Israel in a future day
 - Truly we serve a mighty and faithful God Who keeps His promises
 - Who does all things accordance with His purpose and will
 - Who brings all these things to good for His children
 - And yet Who also ensures that men's hearts are humbled

- Last week we witnessed the moment when Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers
 - As Joseph brought the family through a time of testing, they came to repentance
 - They sought mercy from Joseph
 - They mourned their prior mistakes and sins against their father
 - And then Joseph revealed himself to them
 - And in these circumstances we saw a beautiful picture of Christ
 - Of how the Lord brings Tribulation against Israel in the Last Days
 - Of how Israel will be brought to repentance by that trial
 - Of how Israel will call upon the name of the Lord in their distress
 - And of how Jesus will reveal Himself to Israel in those last days
- So Joseph waited a year or more before finally sharing his secret with his brothers, and how stunning and unexpected the news was when they heard it
 - Quite often, secrets have that effect on other people
 - They can catch us off guard, unprepared for the reveal

A deacon is in the hospital and his good friend, a preacher, goes to visit him.

The preacher notices all the medical equipment attached to the deacon. The deacon is too weak to speak and can barely open his eyes. So the preacher kneels by the bedside to pray for his deacon.

Before the preacher can begin his prayer, the deacon suddenly motions for a pad and pen on the nightstand. The preacher hands his friend the pad and pen, and the deacon begins to write. But just as the deacon finishes writing the last word, his eyes close again, his head slumps over and the deacon breathes his last breath and dies.

The preacher was so moved to have been with his friend at the end and to have received the deacon's last words in writing, he decides to keep the note a secret until he can read it at the funeral service. Not even the preacher himself took an opportunity to read the note beforehand.

At the funeral, the preacher delivers the deacon's eulogy, and at the climax of his sermon, he announces, "I was with him when he died, and as a matter of fact, I have his last thought with me now, right here in my coat pocket."

The preacher reaches into his pocket and pulls out the paper and begins reading, "Please, get up. You're kneeling on my oxygen hose."

- Secrets are at their most dangerous when they are first revealed
 - So now that Joseph has revealed his secret to his brothers, the brothers must be wondering what happens next?
 - Will Joseph take retribution? What will Joseph tell Jacob?
 - And what will Jacob do to them once he realizes they've been lying to him all this time?
 - By these answers, we come to see another strength of Joseph's character in the story
- Finally, we also discover why it was necessary for Joseph to obtain this position of power over his family
 - The promise the Lord made to Abraham is still working itself to fulfillment
 - The family will live in Egypt for hundreds of years, and Joseph's role of authority is essential to fulfilling that promise
- Let's begin in v.7 revisiting Joseph's words of wisdom to his brothers

Gen. 45:7 "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

Gen. 45:8 "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Gen. 45:9 "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.

Gen. 45:10 "You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have.

Gen. 45:11 "There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished.'"

Gen. 45:12 "Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you.

Gen. 45:13 "Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here."

Gen. 45:14 Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.

Gen. 45:15 He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

- Joseph explained to his brothers that God had placed Joseph in Egypt
 - And that placement was strategic on God's part
 - God was working to accomplish a plan, and Joseph's misery was a part of the

plan

- Just as Jesus had to go before us into the grave, so did Joseph have to go before Israel into Egypt
- But now Joseph was ruling, a man second only to Pharaoh
 - And in this position of power, Joseph still has work to do in keeping with the Lord's promises to Israel
 - Joseph's journey into Egypt was intended to preserve a remnant of Israel and lead to a great deliverance
- Joseph's words are prophetic to events that happen long after Joseph's life
 - The remnant refers to the people of Israel who are preserved through many years of captivity in Egypt
 - And the great deliverance refers to the deliverance of Moses described in the book of Exodus
 - Remember, the Lord has already promised that Abraham's descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land
 - But then the Lord would free them and return them to their own land
 - Joseph is telling his brothers that his own journey into Egypt was the beginning of that plan
- Joseph's faith in this plan is so sure, Hebrews tells us he insisted that Israel take his coffin with them when they left in the coming Exodus
 - We'll see those instructions in Genesis 47, but Hebrews summarizes it this way

Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

- Men and women of faith live this way, the Bible tells us
 - We hear and accept the promises of God, as Joseph heard and understood God's promise to Abraham
 - We tell others what the Lord has told us, as Joseph told his brothers about the coming deliverance
 - As we live our lives according to our understanding, just as Joseph required that his bones be removed from Egypt
- Joseph's faith led to understanding and to his works
- And that same faith in God's promises led Joseph to give his next command to his brothers
- Joseph instructs his brothers to go tell their father Jacob about all they have learned and then to instruct Jacob to bring his family back to Egypt
 - Joseph says they will live in Goshen and have all their family and herds with them
 - Goshen is a fertile valley in northwest Egypt

- It was adjacent to the Egyptian capital Memphis
- For Joseph and his family, this region near Memphis would become a new home, a land of grace
- You might even call it Graceland
- Joseph tells them to mention all the wonderful things they have seen in Egypt
 - Tell Jacob that Joseph rules
 - And tell him to hurry, for the famine will still last another 5 years and it has the power to reduce them to poverty
- Clearly, Joseph has been thinking about this for some time, and that makes sense, since Joseph knew he would reach this moment
 - He already knew where to put the people of Israel in the land
 - And he knew what to tell his father
- This is no easy sell and Joseph knows it
 - Jacob left the land once before, and he worked very hard to get back
 - Now that he has returned to the land, he's unlikely to leave again easily
 - That's why Joseph told the brothers to make the idea sound as inviting as possible
 - He knew he needed to sell Jacob on it
- Most importantly, Joseph has the Lord's famine working for him
 - Notice the Lord designed a seven famine, but it only took two years to bring reconciliation between the brothers
 - That tells us plainly that the famine's purpose hasn't been met yet
 - Yes, it provoked repentance in the family
 - But it is also designed to bring Israel into Egypt
 - And Joseph knows this as well
- Finally, everyone exchanged embraces and words, and then news spread of Joseph's family

Gen. 45:16 Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants.

Gen. 45:17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan,

Gen. 45:18 and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat of the land.'

Gen. 45:19 "Now you are ordered, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come.

Gen. 45:20 'Do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

Gen. 45:21 Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey.

Gen. 45:22 To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments.

Gen. 45:23 To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey.

- Pharaoh learns that Joseph's brothers have arrived, and it pleases him
 - We can safely assume two reasons for why this news might please Pharaoh
 - First, the Pharaoh and all Egypt have been incredibly blessed by Joseph's leadership, and the Pharaoh wants to ensure Joseph never leaves
 - Having his family with him is the surest way to keep Joseph happy and settled in Egypt
 - Secondly, the Pharaoh shares something in common with the family of Joseph
 - This Pharaoh is a Hyksos, a semitic people like the Jewish people
 - As we learned in past lessons, the Pharaoh would like nothing better than to encourage more semite immigration
 - So bringing Joseph's family into the land fits his political goals as well
 - This kind of invitation would never have happened if the Hyksos people weren't in power at this time
 - In fact, it will be the rise of a new dynasty of non-Hyksos people that will eventually lead Israel into slavery
 - So God's timing and sovereignty over world events is clearly evident here
 - God promised Abraham He would send Israel into Egypt
 - Then hundreds of years later, the Lord brought a strange, semitic people into power over Egypt
 - So that when He changed world weather patterns to create a famine, it could lead Israel into Egypt to be welcomed by a friendly ruler
 - God did all these things in a perfect ballet of cause and effect, directing the sinful wills of men until everything arrived exactly where it must
 - If the Lord can conduct an orchestra like this, over centuries of time, thousands of miles and millions of people, and every note plays perfectly in tune with His will, how much authority does He have in your life?
 - In fact, isn't that the wrong question?
 - The better question is how much of the Lord's power do you acknowledge in your life?
 - He is in control of your life with or without your recognition
 - But if you come to know Him, take time to learn His word, and discipline

- yourself to obey His voice, you can see the evidence of His work as it happens
- If you don't, then you'll only see it in hindsight, if you see it at all
 - And it's so much easier to see the Lord at work and join Him, when your eyes are open, just as Joseph's were
- So Pharaoh tells Joseph that his family will experience the best Egypt has to offer, which tells us how pleased the Pharaoh was with Joseph's work
 - The Pharaoh says to send wagons from Egypt to pick up Israel and deliver them to the land of Goshen
 - In fact, the Pharaoh says don't worry about trying to bring their household with them
 - Even the provisions needed for the journey would be provided by Pharaoh
 - Every detail was accounted for, even a change of clothes
 - Joseph lavishes the gifts of money and clothing on Benjamin again
 - I can think of two reasons why Joseph might do this
 - First, he continues to favor Benjamin out of love for his only full brother
 - Secondly, he wants to prove to Jacob that Joseph is truly alive
 - Favoring Benjamin in this way is sure to catch Jacob's eye and give evidence to support the brothers' testimony
 - The Pharaoh's instructions create another, remarkable picture of Christ and the end times events
 - We remember that as Joseph is a picture of the Second Person of the Godhead, then Pharaoh becomes a picture of the First Person, the Father
 - And therefore, as Pharaoh was pleased with Joseph, so is the Father in Heaven pleased with the work of Christ
 - And because the Father is pleased with His Son, He will gladly welcome Christ's people into the Kingdom
 - Isaiah tells us this very thing

Is. 49:5 And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,

**To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him
(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
And My God is My strength),**

**Is. 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**

**Is. 49:7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One,
To the despised One,**

**To the One abhorred by the nation,
To the Servant of rulers,
“Kings will see and arise,
Princes will also bow down,
Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen
You.”**

Is. 49:8 Thus says the LORD,

**“In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;**

- Consider Isaiah’s words concerning Christ
 - He was formed by the Father in the womb for the purpose of bringing Jacob (that is, Israel) back to Himself
 - And this salvation would reach beyond Israel to the ends of the Earth
 - This Redeemer will be abhorred by the nations and despised in Israel
 - Nevertheless, everyone will bow down to Him, because the Father has chosen Him
 - And then the Father will reward His Son by giving Him a covenant people, who He will restore to a land
- All of these promises are pictured in the way the Pharaoh elevated a despised and rejected Joseph
 - And as Joseph served the Pharaoh, he pleased the Pharaoh
 - And this led the Pharaoh to restore Israel to a land with a wonderful inheritance
- Furthermore, consider the way this family entered Egypt
 - They were called to come wearing new clothes, clothes provided by Pharaoh
 - And in the future day of Israel’s salvation, they will receive new clothes
 - They will be given robes of righteousness and new incorruptible bodies that can never sin again
 - And these clothes are provided by the Lord
 - Salvation is a gift, given to us by the Lord
 - And He gives us these robes not because we please Him, not by our works, for our works can never earn righteousness
 - Instead, we receive our righteousness because of the work of Christ, who pleased the Father
 - Just as Joseph’s family received robes from Pharaoh because of Joseph’s righteous work in Egypt
 - Finally, they are told to leave everything else behind and come expecting provision
 - Every believer welcomed into the Kingdom takes nothing from this world, as

Paul reminds us

1Tim. 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

1Tim. 6:8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

- And we enter with nothing but our track record of service to the Lord

1Cor. 3:12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

1Cor. 3:13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

1Cor. 3:14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

1Cor. 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- Paul also teaches us that upon our entry into Christ's presence, we stand for a moment of judgment, and come to that moment alone
 - And we can't take letters of recommendation
 - We don't stand with our family or friends
 - We don't offer words of wisdom or excuses
 - In fact, our words count for nothing...only our actions count
- Like Jacob's family headed to Egypt, we leave everything behind, resting in the righteousness of Christ, to stand or fall on the basis of our work for Christ
 - Our goal in this life must be to come ready for that moment
 - To have eyes for eternity
- In response to the Pharaoh's order, Joseph sends ten male and ten female donkeys loaded with provisions for the journey
 - The number ten in scripture is symbolic of a testimony
 - Here, Joseph is making a testimony to Jacob of the goodness to be found in Egypt
 - He is hoping this demonstration of prosperity will convince his father to leave the land and come to Egypt
 - Then, Joseph gives his brothers final instructions

Gen. 45:24 So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the journey."

Gen. 45:25 Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob.

Gen. 45:26 They told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But he was stunned, for he did not believe them.

Gen. 45:27 When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

Gen. 45:28 Then Israel said, “It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

- Joseph’s first order of business to his brothers is “don’t quarrel”
 - In Hebrew, the word is *ragaz*, which is most often translated fear or trembling
 - It seems odd that Joseph would tell his brothers not to quarrel
 - On the other hand, it seems perfectly understandable to tell his brothers not to be fearful
 - They are headed home to tell their father that Joseph is actually alive
 - They must have expected that Jacob would ask many questions, including questions that would lead to uncomfortable answers
 - They might have even been tempted to forget the whole plan, tell Jacob a different story to avoid confessing the truth
 - And maybe they might never return to Egypt
 - After all, they have plenty of provisions to last them, at least for a while
 - So Joseph tells the brother not to fear, not to worry, do what’s right and trust the Lord with the result
 - And with that, they leave Egypt and come to Jacob in Canaan
 - They tell Jacob that Joseph is still alive
 - More than this, he is ruler of Egypt
 - And we’re told Jacob was stunned
 - The word in Hebrew literally means “numb”
 - Jacob was numbed by the news
 - More importantly, he didn’t believe the report, we’re told
- Then he heard the words of Joseph and saw all that had been sent from Egypt, and then the spirit of Jacob was revived and he believed
 - And once he believed, he was ready to go see Joseph
 - Once more we find a beautiful picture of the work of Christ
 - When Israel of today is confronted with the story of Jesus Christ, most do not believe
 - They are numb to the message of the Gospel

- But when the word of Christ reaches them, as it will one day, then they will respond
 - And when they see the mercy and goodness of the Lord as He defends them from the nations who seek to destroy them, they take notice
 - And when the word of Christ comes to them, they will believe
 - And they will turn to Christ and say, “I will see Him before I die.”

- Today we begin our 103rd lesson in our Genesis study, a study of Chapter 46
 - Joseph has summoned his father, Jacob, to leave the land of Canaan and enter Egypt, in keeping with God's promise to Abraham
 - We still have five years of famine remaining
 - And these years of famine will force Jacob's family to live in the land for a time
 - The number 5 in scripture is a number associated with God's grace
 - And certainly the five years spent in Egypt will be grace to Jacob and his family
 - They will live in Goshen, a land that will supply the people of Israel richly even during a period of worldwide famine
 - And five years is just long enough for the people to establish a home in Egypt, one they will not leave for four generations
 - But leaving the land is not easy for Jacob, especially since his last time spent outside the promised land was a difficult time
 - So as we'll see today, the Lord moves in Jacob's heart to reassure him that leaving was the right thing to do
 - Finally, as the family leaves, we'll read through an inventory of the family of Jacob as they leave the land

Gen. 46:1 So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

Gen. 46:2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

Gen. 46:3 He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.

Gen. 46:4 "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

- Once again we notice that Moses is addressing Jacob as Israel, reminding us that Jacob's actions reflect a movement of faith in God's promises
 - Israel sets out to bring all he had to Egypt
 - Jacob is departing from a location in central Canaan and headed south
 - And the southern most settlement in Canaan was Beersheba
 - This was the last town you encountered on your way to Egypt
 - And as Jacob reaches Beersheba, he hesitates
 - Before he steps outside the land, Jacob wants to know that leaving the land was the right thing to do
 - Jacob initiates the conversation with the Lord through a moment of sacrifice

- This means Jacob took uncut rocks and boulders and piled them up to form an altar
 - Remember that altars are always places of sacrifice
 - Then he would have taken a young goat and slit the throat and drained the blood
 - He likely sanctified the altar with the spilled blood of the sacrifice
 - Then he built a fire on the altar and burned the meat and fat of the goat as a pleasing aroma to the Lord
- A sacrifice is always required before sinful men may commune with the holy, perfect living God
 - The Bible teaches us that our sin is an ever-present barrier to our relationship with the Lord
 - It makes us an enemy of God, and we cannot please Him much less make requests of Him while we stand in a state of enmity with Him
 - But when an innocent takes our place in receiving God's judgment, the wrath of the Lord is appeased (also known as propitiation)
 - And we can approach the Lord with our worship and petitions
 - Today, we have a never-ending relationship with the Lord because Jesus Christ became an innocent sacrifice in our place for our sin
 - God's wrath for our sin was placed on Christ, so that now we can be at peace with God
 - And no additional sacrifice is required so we can approach boldly before the Lord at all times
 - In Jacob's day, the world was still waiting for Christ's sacrifice
 - So God made temporary atonement available through sacrifices of an innocent animal
 - And here we see Jacob making a temporary sacrifice so that he can approach the Lord with his doubts
- In a way, it's a curious thing how Jacob hesitates to leave Canaan
 - The land is dry, and dead for lack of water in the drought
 - The people are hostile and corrupt
 - His family has been seeking relief
 - And now he's learned that his favorite son is alive and well in Egypt
 - You might think that Jacob would be running to get to Egypt
 - Why is Jacob so hesitant to leave the Promised Land?
 - Remember, this is the land God gave to his grandfather and his father
 - This is the inheritance every Jewish man since Abraham has longed to receive
 - The Lord's promise to provide the Promised Land to Israel has always been THE measure of faith and the ultimate reward for belief and obedience

- Jacob had worked for nearly 20 years for the opportunity to return to Canaan when he fled Esau
- So it's only too natural for Jacob to cling to the life he knew, believing he had obtained what God promised
 - For the same reason we may hold on too long or too tight to things God has given us or to a direction in life He's asked us to walk at some point in our past
 - A possession, a relationship, a lifestyle, a job, a past time, a church...whatever it is, it's something the Lord gave and we gladly received
 - But now the time to let go has come, and we face a new test of obedience
- Sometimes, we disobey the Lord by rejecting the opportunities and blessings He brings to us because we prefer to do our own thing
 - Or like Jacob, we've grown comfortable with the plan
 - And we think we understand where it's all going
- But sometimes, we disobey the Lord by not letting go of something He's told us to leave behind, or when we won't change direction in our life when He calls us to something new
 - Some of the greatest tragedies in Scripture and in life come from failing to let go of the things God has given us
 - Saul wouldn't recognize that his time as Israel's king was to end – so his pride brought him down
 - Jonah got to spend some quality time with a large fish because he wouldn't turn when God gave him direction to preach good news to his hated enemies
 - And here we see the Lord asking Jacob to give up his presence in the land because it suited the Lord's purposes
- God's pattern in scripture routinely works this way, giving and taking away, to test us and reveal our hearts, while serving His eternal purposes
 - Can there be a better example than Job?
 - God gave him everything a man might want
 - Wealth, family, health, reputation, power
 - Then in a moment, the Lord permitted Satan to take it all away
 - Job had praised the Lord when he had everything, so the test was would Job see God differently when it was all gone?
 - And after Job passed the test, he got it all back again
 - In the end, this is a question of following God
 - He is the master, and we are the slaves
 - He leads and we follow, He gives and we receive gladly, and He takes and we praise Him nevertheless
 - When we try to hold on to those things that God has determined should be removed from our life, we are replacing His sovereignty with our own

- And that's not the real tragedy...the real tragedy comes should we succeed
- Because if we persist in resisting His will, we will only succeed in being distracted by our selfish pursuits, serving ourselves instead of God
- And we'll be sidelined in God's on-going work around us
- If Jacob were to cling to the Promised Land rather than going to Egypt, he would have been left with a dusty, polluted, corrupt land without God's blessing and provision, and he would die there
 - At least for a moment, Jacob toyed with this idea
 - But in the end, he did something important, something in keeping with "Israel" rather than "Jacob"
- Jacob calls upon the Lord seeking a confirmation for what to do
 - I really like what Jacob does here, and not simply for his willingness to seek confirmation in what to do
 - This thing I like is WHO Jacob asks
 - He goes directly to the Lord and waits for his answer
 - That's not fashionable today, even in the church
 - It's a feature of human experience to be faced with dilemmas and choices that leaves us pondering what should we do, and we often seek advice
 - Of course, we know in the world there are industries devoted to telling people what to do or where to go
 - Psychic hotlines, TV psychologists on talk shows, online advice columns, endless Internet discussion forums, etc.
 - But this trend is also evident in the church
 - We have books, radio programs, podcasts, family, friends, home groups, etc.
 - And every one of these sources can be (and often is) used by the Lord to guide us
 - But none of these can substitute for seeking the Lord's counsel
 - Whether in personal prayer or His word
 - These are the two direct sources of revelation the Church has to guide us, and they must always be in agreement
 - The Lord will never contradict His own word
 - Seek the Lord, wait for His answer, and then do what you sense Him telling you
 - Trust that He is capable of cutting through the noise and bringing you clarity when you need it
- In response to his doubts, the Lord appears to Jacob for the sixth time
 - The answer comes in the night, as a vision we're told
 - Apparently Jacob had camped here and waited for a response from the Lord

- And when the response came, it was “Jacob, Jacob”
- The Lord calls to him with his old name, indicating that Jacob was living in the flesh again, at least for a moment
- The Lord identifies Himself as the God of Jacob’s father, Isaac, who had died ten years earlier
 - Calling Himself the God of Isaac, a man who was dead, proves that these men would one day be resurrected and return to the land
 - Isaac was dead, yet the Lord continues to speak of Isaac as alive and still a follower of the living God
 - As Jesus said to the Pharisees

Luke 20:37 “But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB.

Luke 20:38 “Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him.”

- So even the way the Lord identifies Himself, He’s already working to reassure Jacob that this departure will not be the end of his time in the land
- On the other hand, this will be the last time Jacob sees the promised land this side of Heaven
 - Jacob is going to die in Egypt
 - And this is what the Lord intends
 - The Lord assures Jacob he will become a great nation while in Egypt
 - He will not be assimilated into the Egyptian people, which was Jacob’s primary concern
 - Instead, Israel will prosper and incubate within the land for a season
 - And they will never lose their identity while living in the land
 - But in the end, Jacob will die, and Joseph will close his eyes
 - After that death, Jacob will be entombed in Egypt
 - But he will not remain there
 - The Lord promises Jacob will be brought up out of Egypt
 - This happens in two ways
 - First, in Genesis 50 we learn that after Jacob died, Joseph took his body back to Canaan to bury him in the family tomb
 - Secondly, the Lord is speaking of the future inheritance Jacob receives when he is resurrected and enters the Kingdom
 - Like his fathers before him, Jacob understood that his permanent inheritance was yet to be revealed

- So the Lord is promising Jacob that one day he will live again in the land God gave him
- But he needed to wait for that day
- So having been assured that leaving Egypt was the right thing to do, Jacob continues down into Egypt

Gen. 46:5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

Gen. 46:6 They took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him:

Gen. 46:7 his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

- With that confirmation, Jacob enters into Egypt, and with him comes his entire family we're told
 - What follows next is a partial census of the family of Jacob
 - Not all members of his household are called out specifically
 - Mostly, it's a record of the sons and grandsons of Jacob
 - But a few women are mentioned as well
 - At the end we get the count of all of them
 - Let's read through the list

Gen. 46:8 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

Gen. 46:9 The sons of Reuben: Hanoch and Pallu and Hezron and Carmi.

Gen. 46:10 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

Gen. 46:11 The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Gen. 46:12 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

Gen. 46:13 The sons of Issachar: Tola and Puvvah and Iob and Shimron.

Gen. 46:14 The sons of Zebulun: Sered and Elon and Jahleel.

Gen. 46:15 These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.

Gen. 46:16 The sons of Gad: Ziphion and Haggi, Shuni and Ezbon, Eri and Arodi and Areli.

Gen. 46:17 The sons of Asher: Imnah and Ishvah and Ishvi and Beriah and their

sister Serah. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.

Gen. 46:18 These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons.

Gen. 46:19 The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

Gen. 46:20 Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.

Gen. 46:21 The sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher and Ashbel, Gera and Naaman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim and Huppim and Ard.

Gen. 46:22 These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; there were fourteen persons in all.

Gen. 46:23 The sons of Dan: Hushim.

Gen. 46:24 The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel and Guni and Jezer and Shillem.

Gen. 46:25 These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and she bore these to Jacob; there were seven persons in all.

Gen. 46:26 All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all,

Gen. 46:27 and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.

- First, as we consider all these names, remember it's only been 39 years since Jacob left Laban's household with four wives and eleven sons in tow
 - Now just 39 years later we see how large his family has become
 - Clearly, the Lord is blessing Israel even now, moving toward becoming a large nation
 - And in this list we find a few interesting nuggets
 - First, notice that the sons of Judah include mention of the two dead sons, Er and Onan
 - They are not included in the count of Jacob's family, but they are listed here for the record
 - The other two sons of Judah are the twins from Tamar
 - Perez is the son holding the seed promise, which will move to one of his sons
 - Secondly, notice that besides Judah, another son of Jacob took a wife from the Canaanites, Simeon
 - This reminds us of why the family needed to leave Canaan for a while
 - The temptation to marry into the Canaanite culture was too great
 - So the Lord knew He had to move them into Egypt
 - Until they were strong enough to resist assimilation
 - And when they returned to the land, they would be strong enough to defeat the inhabitants of the land

- The Shaulites do not appear in the record of scripture, suggesting they fall under curse of Canaan and disappear
 - Third, it's interesting that Benjamin has 10 sons, since at this time Benjamin was only 25 years old
 - The likely answer for how he could have so many so quickly was that he took multiple wives like Jacob
 - Just as Jacob fathered many sons in only a few years, so could Benjamin do the same
- Lastly, consider the grand totals given at the end
 - All those who are Jacob's descendants who came from Egypt were 66
 - This description excludes Jacob, all the wives, and those already in Egypt
 - That count arrives at 66
 - But then we're told the entire household that entered into Egypt was 70 people
 - The extra four are found by including Jacob, Joseph (who was already in Egypt)
 - And it also includes Joseph's two sons
 - Later in Acts 7 we hear Stephen give a count of 75 for Jacob's household in Egypt
 - Stephen's count includes Joseph's five grandsons, which were born after Jacob entered the land
- Why are these specific counts given to us in the story of Jacob and Joseph?
 - Who cares how many entered the land?
 - We have two answers
 - First, when the nation leaves the land in the Exodus, we're told that just the men above the age of 20 add up to over 600,000!
 - In only three generations after they enter, the family will have grown exponentially
 - They become one of the most numerous nations on earth, all while in slavery
 - This count helps us see how small and vulnerable they are as they enter Egypt
 - Under normal circumstances, we would certainly expect them to be assimilated into Egyptian culture
 - Instead they leave as a mighty people
 - There is only one explanation for that outcome...
 - Which leads us to the second reason this count is important
- The number seventy in scripture is a number packed with meaning
 - It comes up over and over again in scripture
 - Each time, the number is intended to communicate a certain meaning
 - It means the Lord's sovereign purpose accomplished through the works of men
 - We can see this meaning evident in many of the examples where the Lord chose

seventy of something

- When Joseph dies, Egypt will mourn for seventy days
- Moses will be given seventy elders over Israel
- The Lord selected seventy elders to prophesy in the wilderness
- Seventy years were appointed for Israel to be captive outside the land
- Later when the Hebrew text was translated to Greek, the work was done by seventy leaders of Israel
- And the ruling Sanhedrin counsel of Israel was seventy men
- These numbers are an accurate, literal count – they are not merely symbolic
 - But the Lord determined these events so that they would result in a count of seventy so He could send us a message at the same time
 - God is in control, and this departure of Canaan is His plan at work
 - Just as He is the answer to the question how did Israel grow so much while in Exodus
 - The Lord is sovereignly working to bring about exactly what He purposes and what He promised
- Even in this early stage of the process we see His signature in the number seventy
 - Jacob isn't taking chances with his inheritance
 - He's ensuring it
 - Israel isn't in danger of being swallowed up by Egypt
 - The nation will one day leave with the best that Egypt has to offer
 - God's plan isn't at risk
 - It's going exactly according to plan
- Next week we'll look at Jacob's encounter with Pharaoh and move into Chapter 47

- The story of Jacob enters the final section today
 - And this section will bring his story to a close
 - This is the story of Jacob in Egypt
 - He and his family will ride out the rest of the famine in security in Egypt
 - They were invited into the land by Pharaoh, and Joseph has a plan for where they must live
 - He has decided they should live in Goshen
 - We've learned in past weeks why Jacob's family needs to reside in Goshen
 - It's great farming land, very fertile
 - And it keeps Israel separated from the rest of Egypt
 - Joseph understood that the Lord brought Jacob's family into Egypt so they could grow into the nation He intended them to be
 - That growth must happen away from the temptation to join with other people
 - For God's people were to be a separate nation, without ties to other nations
 - So he determined that his father's family must live in Goshen
- But Joseph's plan goes deeper than merely separating Israel physically from the Egyptians
 - He needs to devise a couple of additional details to help ensure his people are properly separated from the Egyptians
 - First, he must find a way to get Pharaoh to agree to his plan
 - Secondly, Joseph needs to give Egyptians reason to leave the Israelites alone
 - And Joseph has a plan

Gen. 46:28 Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out the way before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

Gen. 46:29 Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time.

Gen. 46:30 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive."

- As the family departs, Jacob assigns Judah to lead the family into Egypt
 - We could say that the tribe of Judah will be the first of Israel to enter Egypt
 - But actually, Judah is the second tribe to enter
 - Joseph was the first to enter so many years earlier
 - But now as all Israel enter, it will be Judah who will lead them
 - We can assume Jacob selected Judah because of his emerging role as the

leader among his brothers

- We know he is the seed promise holder in the family, which means his tribe will eventually bear the Messiah Who reigns
- Jacob's decision to place Judah in the lead created a remarkable prophetic picture of Christ, one even the Jewish rabbis detected, though they didn't fully understand it
 - The Jewish Midrash, which is the rabbinical commentary on the Old Testament, said that v.28 tells us that Joseph will receive the kingdom before Judah
 - What the rabbis meant was that the suffering, dying Messiah, pictured by Joseph, would come to Israel first
 - And this would be followed by a second coming by the conquering, reigning Messiah who rules over the world
 - The rabbis studying the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah noticed that the scriptures spoke of two kinds of Messiahs
 - There would be one who died for the sins of the Jewish people
 - This Messiah would be mistreated and killed
 - The rabbis understood that Joseph was a picture of this Messiah
 - Joseph had the birthright over his brothers, yet he was mistreated
 - He was left for dead
 - And then Joseph came into Egypt first, which pictures the Messiah coming into the world
 - And the rabbis also understood that the tribe of Judah was the family holding the seed promise
 - So Judah pictures the Messiah leading His people as King
 - And after the suffering dying Messiah arrived in the world, then the ruling Messiah would follow
 - Even in Jesus' first coming, the rabbis still thought they should have been looking for two different Messiahs Who would come in succession, first the fulfillment of Joseph and the second the fulfillment of Judah
 - They called the first the Prophet, since prophets were always mistreated and usually killed
 - They called the second Messiah, the Anointed One, which is written Christ in the Greek language
 - You can see this clearly in the way the Jewish leaders interrogated John the Baptist

John 1:19 This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

John 1:20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

John 1:21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not."

“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

- Obviously, we see this picture much more clearly than the rabbis ever did
 - We know that Joseph and Judah are picturing the Messiah, but they picture the same Messiah
 - Instead of two different Messiahs, we know that God had in mind One Messiah with two different comings
 - The first coming of Christ was the fulfillment of Joseph, the suffering dying Prophet
 - While the second coming of Christ will be the fulfillment of Judah’s promise of a ruling King
 - So as Jacob’s family enters Egypt behind Judah, they create a picture of the nation of Israel following after their King at His Second Coming
 - They enter the world represented by Egypt
 - And they come to subdue that world and receive the best it has to offer
 - Though the nation suffers for a time in this land, they eventually leave conquerors having plundered Egypt
- Joseph takes his chariot and rides from the capital of Egypt to meet his father as they arrive in Goshen
 - Goshen is located in the northern most part of Egypt
 - As the family entered into the land, they would have come into Goshen first
 - Joseph rides out to meet them there so they won’t travel farther into Egypt
 - This will be their home for several generations
 - What follows next is one of the most powerful moments in all scripture
 - After twenty-two years, father and son are reunited
 - Joseph falls on his father’s neck, they embrace and cry together for a long time
 - The air must have been thick with emotion, not only Joseph’s and Jacob’s, but also the other brothers’
 - They couldn’t have watched this reunion without considering their own roles
- Jacob tells Joseph that now he can die in peace, having seen Joseph’s face again
 - Jacob is 130 years at this old, and though he may feel near death, he was speaking in hyperbole
 - It was an expression of happiness and thankfulness
 - In fact, Jacob will live another 17 years in Egypt
 - And now Joseph explains his plan to keep the people of Israel separated

Gen. 46:31 Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up

and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me;

Gen. 46:32 and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.’

Gen. 46:33 “When Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’

Gen. 46:34 you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,’ that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians.”

Gen. 47:1 Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, “My father and my brothers and their flocks and their herds and all that they have, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.”

Gen. 47:2 He took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

Gen. 47:3 Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What is your occupation?” So they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers.”

Gen. 47:4 They said to Pharaoh, “We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen.”

Gen. 47:5 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you.

Gen. 47:6 “The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock.”

- Joseph’s plan is to leave his family in Goshen in northern Egypt
 - Then he will go to Pharaoh and explain that the family is now settled in Goshen
 - Joseph also plans to casually mention that they are staying in Goshen because they are shepherders that need grazing land
 - And then Pharaoh will call for Joseph’s family to present themselves before Pharaoh
 - When they get the word that Pharaoh and Joseph are waiting for them in Memphis, they are to come Pharaoh
 - When Pharaoh asks Jacob’s occupation, Jacob must say he is and always has been a keeper of flocks
 - This is the only thing the people of Israel know how to do
 - And therefore, it will be the only thing they will ever do
 - Joseph’s purpose in these instructions becomes clear in the end
 - Egyptians were shepherd-phobic, as we might say today
 - They literally loathed shepherders
 - So Joseph’s plan was to gently lead Pharaoh in the direction Joseph wanted

him to go

- Pharaoh needed to endorse the plan for Israel to live in Goshen
- The easiest way to accomplish that goal was to lead Pharaoh to loathe Jacob's family
- We're watching God at work to keep His people separate from the Egyptians, and this principle continues to work in God's people today
 - God has always called for His people to remain unstained by the world, distinct and unique among mankind
 - This is a command for both the nation of Israel and to the Church
 - We must forever maintain a degree of separation from the world to suit God's purposes

2Cor. 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

**"I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

2Cor. 6:17 "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.

**"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR;
And I will welcome you.**

2Cor. 6:18 "And I will be a father to you,
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"
Says the Lord Almighty.

- Paul reminded the Corinthian church that they have become a temple of God, by virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - And as God's people, they must observe a separation from the world
 - The Law created that separation for Israel, by establishing ritualistic clean and unclean distinctions
 - The idea was simple: if God is among us, then it becomes our duty to abstain from things that are contrary to God's perfection and holiness
 - Don't drag the Lord's Spirit into unclean experiences through your personal sin
- But Christians can take Joseph's example and Paul's command and run too far, in the wrong direction, and thereby miss God's purposes
 - God isn't asking us to remove ourselves from the world
 - Notice that Jacob's family entered Egypt, which was God's intent
 - They came into Egypt, yet even so they remained separate from the people
 - Likewise, we're called to be in the world but not of the world
 - Jesus prayed to the Father for exactly that balance in the Church

John 17:14 “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:15 “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

John 17:16 “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

John 17:18 “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

- Jesus acknowledged that His disciples were not of the world, because our faith makes us citizens of a heavenly kingdom
 - Yet for a time they remained in the world with a mission to testify to Jesus and the Gospel
 - Jesus says He sends us into the world, just as Jacob was called into Egypt
 - Which is why Jesus clarifies that He did not want the Father to remove His disciples from the Earth
 - So we shouldn't strive to remove ourselves from the world entirely
 - We must be in it to impact it
- So what does it look like when we're in the world but not of the world?
 - First, we must seek to fulfill the mission Christ gave His Church
 - We must associate with those who need to hear the truth
 - We must have unbelieving neighbors, associates, even friends
 - We must visit places where unbelievers gather, work, play and go to school
 - We must go into Egypt, as it were, so that we may influence their understanding
 - Nevertheless, we must remain separate within those places we go
 - We cannot share in their sin or participate in their world in such a way that it defiles us and pollutes our message and witness
 - We must remain distinct even as we move and live among them
 - We cannot hope to influence the world by our difference if we choose to blend in too much
 - Have you ever told someone at work or school that you were a Christian and they were surprised to learn that?
 - That's a warning sign that should convict us
 - We are called to be salt and light in a dark world
- Secondly, our difference must be based on the truth of God's word
 - Notice Jesus said in John 17 that we would be kept from the world by being sanctified in the truth of God's word
 - The word sanctify means to be set apart for holy purposes
 - Therefore, the church achieves its separation from the world by holding to the truth

of God's word

- We may attend the same schools, but while they hold to the enemy's lies of Evolution, we hold to the truth of Creation in Genesis
- We are in their world, but we remain distinct by virtue of God's sanctifying truth
- We don't create separation in our own, fleshly way
 - We don't become judgmental, sourpusses looking down our noses at sinners
 - Instead, we remember we were once sinners too, so we display grace and mercy
 - We don't live in isolated compounds, dress in weird ways, drawing attention to ourselves through outward appearances and making other people feel unnecessarily uncomfortable in the process
 - Instead, we remember Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors, laughing, drinking and enjoying Himself
 - We make sure that the word of God living in us creates that distinction so that our message is different, not our appearance
- Finally, when we do these things, a few will follow as the Lord appoints, but we shouldn't be surprised when most hate us because of our message
 - Joseph ensured that Pharaoh left Israel separated and distinct within Egypt
 - But notice he achieved this end by calling Pharaoh's attention to something loathsome
 - This is the pattern throughout scripture
 - In John 17:14 Jesus said that the world will hate Jesus' disciples because they hated Him first
 - So we follow Jacob's example when we enter the world willingly while remaining distinct
 - We live among those who God intends to influence
 - But we don't allow that influence to defile us
 - We maintain our distinction through a strict adherence to the word of God, and a lifestyle that reflects that belief
 - Not by artificial attempts to show off our differences
 - And as we live a sanctified life, we expect we will receive some into faith while the rest hate us just as the world hated God Himself
- Then after hearing Jacob's story, the Pharaoh reacts exactly as Joseph had hoped
 - He welcomes the family to settle in the land of Goshen
 - Furthermore, the Pharaoh invites Jacob's family to assume care for Pharaoh's herds
 - The Pharaoh probably assumed that if Joseph's oversight had blessed the nation, then his family might also bless him in their care of his herds
 - And he was probably right

Gen. 47:7 Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

- At this point, Joseph brings Jacob before Pharaoh for a formal moment
 - And in that moment, Jacob bestows a blessing on Pharaoh
 - This is significant because of who blesses whom
 - Hebrews explains that the one who bestows a blessing on another is always the greater, spiritually speaking

Heb. 7:7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

- So Jacob's movement to bless Pharaoh rather than the other way around reflects his awareness that he had something to offer Pharaoh
- His blessing was a prophetic word from the Lord
 - This Pharaoh was indeed blessed by the presence of Israel in the land
- This is exactly what the Lord intended when he brought His people into Egypt
 - The Jewish people would benefit from their time in Egypt
 - And while they sojourned in the land, they would likewise become a blessing to those they lived among
 - Even though Jacob's family was small, virtually powerless, nevertheless they could by God's power bring a blessing to Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt
- Consider that pattern as you strive to serve God in this world
 - The Lord has left you in this world, as Jesus said, to accomplish a mission
 - You are not wise or mighty by the world's standards
 - You will be despised at times and you will always remain separate
- But you have been left in the world for a time to be blessed and to be a blessing to the world
 - You and I are blessed to be in the world because we have opportunity to serve our Lord
 - To please Him by our obedience
 - To earn our eternal reward
 - To grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - And we are a blessing to a lost and dying world by our witness and our message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
 - We exist in this world for a time to serve as Christ's ambassadors
 - So make every day a day we rub elbows with the citizens of this foreign nation
 - Speak the truth of Christ, demonstrate His love, allow others to experience our

joy and hope

- And invite them to immigrate into our heavenly kingdom

- Jacob and Pharaoh stand face to face at the beginning of Chapter 47
 - The most powerful world political leader and the world's pre-eminent patriarch united for a time by the will and hand of God
 - For now the two are allies
 - Each has need for the other
 - Pharaoh wants to keep Joseph close by and he likes the idea of more Semites shoring up his power
 - Jacob needs a place to wait out the famine and beyond, and staying in Pharaoh's good graces is key to his family's prosperity
 - Or so it would seem at this moment
 - The Lord has already laid out the plan to Jacob's forefathers
 - Israel goes into Egypt for a time, to protect the people from themselves
 - They incubate in a foreign land where they will be isolated, set apart and prevented from intermarriage
 - And when the time is right, they will be brought back into the land, in keeping with God's promises
 - If you want to learn that story, listen to the Exodus study
 - But for now, the two powerful men engage in a moment of political dance, testing each other to know whether they can coexist
 - Last week, we saw Jacob bless Pharaoh
 - And we noted this was a reversal of what the world would have expected in that moment
 - Since the lessor is always blessed by the greater, the audience in Pharaoh's court would have expected the king to bless Jacob
 - But we know Jacob knew he was the greater spiritually, so he took it upon himself to bless Pharaoh
- Pharaoh is no doubt surprised by Jacob's assumption of a higher position, so he takes the conversation in a new direction

Gen. 47:8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many years have you lived?"

Gen. 47:9 So Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning."

Gen. 47:10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.

Gen. 47:11 So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered.

Gen. 47:12 Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's

household with food, according to their little ones.

- Pharaoh's next question to Jacob sounds a bit odd for our day
 - We don't expect someone to ask our age, especially in a first-time meeting
 - But in ancient times, age mattered in a different way
 - It was a badge of honor and authority
 - The older was always honored above the younger
 - Therefore, Pharaoh's question is an attempt to assess Jacob's honor and make sense of Jacob's decision to bless Pharaoh
 - Jacob responds with an equally odd answer
 - First he answers the question directly: Jacob is 130 years old
 - Jacob adds that his years have been few and unpleasant, nor have they equalled the years of his fathers
 - As we said last week, Jacob will live another 17 years in Egypt, so he's not exactly on death's doorstep
 - Nevertheless, his statement seems to acknowledge that he expects that his life will not extend as long as his forefathers
 - Remember that Abraham was 125 when he fathered Isaac
 - And Isaac lived to 180
- And beyond the length of his life, Jacob says his years have been unpleasant
 - The Hebrew word for unpleasant is *ra*, which is the common word for evil
 - Jacob could have meant that his years were hard and difficult
 - He has struggled his whole life – even in the womb he struggled with his brother
 - He schemed unnecessarily to receive his blessing
 - Fled the family and never saw his mother again
 - Worked as an indentured servant for Laban for 20 years while suffering betrayal at his hands
 - Suffered the indignation of his sons' shameful conduct in Canaan
 - Suffered the loss of his wife, and the loss of his favored son
 - By contrast, Jacob's father and grandfather received the promised land, were blessed with much wealth and a life of few cares
 - They both were able to live out their years in Canaan and die there in peace
 - While Jacob has spent many years outside the promised land, on the run and afraid, and now he will die in Egypt
 - So it could indeed be said that Jacob had an unpleasant life compared to his fathers

- But the word *ra* could be a reference to his own behavior – a life marked so much by sinful disobedience
 - Because we know Jacob brought so much of his hardships upon himself
 - Scripture testifies that Jacob's life was hard because he often chose to be defined by his mistakes rather than his triumphs
 - We first met Jacob struggling in the womb with his brother
 - He schemed and contended against his father, against his brother, his uncle, his neighbors, his sons, and most of all the Lord
 - So Jacob is making a statement concerning his sinfulness in comparison to the lives of his forefathers
- This second interpretation fits the context of the moment far better
 - Remember, Jacob's conversation with Pharaoh turned when Jacob chose to bless Pharaoh
 - Immediately, Pharaoh begins to size up Jacob, to understand why Jacob presumed to possess the greater honor
 - So Pharaoh asks Jacob his age
 - Perhaps Jacob was much older than Pharaoh realized
 - For had Jacob been 175 or even 200 years old (which was still within reach in those days), then Pharaoh might have reason to understand Jacob's claim to honor
 - But in response, Jacob put aside any claims to worldly honor
 - Jacob says he is relatively young for this day...only 130
 - Furthermore, he obtained less honor than his fathers, who outlived him and demonstrated a life more worthy of honor
 - This is not false modesty on Jacob's part...it's truth spoken in humility
 - Jacob does not possess a personal history that reflects honor upon himself
 - And his testimony is certainly not the source of his ability to extend a blessing to Pharaoh
 - Jacob is claiming no honor for himself, but instead he's projecting the honor that has been bestowed upon him by the word of God
 - Jacob is the man given the one and only inheritance offered by the living God
 - No other man, no other family carried that promise in his day
 - Long after Pharaoh and his people have perished, Jacob and all the children of God will live and reign in glory with Christ
 - John Nelson Darby once wrote:

"The least and most faltering of God's children has the superiority . . . in the presence of the most elevated men of the world."

- And Jesus speaking to His disciples said this

Matt. 10:17 “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

Matt. 10:18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Matt. 10:19 “But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

Matt. 10:20 “For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

- It may fall to us in God’s sovereign will to stand before powerful men and women
 - Like Jacob, perhaps we might be called before a king or president
 - Or perhaps a company boss or school principal
 - And in that moment, we will have an opportunity to bring a blessing, as we learned last week
 - But it also matters how we convey that blessing
 - We come in humility, recognizing we bring nothing special in and of ourselves
 - Our power is not like their power
 - We do not pretend we have earned our worth or honor
 - We do not bless others on account of our own accomplishments, especially our spiritual accomplishments
 - Instead, we speak like Jacob
 - We discount our worth
 - We acknowledge God has used greater men and women than us
 - We are not especially wise, nor powerful, nor noble, to quote Paul
 - We are simply vessels
 - But at the same time, we do not go into those moments absent power and honor
 - We come in the name of Jesus Christ, and we bring His Spirit
 - Notice that Jacob combined two things together
 - He delivered a blessing to Pharaoh, a spiritual honor that told Pharaoh Jacob had power and authority that even Pharaoh lacked
 - And yet, Jacob delivered it in personal humility, without taking upon himself undue personal honor
 - He honored the Lord, he didn’t try to rob him of His glory
 - This is the call we have been given as well, the command to go out with the Gospel of grace

- Preaching in humility knowing we are sinners saved by the very same grace we offer to others
- As James says

James 1:9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

James 1:10 and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

- And so the meeting ends, and we're told Jacob goes out from the presence of Pharaoh to settle in Goshen, just as Joseph intended
 - In Hebrew, the phrase "went out from..." conveys a sense of permanence
 - In other words, this was likely the one and only time Jacob and Pharaoh met
 - Once again, this demonstrates that the plan to keep Israel separate worked well
 - From there, the family settles in and receives the best of the land
 - Joseph remains in power and ensures that the family is taken care of in Rameses
 - By the way, this mention of Rameses bothers some Biblical critics, since the Pharaoh Rameses didn't come to power until long after Israel had left Egypt in the Exodus
 - Historians assume that Rameses was named after the Pharaoh Rameses, but it's equally possible that the region lent its name to the Pharaoh
 - The name simply means "the Sun God created it"
- Having settled his family in the land, Joseph returns to running the country in the midst of a famine

Gen. 47:13 Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.

Gen. 47:14 Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

Gen. 47:15 When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone."

Gen. 47:16 Then Joseph said, "Give up your livestock, and I will give you food for your livestock, since your money is gone."

Gen. 47:17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.

Gen. 47:18 When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord’s. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands.

Gen. 47:19 “Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.”

Gen. 47:20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh’s.

Gen. 47:21 As for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt’s border to the other.

Gen. 47:22 Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land.

Gen. 47:23 Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, here is seed for you, and you may sow the land.

Gen. 47:24 “At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones.”

Gen. 47:25 So they said, “You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s slaves.”

Gen. 47:26 Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt valid to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh’s.

- In v.13, Moses begins to tell the story of how the famine impacted the economy of Egypt and the surrounding nations, particularly Canaan
 - To tell this story, Moses takes a step back from the narrative of Jacob and Joseph, and begins again at the beginning
 - So v.13 actually backs up to the beginning of the seven year famine
 - And from there, we learn of how the entire seven year period affected the nations
 - In the first stage, the famine brought families inside and outside Egypt to Pharaoh seeking relief
 - Everyone has exhausted their personal grain stores
 - The farmland is barren, no one is planting much less harvesting
 - People are watching their families starve, but they hear that Egypt has grain in abundance
 - We remember that the Lord had revealed to Pharaoh seven years earlier through Joseph that there was a coming famine
 - So they needed to store up for seven years and those seven years of plenty

- produced so much grain that they couldn't count it all
- Now that storage is ready to be shared with the people
- Imagine how much grain must be stored if it is going to feed Egypt and the rest of the Middle East for seven years?
- When the time comes to feed the people, Joseph doesn't give hand outs...he demands a price for Egypt's grain
 - Initially, Joseph requires payment in cash
 - And the money is funneled into the treasury of Egypt
 - So the famine quickly begins to enrich Pharaoh's government
 - After a year, the famine exhausted everyone's savings, both in Egypt and Canaan
 - Remember, the cash economy was driven by farming, so with no farming taking place, the cash supply dried up
 - Still, the people must eat, so they continue coming to Joseph for grain
 - And Joseph is still demanding a payment, so the people begin to barter with livestock
 - They say sensibly that their lives are worth more than livestock
 - Within another year, the nation of Egypt owned virtually all the livestock of the Middle East
 - Egypt's power and wealth has reached unprecedented heights
 - After another year, everyone has traded all the livestock, but the famine continues, so they sell their land and their personal liberty for grain
 - Once again, the bargain makes sense
 - After all, isn't their personal survival worth more than their land and even their personal liberty?
 - So Joseph began to buy up all the land of the region for Pharaoh and to relocate men into Pharaoh's cities as slaves to the nation
 - They are positioned from one border of Egypt to the other
 - Furthermore, Joseph institutes a system by which the people pay Pharaoh for their grain through their labors, in the form of a 20% tax
 - Only the land devoted to the priests of Egypt were excluded from the indentured servitude
- At this point, you may be tempted to second guess Joseph's actions in all this
 - Why did he demand so much payment for the grain of Egypt?
 - Shouldn't he have given it away in a more charitable fashion to the people?
 - Why demand so much from them?
 - Well, there are three reasons why Joseph acts in this way
 - First, this is the honorable and expected way to handle need in Joseph's day

- The ancient world understood far better than our culture does today that it is only right to expect people to pay their own way with whatever they have
- To give them food for nothing while they still had the means to pay a fair price was considered wrong
- Joseph ensures that the people keep their dignity and honor even as they may be deprived of their possessions
- Secondly, it's smart conservation of his resources
 - By demanding the people trade their livestock, he relieves them of a burden they couldn't afford to keep
 - Livestock need grain too, but the people have none
 - Eventually, they would have begun to eat the farm animals before they died of starvation
 - Then everyone would have lost
 - Instead, the animals are preserved in prosperous Egypt
 - And the people are free of the burden to feed them
- Thirdly, Joseph is practicing smart economic theory
 - If Joseph had simply opened up the storehouses for free, there would have been no hesitation on the part of the people to exhaust the supplies quickly
 - When something is free and highly desirable, it won't last long
 - If the food in our grocery stores were suddenly free, how long before the shelves were bare?
 - If we charged the right fair price, things will sell, but at a manageable pace, so the resource is enough for everyone
- Each of these reasons show us that Joseph is acting in a responsible & wise way to manage Egypt's resources while treating the people with dignity
 - Even the slavery was an acceptable response to the circumstances
 - We think of slavery with disgust, and rightly so given our history with its practice
 - But slavery in this context is very different
 - It is voluntary, it is economically driven and it comes with very different conditions
 - Think of it as a job you can't afford to quit
 - One where you are owned by your boss, and you work for him to pay off a debt
 - I guess it's a lot like working in corporate America today
 - Joseph is doing everything the Lord expected, and he's doing it in his usual excellent and obedient fashion
 - By the time the famine ends, Egypt is by far the richest country in the world
 - Later, much of this wealth will come to Israel, as they grow in the land and when

they plunder the land upon their Exodus

- All wealth belongs to the Lord
 - It merely passes through men's hands for a time
 - Doing whatever God intended for it to accomplish
- As you know, Joseph pictures Jesus in so many ways, and here we see yet another of those pictures
 - When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we place our trust and reliance in Him as our Righteousness, our Provider and our Lord
 - But as we each entered into a relationship by faith, we came pulling a wagon full of the things we've accumulated in this world
 - And for many of us, that wagon carried some very impressive things
 - A huge savings account, with investments in a hundred places
 - Lots of property with houses, cars, various trinkets
 - A life of achievements, degrees, awards, promotions, fame
 - Lots of followers on Facebook and Twitter
 - Perhaps a testimony of beauty, brains, strength, pedigree, eloquence, sophistication
 - All of these were a currency in our lives
 - They could buy us attention, respect, ego, self-worth, independence
 - When we needed a favor, we dipped into our wagon and made a withdrawal
 - These were the things we valued and held dear
 - And then came Christ, our Lord and Master who offered us the one thing we didn't have but desperately needed, the daily bread of His Spirit living in us
 - Our relationship with Christ was a gift, one that is not dependent on our works, but that doesn't mean it doesn't come without a price
 - To receive the blessings and rewards of this new relationship, both in this life and beyond, our Master makes demands
 - He wants us to give up our wagon, those sources of personal wealth and power and self-worth from our life prior to faith
 - We are called to be bondservants, willingly and joyfully sacrificing even our liberty to serve the Good and Loving Master
 - Forsaking the world to receive the best He offers: eternal life and that abundantly
 - Just as Joseph took the worthless things the people possessed in exchange for giving them life

- We've been studying Genesis for roughly 30 months, and for almost half that time, we've been watching the life of Jacob
 - In fact, half of Genesis' 50 chapters involve Jacob one way or another
 - We've seen his shortcomings and failures
 - We've also noted his strengths and successes
 - We know him as a real person, as an authentic man called to follow God
 - He is flawed but growing under God's loving care
 - Clearly he's an important figure in this book and in God's plan for the world
 - In a sense, you could say that Jacob embodies God's response to Adam's sin
 - Adam's life began in perfect ease in the Garden, and ended in struggle and toil in the wilderness...
 - While Jacob's life began in struggle and toil, but it will culminate in peace and ease, living in the oasis of Goshen
 - And today we learn another reason Jacob is so unique in God's plan
 - Obviously, we already know his family becomes the nation of Israel, the center of God's plan of redemption
 - But Jacob is the last of the patriarchs
 - Today we say "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob..."
 - We never add another name after these three
 - Today we learn why
- So now the time has come to conclude Jacob's story
 - We have three chapters remaining
 - In these chapters we see several loose threads tied up
 - First, we watch how Jacob's life ends
 - Secondly, we learn how the seed promise and birthright will move forward into the family of Israel
 - Thirdly, we see the end of Joseph's story, which is closely linked to Jacob
 - Finally, in all these things we come to appreciate the sovereignty of God at work to accomplish His purposes through this family
- Today we return to the end of Chapter 47, which together with the beginning of Chapter 48, forms one continuous scene
 - Israel and his children have settled in Goshen while Joseph remains installed in the government of Egypt

Gen. 47:27 Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous.

Gen. 47:28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of

Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

Gen. 47:29 When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt,

Gen. 47:30 but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."

Gen. 47:31 He said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.

- After Jacob arrives in Egypt, he lives in Goshen another 17 years
 - The first 5 years or so were years of famine
 - Nevertheless, the family prospered in Goshen under Joseph's care
 - After the famine ends, Jacob lives another 12 years, one year for each of his sons
 - Jacob lives to 147 years old we're told, but he's not dead yet, so the next section describes the last days of his life
 - It begins with Jacob's insistence that Joseph swear an oath to him
 - The oath ritual is particular to this time and culture
 - A man requested that another man place his hand in a certain place on his body
 - Our English Bibles render the place as under the "thigh"
 - In reality Jacob was asking Joseph to place his hand on Jacob's most intimate body area, his genitals
 - This act invoked powerful symbolism
 - This area of a man's body represented life, given its role in bringing new life into the womb
 - Therefore, an oath taken in this way symbolized a promise taken on the life of the person
 - In this case, if Joseph failed to keep his word, then his own life and posterity would be cut off
 - The promise Jacob demands of Joseph is that Jacob would never be buried in Egypt
 - Instead, Joseph would ensure that Jacob's body would be preserved so it could be transported into Canaan and buried in the family's traditional burial place, the cave of Machpelah
 - And Joseph swears to do as his father requests
- Pay attention to the order of Jacob's words
 - Jacob said that after he is lying with the fathers, then his body is to be carried back to Canaan

- We can see that Jacob did not consider “lying with the fathers” to mean the burial of his dead body in the grave
- Jacob expected he would already be “with the fathers” even before his body reached Canaan and was buried in the cave
- So Jacob’s instructions tell us he had faith in an afterlife, one that he would share with his fathers
 - He believes he will live on by God’s power, just as did Abraham and Isaac
 - Furthermore, Jacob’s desire to see his body return to Canaan is symbolic of his faith in God’s promise of resurrection
- We remember that the Lord appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the same promise
 - And among other things, the Lord would grant them an inheritance in the land of Canaan
 - But none of these men received that promise in their lifetime
 - Abraham and Isaac died in the land having never received the full inheritance they were promised
 - Likewise, Jacob is preparing to die outside the land, knowing he has not received what God promised
- So how can God be faithful to His promises?
 - Why did these patriarchs trust in that promise even after they clearly saw their fathers dying without its fulfillment?
 - The answer is resurrection
 - These men had faith they would be resurrected into new bodies so they could receive what God has promised
 - They trusted that physical death was no barrier to God keeping His word...it merely delays the fulfillment until the appointed time
 - So they each asked to be buried in the land, as a testimony of their expectation to be living again one day in the land God promised
- Hebrews confirms that this is what the patriarchs believed

Heb. 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Heb. 11:14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

Heb. 11:15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

Heb. 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

- The men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 demonstrated faith by their actions
 - And in the case of the patriarchs, they demonstrated their faith by the way they lived and died in the land
 - They lived as wanderers and died with expectations of resurrection
- I don't think there's a more succinct description of our calling as Christians in all the Bible
 - Like Jacob, we are to forsake any attachments to this world
 - Living with an ever-present expectation of our resurrected life in the Kingdom to come
 - Knowing that will be the day when we will see the fulfillment of God's promises
 - In that day we will receive a new glorified body free of pain and suffering
 - In that day, we receive an inheritance that can never be taken away from us
 - In that day, we enjoy life, and life abundantly
 - But for now, we live by faith and in the hope of these good things to come
 - Let's be careful to never want to trade our hope in resurrection for an attachment to this world
 - For example, don't be misled to think that the promises of God find their fulfillment in this world, in this sinful body
 - We will see evidence of God's grace in this life, certainly
 - This life is not absent God's blessings
 - But neither is it the fulfillment of them
 - In fact, Paul says the presence of God's Spirit living in us is only a downpayment on the inheritance we are to receive after our death

Eph. 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

- Paul says the gift of the Holy Spirit is a pledge, and that word in Greek means downpayment or earnest money
 - It's God's pledge to us that the work He began in us He will bring to completion one day
 - Therefore, our life today cannot be the full measure of God's grace
 - It's just the beginning
- So don't think this world must be the fullness of what God has promised
 - Despite what the book says, you will not see your best life now

- Because for believers, this life is the least of your blessings when compared to the life awaiting you in the Kingdom
- If we begin to think God will deliver on His promises to us in this life, then we're likely to cling to the world, to become a friend with the world
 - But the only person who truly experiences his best life now is the one who remains an unbeliever
 - And it's no life at all
- Jacob is demonstrating that same faith here, and in doing so he becomes our model
 - In fact, Hebrews specifically credits him with faith in this moment

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

- Notice it says that as Jacob was dying, he was worshipping while leaning on his staff
- That odd detail in Hebrews was the writer's subtle way of drawing our attention back to this moment in Genesis 47 and 48
- How does Hebrews 11 connect with what we're studying in Genesis 47?
 - Well in v.31 it says that Israel bowed and worshipped at the head of his bed
 - But this is actually not a good translation
 - The word in Hebrew for bed is *mittah*
 - That word is almost identical in Hebrew to the word *mattah*, which means staff
 - If we consult the Septuagint, the Jews' own translation of their scriptures into Greek, we find the verse translated this way

Gen. 47:31 And he said, Swear to me; and he swore to him. And Israel did reverence, leaning on the top of his staff.

- It's likely that a copyist error created the confusion, when the original meaning was *mattah*, or staff
- So the writer of Hebrews uses the phrase "worshipping on his staff" to draw a connection to this moment in Jacob's life
 - The moment when he told Joseph to return his body to Canaan
 - The writer of Hebrews teaches us that this request is evidence of Jacob's faith in God's promises
 - Jacob was so sure of God's faithfulness, that he didn't want to be caught buried in the wrong place when his resurrection took place
- The writer of Hebrews also mentioned this event happened in conjunction with Jacob blessing Joseph's sons, which leads us into Chapter 48

Gen. 48:1 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, “Behold, your father is sick.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him.

Gen. 48:2 When it was told to Jacob, “Behold, your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed.

Gen. 48:3 Then Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

Gen. 48:4 and He said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.’

Gen. 48:5 “Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.

Gen. 48:6 “But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance.

Gen. 48:7 “Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

- Since Jacob is near death, it’s time for him to transfer the birthright to the next generation
 - Remember, every father had an inheritance to pass along to his children
 - The inheritance included all the property the father had acquired
 - The inheritance was divided according to the patriarch’s wishes, usually among all the sons
 - When it came time to assign the inheritance, usually at the moment the current patriarch was dying, one of the sons was assigned the birthright
 - The birthright usually belonged to the oldest son
 - It entitled him to receive a double portion of the inheritance and the right to become the new patriarch
 - The double portion was calculated by dividing the estate into a number of portions equal to the number of sons plus one
 - So in Jacob’s household, there were twelve sons
 - Therefore, Jacob will divide his estate into thirteen equal portions
 - And one son will get two portions and the right to become patriarch
- Now in the case of the family of Jacob, the inheritance included a unique additional element
 - It included the seed promise, which was the promise the Lord delivered to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - This promise was something God said would be passed down within the family, as part of their inheritance

- The promise represented a special inheritance that God established and assigned to this family
- Therefore, God elected who would receive it in each generation
- Though the patriarch conferred the birthright, it was God Who determined where it would rest within the family
- This unique partnership has led to some interesting and even comical situations in this family
 - As when Jacob and Esau bargained over the birthright
 - Or when Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar birthed twins
- So at this point, Jacob is preparing to pass on the birthright, and our favorite question returns: who will receive the inheritance?
 - Jacob begins by calling Joseph and his sons into his presence
 - He recounts the inheritance he has been given by God, which he is prepared to pass down to the next generation
 - The promise of God included the blessing of many children and a company or tribe of many peoples
 - It included a land that Israel would one day own in peace as an everlasting possession
 - And it included the arrival of the Messiah, the Seed to rescue God's people from sin
- In past generations, the Lord made clear how the transfer would take place
 - When it came time to pass the inheritance to the next son, everything would transfer to one person
 - In the case of Abraham, both the birthright and the seed promise were given to Isaac
 - While Ishmael received nothing
 - In the case of Isaac, both the birthright and the seed promise were given to Jacob
 - Esau received nothing
 - So now the question becomes how will God accommodate all of Jacob's sons?
 - Will God's blessing and promise transfer from Jacob to one tribe thereby leaving the other tribes outside His promises?
 - Here we get part of the answer
 - Jacob has determined to give the double portion to Joseph, meaning Joseph receives the birthright
 - Except that Jacob is doing it in a very unique and important way
 - He grants an equal portion to each of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh
 - He does this by legally adopting Joseph's sons

- Notice in v.5 Jacob declares that Joseph's sons were now Jacob's sons
 - Just as much as Reuben and Simeon
 - Remember, Reuben and Simeon were #1 and #2 sons of Leah
 - Therefore, Jacob is calling Joseph's sons in effect the #1 and #2 sons of Rachel
- We see further evidence in v.8, where Jacob makes a reference back to Rachel's death
 - Rachel died on a road leading into Canaan while giving birth to Benjamin
 - Jacob always felt she died too soon, denying him more years together and perhaps more sons
 - So now he is adopting two of Rachel's grandsons in place of Joseph
 - In effect, Jacob now acquires a third son of Rachel he was denied by her untimely death
- How can we know this to be his intention?
 - Notice how Jacob emphasizes the name of the place they were going to at the time of her death, Ephrath, which today is Bethlehem
 - The word for Ephrath is of the same root in Hebrew as the name Ephraim
 - Jacob is saying that Ephraim is the fulfillment of what he expected to find entering the land with Rachel
 - By adopting Joseph's sons, Jacob essentially gives Joseph's tribe the double portion of the birthright
 - While every other brother will receive a single portion, Joseph's family receives the double portion
 - But in the way Jacob did it through the adoption of the two grandsons, neither grandson has the birthright by himself
 - Each only received a single portion
 - Jacob's actions have the effect of preventing the birthright in the nation of Israel from ever transferring to a single person again
 - After Jacob, no one man holds the birthright
 - No tribe is greater than the others
 - The birthright of God's inheritance has been divided evenly among the tribes
 - Today the promises given to Abraham are shared among a nation of people rather than a single individual
 - This is why today we say that our salvation and the promises of God come through Israel the nation
 - Israel the man begot Israel the nation, and now it is through that nation that God brings the promise of salvation, realized in the Person of Christ
- Speaking of the Messiah, there is still the matter of which tribe receives the seed promise in God's inheritance, since only one tribe can bring forth a Messiah

- And as we'll see later in Chapter 49, Judah is given that privilege
 - But for now, we discover that Joseph is the last man to carry the birthright in Israel
 - As 1 Chronicles explains:

1Chr. 5:1 Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright.

1Chr. 5:2 Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph),

- So the inheritance God granted to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is now distributed evenly among Jacob's descendants
 - While we see Jacob making this decision, we're reminded once again by the letter to the Hebrews that this decision was an act of faith prompted by the Spirit of God
 - In fact, v.2 in my English translation says that Jacob sat upon his bed
 - But once again, that word should be translated leaning on his staff
 - So this is the same moment Hebrews described in Chapter 11, where it told us this blessing was an act of faith on Jacob's part
 - This is evidence that God Himself is directing this patriarch to adopt these sons
- In the way the Lord directs this outcome, He creates in Joseph's life yet another powerful picture of Christ
 - First, notice what Jacob says in vs.6
 - Jacob stipulates that if Joseph should have any other children after this moment, then those children would not be considered Jacob's family
 - In other words, Joseph's tribe will continue only through Ephraim and Manasseh
 - Any other children birthed by Joseph's wife would be considered Egyptian, since Joseph was now technically an Egyptian citizen
 - Furthermore, Jacob says that any inheritance Joseph passes on from his life in Egypt would go to his Egyptian children
 - Clearly, Jacob doesn't want any of his inheritance to be shared with the Egyptians
 - The only way to ensure that outcome was to take Joseph's sons into his own family, removing them from the family of Joseph and Egypt
 - Joseph's sons were adopted by his father so that they might receive Joseph's inheritance
 - And so it is with us and Christ
 - The Bible teaches that we were once children of the world, just as Joseph's sons were technically sons of Egypt

- And then the Father in Heaven adopted us, making us sons of God
 - And because we are adopted sons of God, we now have the promise of receiving Christ's inheritance

Eph. 1:5 He [the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

Eph. 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Eph. 1:10 ...In Him [the Father]

Eph. 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

- What Jacob did for Joseph's sons, the Father has done for all of us
 - Joseph's faithfulness and Joseph's obedience made possible his sons' opportunity to be blessed by Joseph's father
 - Because Jacob loved Joseph and he honored Joseph with the birthright
 - But the enjoyment of that birthright fell not to Joseph but to his sons, not because his sons earned it, but because Jacob was seeking to honor his son Joseph
 - And Jesus' faithfulness and obedience to the Father made possible our blessing as adopted sons of God
 - We will enjoy the inheritance the Father has prepared for Christ
 - Not because we earned it, but because the Father selected us to receive it
- Next week, we see evidence of God's sovereignty at work as Joseph tried to direct his father to grant his greater blessing to Joseph's older son over the younger
 - And I'll give you one guess how it turns out

A lawyer was reading out the will of a rich man to the people mentioned in the will:

"To you, my loving wife Rose, who stood by me in rough times, as well as good, I leave her the house and \$2 million."

The lawyer continued, "To my daughter Jessica, who looked after me in sickness and kept the business going, I leave her the yacht, the business and \$1 million."

The lawyer concluded, "And, to my brother Dan, who hated me, argued with me, and always said I would never mention him in my will – well you are wrong. Hi Dan!"

- Everyone in the family expects to be included in the father's will
 - Though hopefully more than just a mention
 - Jacob has determined it's time to appoint his inheritance to the next generation
 - Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he has determined to give Joseph, the first born of his beloved wife, Rachel, the birthright privilege
 - His family will receive the double portion of the inheritance
 - But Jacob assigned the double portion in a unique way
 - He adopted Joseph's two sons, making them his own
 - And then assigned each a single portion of the inheritance
 - In that way, Jacob's 13 portions were divided equally among 13 sons
 - This method had several consequences for the family of Israel
 - First, it removed any inheritance from Joseph's family
 - He and his Egyptian wife receive nothing from Jacob
 - His children receive the inheritance directly
 - Secondly, the nation continues forward without a single patriarch leading the nation
 - The promises of God are divided equally among the thirteen tribes of Jacob
 - Israel is no longer a single tribe ruled by a single man
 - It has become a company of tribes, each ruled by elders
 - Together it forms a nation
 - Finally, the seed promise continues to live on in a single tribe, Judah
 - And eventually the nation will receive kings from this tribe
 - Culminating in Christ's reign over the nation
- Since Jacob has promised to adopt Joseph's sons, he immediately moves to the

adoption ritual, which includes pronouncing a blessing on each of his new “sons”

Gen. 48:8 When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?”

Gen. 48:9 Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” So he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.”

Gen. 48:10 Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

Gen. 48:11 Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.”

- Let’s begin by noting that Jacob has been called Israel at key moments in the chapter, including in this passage
 - Earlier, Jacob was called Israel as he worshipped God on his staff and decided to adopt the sons of Joseph
 - As we know, the use of the name Israel is Moses’ sign to the reader that Jacob was operating fully under the direction of the Holy Spirit
 - He is acting according to the will of God
 - Now we see Jacob making a surprise decision, but he does so in the will of God according to v.14
 - First, Jacob asks Joseph who are these boys
 - Before you imagine two young school boys, remember these two sons were born before Jacob even entered Egypt
 - They are probably in their late teens or early twenties by now
 - So you might think it odd that Jacob would not recognize his own grandsons, the very boys he agreed to adopt
 - But v.10 explains why Jacob couldn’t recognize the boys
 - His eyes were so dim at his age he couldn’t see except very close
 - So he knew someone was in the room, but he wasn’t sure who they were
- Joseph brought them closer to Jacob, and Jacob kissed the boys and embraced them
 - At this point, Jacob reflects on God’s goodness
 - He never expected to see Joseph’s face again, much less to see grandsons from Joseph
 - So Jacob gives the Lord credit for this blessing
 - If we were in Jacob’s sandals, would we have this attitude?
 - When Jacob first learned Joseph was gone and thought him dead, he suffered greatly and spent years in mourning
 - But he now knows his suffering was a consequence of God’s eternal purposes

- By this point, Jacob knew God was the One who led Joseph into Egypt
- Yet here's Jacob thanking God for the chance to see Joseph and his grandsons
 - Jacob might have harbored resentment toward the Lord
 - Had God not taken Joseph in the first place, then Jacob wouldn't have needed to be reunited
 - In other words, Jacob might have accused God of creating the problem in the first place, rather than crediting the Lord with the blessing of a solution
- In my experience, it requires a lot of spiritual maturity to do what Jacob does here
 - To look upon the calamities in our life, both large and small, recognizing they come from the Lord
 - And rather than curse at God for our grief, we sincerely thank Him for the good these events may ultimately bring us
 - We might be able to understand the principle that God uses sin and evil to create something good
 - But it's another thing entirely to actually feel a peace when we see the Lord bringing hardship into our lives
 - And then to thank the Lord when He gives us relief from those very same hardships, which He delivered in the first place
- This kind of spiritual maturity is built in part through experience, but primarily it comes from an understanding that our sin requires God work through suffering to bring blessing
 - We gain this understanding in our study of God's word, through a deep and abiding understanding of what God can accomplish through suffering
 - And scripture points us to Christ to help explain why the Father will bring us grief in order to establish a blessing

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Rom. 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Rom. 8:33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

Rom. 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

- Paul teaches that God is for us, and if God is our friend and advocate, then there is nothing to stand against us
 - Nothing stands against us if God is for us
 - And since we know God is for His children by faith, then logic requires we conclude that even the worst circumstances of our lives find their source and

purpose in the Lord

- Everything that happens to us, no matter how painful or traumatic, no matter how surprising or senseless, is brought by God
- Therefore, they have a good purpose
- And Paul's best proof of this truth is seen in the life of Christ
 - He received the most unjust penalty ever assigned to any human being who ever lived
 - And this unimaginably great injustice was accomplished according to the Father's will so that an equally immeasurable blessing could be granted to us
 - And just as Christ's suffering gave way to His resurrection and glory, so too will our griefs give way to blessing in due time
- Knowing this truth from scripture, then we can respond like Jacob
 - As he looked dimly upon the faces of his grandsons, he didn't bear resentment toward God for the lost years
 - He was filled with gratitude for the Lord's goodness
 - Jacob's suffering for a time led to the salvation of Jacob's family from a famine, the opportunity for a nation to be born, and the fulfillment of God's promises
 - What will the Lord accomplish in your suffering? Be sure to thank the Lord for that blessing
- Next Jacob adopts the sons formally

Gen. 48:12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

Gen. 48:13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him.

Gen. 48:14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

Gen. 48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said,

“The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

Gen. 48:16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;

And may my name live on in them,

And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

- Joseph recognizes that his father is about to speak as the patriarch, as a man with the Lord's authority, so he bows in respect and begins to prepare his sons for the formal

adoption ritual

- First, it says he removed the boys from his knees
 - Up to this moment, the sons had been sitting on Jacob's knees, not Joseph's knees
 - We already established that these boys are fully grown men at this point
 - So Jacob isn't bouncing them on his knees
 - The reason they were on Jacob's knees was a part of the adoption ritual
 - It symbolized that the boys were now seen to be from Jacob's loins
 - And by sitting on his knees, they create this image
- But now the time comes for Jacob to speak words over the boys, and so Joseph removes the boys and places them before his father
 - He purposely places his sons in a particular way
 - His oldest son, Manasseh is positioned on Jacob's right and the younger son, Ephraim, is placed on Jacob's left
- Once again we see the culture's appreciation of prominence and honor driving Joseph's actions
 - Joseph feels that his oldest son must be shown a greater degree of honor than the younger, for this is the culturally accepted practice
 - Even though both sons were to receive the same inheritance, nevertheless the oldest son should receive greater honor, or so Joseph assumed
- In the Eastern culture, the right hand is symbolically greater than the left
 - We see this principle reflected in both scripture and in our culture still today
 - Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, the position of highest honor
 - Most if not all cultures greet one another with the right hand
 - In the military, the highest ranking officer always stands or walks on the right, and our national flag is always on the right of state flags, etc.
- So in the adoption ritual Jacob is about to conduct, Manasseh and Ephraim were to replace Reuben and Simeon as first and second among the brothers
 - Joseph wants Manasseh to receive the greater honor over his younger sibling, which was symbolized by Jacob's right hand
 - But once again, the plans of God diverge from the plans of men
 - The Lord wants to make clear that he retains all authority and control for how this people will develop
- Defying the culture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jacob decides at the last minute to criss-cross his hands above the heads of the grandsons
 - Jacob knew Joseph would position his sons in the traditional way
 - So Israel acts according to God's will in going against this tradition
 - He places his left hand on Manasseh and his right hand on Ephraim, elevating

Ephraim above Manasseh

- Then he pronounced a blessing upon Joseph
 - By adopting his sons, Jacob was honoring Joseph with the birthright
 - So this action was indeed a blessing for Joseph
- In the blessing, Jacob says the Lord has been his shepherd all his life
 - In both the low points and the high points, Jacob's life has been under the care of the Lord
 - And that care came as a result of the Lord's promises to his fathers
- Then in v.16 Jacob reveals his faith in the Messiah
 - The beginning of v.16 is a continuation from v.15
 - In v.15 Jacob acknowledged the Lord was his shepherd
 - Then in v.16 Jacob describes the Lord as the angel who has redeemed me from all evil
 - This angel is none other than the angel of the Lord, Who appeared to Jacob
 - The angel of the Lord is the Old Testament reference to the Second Person of the Godhead, a pre-incarnate Christ
 - Furthermore, Jacob says the angel of the Lord is the One Who redeemed him from all evil
 - The Hebrew word for redeemed is *goel*, which is commonly translated kinsman redeemer
 - Jacob is calling the angel of the Lord his kinsman redeemer
 - Jacob understood that God Himself, the Angel of the Lord, was to become his kinsman
 - A Redeemer to rescue him from all evil
 - Here we see the patriarch acknowledging the coming Christ, calling Him his Redeemer
 - And his faith in that promised redeemer was the source of his salvation
- Knowing the faithfulness of the Lord and the salvation He promises, gave Jacob the confidence to pronounce a blessing on these boys
 - He asks the Lord to bless his newest sons
 - That Jacob's name would live on in them
 - They would be known as children of Israel, rather than as children of Joseph
 - They would likewise grow into a multitude just as Jacob's other sons
 - Since we know Joseph has no more children in Egypt, then Joseph's line dies out apart from these boys
 - And though they collectively are the tribe of Joseph, these two sons become known forevermore as sons of Jacob

- Now as Jacob pronounces these words over Joseph's sons, Joseph watches on in horror
 - Perhaps he wonders if dear old dad has gone senile
 - So Joseph tries to intervene to correct his father

Gen. 48:17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

Gen. 48:18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head."

Gen. 48:19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

Gen. 48:20 He blessed them that day, saying,

"By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,
'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'"

Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Gen. 48:21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

Gen. 48:22 "I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

- Joseph reaches out to grab Jacob's right hand, trying to remove it from Ephraim's head
 - Joseph tells his dad you're doing it all wrong
 - What a classic response to God at work
 - We know Jacob's action was the Lord working, because we have the benefit of Moses' narration
 - We can sit back objectively and laugh a little at Joseph's presumptuousness, trying to "fix" the Lord's "mistake"
 - But physician heal thyself
 - The only difference between us and Joseph is the eye makeup (and maybe not even then)
 - We commonly defend culture, tradition, and other human institutions over defending scripture and the work of the Spirit
 - Never is this more true than in church practices
 - As a simple rule of thumb, if you ever find yourself defending the world's point of view over the Bible's teaching, then you know you've become Joseph trying to lift Jacob's hand off Ephraim's head
 - Christians who love the Lord and the Bible, suddenly switch positions to argue against the word of God to defend ways of man they hold dear

- Disputes over evolution, water baptism etc.
 - We cling to our preconceived thinking, our preferred practices, our denominational traditions
 - Rather than following God
- And if we've learned anything in our study of Genesis, it should be that the Lord delights to show Himself doing the unexpected
 - He wants us to recognize Him at work, which means doing differently than men would naturally do
 - Because whatever men seek in their flesh and pride will always run opposite to what is holy and proper
- Jacob responds to Joseph's attempts to correct him by saying, I know, I know
 - Jacob is explaining to Joseph that he fully understands what he's doing
 - This is no mistake, it's intentional
 - Manasseh will also become a great people
 - The fact that he is not receiving the greater blessing doesn't mean he still won't receive great things
 - Nevertheless, the younger boy Ephraim is selected by God to be even greater
 - In fact, the name Ephraim will become a synonym for the northern tribes in total
 - In the same way that the southern tribes are named for their greatest tribe, Judah
 - Ephraim won't necessarily be larger than the other tribes, or even larger than Manasseh
 - But Ephraim will be more honored
 - In this way, the birthright and seed promise holders become the two most prominent tribes in the entire nation
 - In v.20, the blessing on Joseph is that he might be made great through his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh
 - But by placing the name Ephraim before the name Manasseh, Jacob makes Ephraim the more honored son
- Finally, Jacob ends with an important prophetic statement to Joseph
 - Jacob reminds Joseph what the Lord first spoke through Abraham
 - Though they are in Egypt for a time, there will be a time when the nation leaves Egypt
 - And Joseph will go with them, though in a coffin
 - Secondly, v.22 records Jacob giving Joseph one portion more than his brothers, which is true in the way his sons each received a portion
 - But the word for portion is literally shoulder, which in Hebrew is the word Shechem

- This is name of the town where Simeon and Levi murdered all the inhabitants
- This is the place Jacob purchased for his burial plot
- So in this verse, Jacob is giving to Joseph ownership of this piece of land
 - Later, we see the bones of Joseph buried in this location, since he owned this land
 - In John 4 we see the woman at the well refer to this location in Samaria as the parcel of land Jacob gave to Joseph
 - So Jacob is giving Joseph land in anticipation that Joseph and the rest of Israel will one day leave the land of Egypt
 - Here again is a beautiful example of faith turned into action
 - Jacob was making decisions about his life and even his death in complete trust that the Lord would keep his promises
 - And his faith was certainly rewarded

- As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, roughly half of the book of Genesis is devoted to the messy, complicated life of Jacob
 - He is the final patriarch, the man who gives birth to the entire nation of Israel
 - He often relies on deceit rather than trusting in God
 - He frequently brought his family misery because of his mistakes
 - And yet he has also demonstrated remarkable growth and maturity, especially in his later years
 - He relied on God for protection in the face of his enemies
 - He worshipped God in the midst of trial and calamity
 - And he never lost faith in God's promises
 - It's so encouraging to see Jacob in such a good place at the end of his life
 - It's a reminder that the Lord holds out the blessing of sanctification for all of us
 - As we walk with the Lord, we grow like Him
 - We earn our merit badges, so to speak, experiencing the discipline of the Lord and profiting from it
 - But the key is to remain in that walk, standing firm in our faith, enduring the trials, trusting in the God Who brings them
 - That's Jacob
 - We've said it required the Lord to turn the pagan Abram into the patriarch Abraham
 - And so it required the Lord to turn a disobedient Jacob into the obedient Israel
 - God can do the same for us
- As we enter Chapter 49, Jacob is near death and ready to transfer his inheritance to his sons
 - But before he dies he pronounces a prophetic blessing upon his sons
 - Since he has already pronounced a blessing on the two adopted sons, Jacob has the other sons to consider now
 - In this blessing, Jacob also remembers Joseph
 - The reason Joseph is included is because this blessing goes far beyond the bestowing of the inheritance
 - The Lord is using Jacob to reveal distant prophetic truths for the nation
 - And Joseph's place in the family carries significant prophetic meaning
 - So we leave Chapter 48 and enter 49 in virtually the same moment, as Jacob transitions from blessing Joseph's sons to blessing the rest of the nation of Israel
 - Today we'll look at what Jacob says about each son
 - In particular, we'll consider the prophetic importance of each statement

- All together, these prophecies make Chapter 49 one of the most important in the book of Genesis

Gen. 49:1 Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come.

- As the chapter begins, Jacob summons his sons, and he tells them he is going to pronounce a prophetic blessing upon them
 - Notice Jacob says that this will be what will befall Israel in the days to come
 - This English translation obscures the subtleties of this phrase
 - In Hebrew, the phrase reads “what will befall Israel in the latter days” or the “days of the end”
 - Jacob is speaking about what will come upon Israel at the end of this age, prior to the Kingdom of the Messiah being established
 - So Jacob is going to speak a specific prophetic blessing concerning the tribe of Israel that comes from each son
 - We’ve seen the Lord work in this way in Genesis before
 - Noah spoke prophetically concerning the future of his sons
 - And Abraham spoke prophetically concerning Ishmael
 - In each case the Lord is moving by His spirit through these men to reveal His plans to men
 - This reminds us that the patriarchs functioned as God’s prophet in their day
 - So these words of Jacob are divinely inspired revelations of God’s plans for each tribe, particularly in the last days
- Jacob begins with Reuben, his first born son from Leah

Gen. 49:2 “Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob;
And listen to Israel your father.

Gen. 49:3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

Gen. 49:4 “Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,
Because you went up to your father’s bed;
Then you defiled it — he went up to my couch.

- Jacob doesn’t proceed in exact birth order
 - Instead, he addresses the sons of each wife in turn, beginning with Leah
 - Then moving to the two concubines
 - And then ending with the sons of Rachel

- Under normal circumstances, we should have expected Reuben to receive the birthright and the best blessing
 - But instead, Reuben is given a rebuke
 - But not before Jacob reminds Reuben of what could have been his
- Jacob first says that Reuben was the firstborn, the beginning of Jacob's strength and the son who was positioned to be the preeminent son in the family
 - But Reuben forfeited this opportunity
 - In Hebrew, Jacob says Reuben was boiling over like water, which suggests Reuben's uncontrollable lust and undisciplined nature
 - He was disqualified from receiving these blessings in the inheritance because of his lust for his father's wife
 - Reuben's prophecy is a reminder that men (and women) who do not act to discipline the flesh and control their lusts run the risk of disqualifying themselves of the blessings the Lord may offer
 - Our new birth in Christ brings a new opportunity, the chance to start fresh in serving God rather than serving ourself
 - And service to God brings with it the potential for reward
 - But we can disqualify ourselves from the blessings of service if faith is shipwrecked by our lusts and undisciplined lifestyle
 - Don't be naive and think God won't hold us accountable
 - Reuben may not have given much thought to his father's reaction beforehand
 - But Jacob took note and now he holds Reuben accountable
 - Prophetically, this blessing reflects the character of Reuben's tribe
 - He was a man of great promise that amounted to nothing
 - Likewise, the tribe of Reuben never produces anyone of significance in the life of Israel
 - No judge, no prophet, no leader
 - In fact, Moses prays in Deuteronomy that Reuben's tribe wouldn't fade away, since it was so small and shrinking

**Gen. 49:5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Their swords are implements of violence.**

**Gen. 49:6 "Let my soul not enter into their council;
Let not my glory be united with their assembly;
Because in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.**

**Gen. 49:7 "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel.**

**I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.**

- Next, Jacob deals with his second and third sons of Leah; Simeon and Levi
 - These brothers are forever connected by their misdeeds in Shechem
 - They said they were defending their sister's honor, but their motives were evil according to Jacob
 - They had vengeance and wrath in their hearts and they reacted in anger
 - They murdered men and they made animals lame, meaning they cut the tendons of their legs to render them useless to anyone
 - So the Lord speaking through Jacob declares that this sin will receive a punishment in the history of Israel
 - The judgment falls on their seed, in that it would be scattered
 - Neither Simeon nor Levi received land of their own
 - Instead, they lived entirely inside other tribes' land
 - By pronouncing these judgments on the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Levi, God wasn't acting unfairly
 - Historians have noted that these individual sons of Jacob seemed to pass their personalities on to their respective tribes
 - The tribes of Reuben, Simeon and even Levi showed characteristics of their fathers
 - And therefore, the Lord could be seen protecting Israel from these men and their defects spreading among the tribes
 - Kings would not arise from these lines after their nature
 - Kings with the immoral nature and unrestrained emotions of these men
 - This was a blessing to Israel

**Gen. 49:8 “Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.**

**Gen. 49:9 “Judah is a lion's whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?**

**Gen. 49:10 “The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**

Gen. 49:11 “He ties his foal to the vine,
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine;
He washes his garments in wine,
And his robes in the blood of grapes.

Gen. 49:12 “His eyes are dull from wine,
And his teeth white from milk.

- At this point, I imagine Jacob’s sons fidgeting, beginning to wonder if he was going to give any son a positive blessing...but then it came time for Judah’s blessing
 - Judah’s is the first true blessing, and along with Joseph’s, it’s the longest blessing
 - In v.8 Jacob awards Judah with the prominence over his brothers
 - This was the closest the sons got to appointing a patriarch to replace Jacob
 - In this case, an entire tribe received the prominence within the family
 - The tribe of Judah would ultimately see the other tribes bowing down, a prophecy of the coming kings of Israel from Judah
 - We see clearly that the Lord intended to give Israel kings
 - The sin of Israel in 1 Samuel wasn’t the desire for a king
 - It was their rejection of the Lord’s rule and their vain desire for a king
 - They asked for the wrong reasons and they asked too early, so God gave them a king from Benjamin that reflected their desires for outward appearance
 - And that impatience cost the nation dearly
 - Eventually the Lord brought the king He intended through Judah
 - Of course, Jacob’s promise speaks of an eventual descendant of Judah, the Messiah Who will reign over all Israel and the world
 - Here we see the seed promise for the Messiah
 - The promise is given to Judah exclusively
 - In v.9 Judah is promised great power
 - Judah is compared to a lion for the first time
 - Like a lion, Judah will have power, authority and mastery over all adversaries... a fitting picture for the coming Messiah, Who is called the Lion of Judah
 - In v.10, the kingship of Judah is further revealed
 - The scepter shall never depart Judah, meaning the tribe will reign without end over Israel
 - And the staff not depart between his feet, which is a picture of a judge ruling from a seat of judgment
 - The word Shiloh is an interesting Hebrew word
 - It can be translated as “He Whose right it is”

- The Septuagint, Syriac and Dead Sea Scrolls all translate this verse in that way
- It means the tribe of Judah will rule over Israel until the One Whose right it is to rule comes to take up the throne
 - It's a reference to the Messiah's arrival to rule
 - While the tribe of Judah will hold the rule over Israel from generation to generation, once Messiah comes, there will be no more succession of rule
 - He will hold it forever
 - And He will rule over all peoples, Jewish and Gentile alike
- Finally, Judah's family will be so prosperous, they will tie donkeys and foals to choice grape vines
 - A grape vine is a relatively fragile thing
 - If a vine were strong enough to restrain a donkey, then it says a lot about the prosperity of the vineyard
 - Judah's vines will be unbelievably healthy and strong
 - The Jewish commentary on this verse somehow came to understand this detail as a description of the Messiah's arrival
 - According to the rabbis, the Messiah can be recognized as One who will ride on a donkey
- Furthermore, the agricultural production will be so abundant, that Judah will wash their garments in grape juice, be filled with wine, and have teeth made white from milk
 - Judah will indeed be a blessed tribe
 - And his leadership qualities will bless the nation
- Then Jacob blesses the next six sons with brief mentions each

Gen. 49:13 "Zebulun will dwell at the seashore;

**And he shall be a haven for ships,
And his flank shall be toward Sidon.**

Gen. 49:14 "Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between the sheepfolds.

Gen. 49:15 "When he saw that a resting place was good
And that the land was pleasant,
He bowed his shoulder to bear burdens,
And became a slave at forced labor.

Gen. 49:16 "Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.

Gen. 49:17 "Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
A horned snake in the path,
That bites the horse's heels,

So that his rider falls backward.

Gen. 49:18 “For Your salvation I wait, O LORD.

**Gen. 49:19 “As for Gad, raiders shall raid him,
But he will raid at their heels.**

**Gen. 49:20 “As for Asher, his food shall be rich,
And he will yield royal dainties.**

**Gen. 49:21 “Naphtali is a doe let loose,
He gives beautiful words.**

- For Zebulun, Jacob says his tribe will dwell at the seashore and the border of Sidon, the historical land of the Phoenicians
 - The problem is the territory assigned to Zebulun in the book of Joshua doesn't border the sea
 - The tribe is entirely landlocked
 - On the other hand, Ezekiel 48 describes the territory of each tribe during the Millennial Kingdom
 - And in that age to come, Zebulun does have territory on the sea and in the northwest corner of the nation
 - Exactly where Jacob says it will be
 - Remember, these instructions concern the latter days
 - This is further proof that the promises of God for Israel await the coming Kingdom on earth
 - The pithy description of Issachar as a strong donkey lying down between sheep pens communicates a lot about his character
 - He is physically strong, given over to manual labor and service
 - But in lying down, he has a lazy streak and he's not particularly ambitious
 - In v.15 Jacob says that this tribe will see the good land they're given in Canaan, and they will seek for nothing more
 - They will be strong workers and will favor working the land
 - But they will enjoy that role too much, being willing to accept a form of slavery working for others, including Canaanites to maintain the produce of the land
 - They traded obedience to God for the material pleasures of the land
- The tribe of Dan is an interesting case
 - Jacob says that in keeping with the meaning of their name, this tribe will be judges
 - The tribe of Dan produced Samson, the most prominent of the judges
 - But Dan was also the first tribe to practice idolatry
 - And Dan began the rebellion that eventually split the nation of Israel
 - Jacob alludes to these outcomes when he says that Dan is a serpent in the

way of the nation

- He bit at the horses heels, causing Israel's downfall
- Interestingly, Dan is not listed among the tribes of Revelation 7 when the 144,000 Jews are called to evangelize the world
 - Dan's exclusion is often assumed to be a punishment, but I wonder if it has more to do with the tribe's name
 - Remember, Jesus says that until He returns for judgment, the times are devoted to salvation

John 12:47 “If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

- Since Dan means to judge, perhaps he was left out of the 144,000, since those men are selected to continuing the salvation work of Messiah
- It isn't time for judgment as yet, though that time will be drawing very near
- Finally, Jacob says of Dan that he will await the salvation from the Lord
 - Despite Dan's failings, his tribe will be included in the Kingdom with the rest of Israel, enjoying the salvation of the Lord
- Jacob says relatively little about Gad, Asher and Naphtali
 - Gad's territory was the eastern most border of Israel across the Jordan
 - So he was vulnerable to raids from desert tribes
 - The tribe were excellent warriors and defended Israel well
 - Asher is given some of the best land in the nation, very fertile ground
 - As a result, the nation comes to enjoy rich food, which literally means oily food, a symbol of richness
 - His tribe will produce delicacies for kings
 - For Naphtali, Jacob says the tribe will move like a doe set loose
 - It's a reference to the way Naphtali's territory is very mountainous, creating a degree of independence among this tribe
 - They are footloose and move around like a deer and are also gifted warriors
 - Finally, they are eloquent in speech and gifted with words
- Next we move to Joseph

Gen. 49:22 “Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a spring;
Its branches run over a wall.

Gen. 49:23 “The archers bitterly attacked him,
And shot at him and harassed him;

Gen. 49:24 But his bow remained firm,
 And his arms were agile,
 From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob
 (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),
Gen. 49:25 From the God of your father who helps you,
 And by the Almighty who blesses you
 With blessings of heaven above,
 Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
 Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
Gen. 49:26 “The blessings of your father
 Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors
 Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;
 May they be on the head of Joseph,
 And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.

- Joseph is richly blessed, the most blessed of the sons of Jacob in keeping with his award of the birthright
 - Remember, that blessing was measured in way Jacob granted a double portion to Joseph's two sons
 - But Joseph himself only received Jacob's land in Shechem
 - Nevertheless, the tribe of Joseph, which has become two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, is the most blessed tribe
 - Their blessing is pictured as a fruitful tree extending its branches outside the walls of the orchard
 - Then Jacob remembers the way Joseph was attacked by his brothers and Potiphar, and yet the Lord took care of Joseph
 - And in the end, Joseph became powerful, as pictured by a firm bow and strong arms
 - And then we see Jacob confirm for us that Joseph's life is a divinely inspired picture of the Messiah
 - Jacob says in the second half of v.24 that the same hand of God that brought Joseph through these things will do the same for the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel
 - These are classic terms for the Messiah
 - So Jacob tells us that what we see in Joseph's life is a pattern for what the Lord will do to bring His Messiah to Israel
 - And of course we've studied that picture in detail throughout the story of Joseph
 - Finally, in vs.25-26 Jacob speaks of the tremendous blessing Joseph received from the Lord, a blessing that even exceeded that given to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
 - The only way to understand that statement is to see it as one, final picture of

Christ in the life of Joseph

- These statements of unsurpassed blessing are references to the blessing the Father will bestow upon the Son
 - In His glory and in His reign on Earth
 - The time when He will wear the crown on His head
- Finally, Benjamin gets his blessing

Gen. 49:27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;

In the morning he devours the prey,

And in the evening he divides the spoil.”

Gen. 49:28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.

- Benjamin is told he will be a warring tribe, often victorious and so successful he will divide the spoils with his brothers
 - The tribe produced many warriors and typically had a war-like nature
 - Among others, this tribe produced a Judge, King Saul, Jonathan, Mordecai, Esther, and the Apostle Paul
 - Warriors for the Lord can be powerful ministers or great disappointments, as Paul and King Saul demonstrate
 - Finally, in v.28 Moses confirms that these blessings were intended for more than just these boys
 - They extend to the tribes themselves as we’ve already seen
 - And each blessing was appropriate, just what the Lord intended
- And then comes the end of Jacob’s life, and he gives instructions concerning the disposition of his body

Gen. 49:29 Then he charged them and said to them, “I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

Gen. 49:30 in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site.

Gen. 49:31 “There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah —

Gen. 49:32 the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth.”

Gen. 49:33 When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

- Jacob wants to see his body buried in the land God promised to him, further evidence of how strong Jacob's faith has become in his last days
 - He wants to be buried in the cave at Machpelah, the place in the land that Abraham purchased and where the patriarchs were buried
 - Notice he says that this is the place he buried Leah
 - This is the first time we hear of her death, and now we know she shares the cave too
 - What Leah could never obtain in life, she obtained in death
 - The chance to be next to Jacob without competition
 - Rachel isn't buried in this cave
 - Only Leah
 - Finally, after speaking to his sons, we're told he literally returned into his bed and breathed his last
 - It's as if Jacob willed himself to die at this moment
 - I wonder if the same Spirit that revealed the prophecies Jacob spoke had also revealed that this would be the day he died
 - Considering all that Jacob experienced in his amazing life, I wouldn't be surprised if this is true
- As I reflect on Jacob's story, I love this ending
 - If God can take a man like Jacob, a man who schemed his way out of every situation
 - A man who impatiently tried to fix problems his own way
 - A man who fought with God rather than rested in God
 - If God can take a man like this and bring him to the point where he could become so in tune with God that he speaks of future events with stunning clarity
 - His eyes were nearly gone, but his spiritual vision was unmatched
 - Then there's hope for me
 - If God can take a man like this and bring him to the point that he leans back in bed, so confident in God's grace and promises, that he welcomes his death
 - Then there's hope for all God's children

Jude 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,
Jude 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.



Genesis 2011 - Lesson 50

Chapter 50

814 Arion Parkway, #410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
210.319.5055

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- After 2 years, 5 months, and 30 days...
 - 109 lessons...
 - And over 71 hours of teaching...
 - We reach the end of the book of Genesis
 - And not a moment too soon
 - This is the fourth time I've taught through the entire book of Genesis
 - It's my favorite book of scripture
 - It's the book that was being taught when the Lord called me to faith in the Gospel
 - It's the first book of the Bible I ever studied as a student
 - It's the first book of the Bible I ever attempted to teach
 - And this may well be the last time I have opportunity to teach it
 - So today I'm experiencing decidedly mixed emotions
 - While I always look forward to the end of a study and the sense of accomplishment it provides
 - I am also melancholy at the thought that I may be concluding a study of Genesis for the final time
 - Many untaught books of scripture await
 - And Jesus' return won't
 - So I approached this study with the expectation that I wanted to give you my best understanding of this special book
 - I prayed my fourth time teaching through the book would do justice to the depth and significance of what God has revealed in it
 - I suspect that's a desire every Bible teacher has but none can realize
 - Still, I've done my best, and now we are at the end
- Israel is securely planted in Egypt, Joseph is reconciled with his family, and Jacob has died
 - All that remains in the story is to put Jacob's body to rest
 - And with his passing, to set the scene for what happens next for his family
 - In particular, we see the brothers face life without their father
 - And finally, we see Joseph's life come to an end, immediately before the story of Exodus begins
 - But the chapter begins where Chapter 49 ended, with Jacob's death

Gen. 50:1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him and kissed him.

Gen. 50:2 Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.

Gen. 50:3 Now forty days were required for it, for such is the period required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.

- Joseph mourns his father's passing, with obvious sadness and loss
 - We can know from Joseph's actions and words that his grieving was not the same mourning as those who have no hope, as Paul says

1Th. 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

- Paul taught the church it was natural to grieve for the loss of a loved one
- But our grieving is entirely different than the grieving of those who have no hope
 - We grieve the separation that death creates
 - We may even grieve the ugly process of death
- Our grieving is tempered by our hope in the promises of God
 - We know the Lord has promised the believer paradise upon death
 - I think of the story of Lazarus coming back to life in John's Gospel
 - The story never shares Lazarus' reaction to being raised, but I wonder if he was a little annoyed at being brought back
 - Because I can assure you that those who die in Christ aren't missing us nearly as much as we are missing them
 - The Lord's promise is that one day we will all enjoy a new life in a resurrected body, and we will enjoy the company of all those who shared our faith
 - So truly death for the believer is a temporary separation
- But death for the unbeliever is a death without such hope
 - It is truly a forever separation
 - And for those who are left behind, the absence of any assurance about what follows leaves only hopelessness and unreconcilable grief
 - Our faith rescues us from this hopelessness
- Joseph's actions reveal his hope in the Lord's promises of resurrection
 - First, we notice he commands his servants to embalm his father
 - While embalming bodies was a common practice in Egypt, this is not and has never been a practice of Israel
 - So why does Joseph want to embalm Jacob?
 - He had lived for seventeen years in Egypt with only his father, so naturally Joseph wanted his mummy
 - The real answer is faith
 - Joseph shares his father's faith in the Lord's promise of resurrection
 - And having promised Jacob that he would bury Jacob in Canaan, Joseph needed to be sure the body could be preserved for the time required to reach Canaan

- So in faithful agreement with Jacob's request, Joseph embalms Jacob's body
- In an unusual step, Joseph commands physicians to conduct the embalming
 - Normally, Egyptians used professional embalmers to mummify bodies
 - But these embalmers were usually priests or other agents of the Egyptian gods
 - Their embalming methods included pagan religious rituals, in keeping with the pagan practices of Egypt
 - Joseph wanted none of this for his father
- Instead, Egyptian physicians were used
 - These are men who knew how to embalm a body but who didn't necessarily practice any religious rituals in the process
 - We can safely assume that Joseph ordered the men to steer clear of such ritual
- While the embalming takes place, both Egypt and Israel mourn for Jacob
 - The standard period for mourning in Israel is 40-days
 - But in Egypt, the period of mourning for a beloved leader, like a Pharaoh was seventy-two days
 - Joseph smartly institutes only 70 days for Jacob's mourning
 - Because it would leave one additional day of mourning for himself
 - And then one more day for Pharaoh's death
 - This ensured that Jacob's mourning period wasn't seen as a challenge to the prominence of himself or Pharaoh
 - It's also interesting that Israel's history is filled with 40s and 70s (not 72s)
- So then after 70 days, Joseph is ready to fulfill his promise to his father

Gen. 50:4 When the days of mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying,

Gen. 50:5 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am about to die; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'"

Gen. 50:6 Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."

Gen. 50:7 So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

Gen. 50:8 and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen.

Gen. 50:9 There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company.

Gen. 50:10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation;

and he observed seven days mourning for his father.

Gen. 50:11 Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.” Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.

Gen. 50:12 Thus his sons did for him as he had charged them;

Gen. 50:13 for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

Gen. 50:14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

- Joseph asks permission to take Jacob’s body back to Canaan
 - Why does Joseph ask permission?
 - Remember Pharaoh permitted Israel to live in Egypt and gave them the best land
 - He did this because he wanted Semites to settle in the land and he wanted to retain Joseph’s loyalty
 - But now Joseph and virtually all of Israel wants to return to Canaan to bury Jacob
 - Pharaoh could easily assume Israel is returning for good
 - The famine has been over for a long time
 - Notice Joseph doesn’t even ask Pharaoh personally, but speaks through others to show Pharaoh respect
 - Joseph assures Pharaoh he is fulfilling a promise to Jacob
 - And then in v.5 Joseph promises he will return to Egypt
 - Why doesn’t Joseph move his family back to Canaan at this point?
 - It seems the perfect opportunity
 - Joseph’s promise to return is another demonstration of faith in God’s word
 - Joseph knew that Israel was in Egypt according to God’s plan
 - And when the Lord gave the plan to Abraham, He also gave a timeline
 - Four generations must live in Egypt
 - And only one generation has experienced Egypt at this point
 - Joseph’s generation
 - So in faith to God’s promises, Joseph promises to return with his family
- Pharaoh agrees, but to be sure Joseph returns, Pharaoh sends along many of his servants and the elders of the land of Egypt along with a guard of horsemen
 - The elders served as the Pharaoh’s representatives at the funeral and the servants were of assistance to Joseph, certainly
 - But these people were also Pharaoh’s property
 - So should Joseph have a sudden change of heart, he would be risking stealing

from Pharaoh

- This would give Pharaoh legitimate cause to pursue Joseph, much in the same way Joseph was able to pursue his brothers for taking his silver cup
- In v.9, we're told that all the family and wagons and chariots and servants and the horsemen amounted to a great procession
 - This is easily the greatest funeral procession recorded in scripture
 - In fact, the effect of such a great company engaged in such great mourning caught the attention of the local inhabitants
- The company stops at a place on the west bank of the Jordan
 - They are in the land of Canaan, but on the very eastern edge
 - Here for seven days the people mourn Jacob, especially Joseph
 - The mourning is so pronounced that the locals are fascinated with it
 - Egypt has conquered Canaan by this time, so the mere presence of Egyptians in the land was no surprise
 - But the willingness to bury someone of such importance in Canaan instead of Egypt surprised them
 - They named the valley a name that means the mourning or the meadow of the Egyptians
- The next time the inhabitants of Canaan see the family of Israel on the western bank of the Jordan, it will be forty years after the Exodus
 - In that time, the nation will come to invade and lay claim to the land the Lord has given them
 - Joseph will accompany the people in that day as well
 - Like his father before him, he will be carried into the land in a coffin
 - Ready to be buried with his fathers
- But for now, it's Jacob's burial and Joseph completes the mission his father gave him
 - He places Jacob's body in the cave, seals it and returns with his family to Egypt
 - Joseph returns knowing he is leading his family into a future of slavery and oppression
 - But he also knows God's promise to deliver the nation in a future day, under a future leader
- Jacob's death produced more than just mourning in the family of Israel
 - It also produced worry among Joseph's brothers

Gen. 50:15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"

Gen. 50:16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying,

Gen. 50:17 ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph, “Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Gen. 50:18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.”

Gen. 50:19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place?

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

Gen. 50:21 “So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

- It’s been seventeen years since the family learned that Joseph was alive and was reconciled with him
 - At that time, Joseph welcomed his brothers and embraced them, forgiving them of their transgressions against him
 - And for the past 17 years the family has lived in Goshen with Joseph in Memphis
 - During that time, Jacob was still the patriarch over the family
 - And the brothers probably assumed that Joseph’s respect and love for his father served to protect them from Joseph’s wrath and vengeance
 - So now that Jacob has died, the brothers’ thoughts immediately turn to wondering if Joseph will take the opportunity to bring vengeance against them
 - This was the natural way of kings and powerful men
 - When presented with an opportunity to remove opposition or vanquish enemies, powerful men always take that opportunity
 - And so the brothers assumed Joseph would take action against them now that the last obstacle was removed
 - So the brothers send word to Joseph concerning Jacob’s dying words
 - Supposedly, Jacob asked Joseph to forgive them for their sins
 - Obviously, Jacob left no such message
 - The brothers invented the story to invoke Joseph’s love and respect for his father
 - The irony is that had Joseph been the type of person to take revenge on his brothers, Jacob’s dying wish – even if it were true – wouldn’t have stopped Joseph from acting
 - Joseph weeps at hearing the brother’s words, which were to spoken to Joseph by a messenger
 - Later in v.18 we’re told the brothers appeared before Joseph to make a personal appeal
 - They come and bow down before Joseph, one more fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams

- They call themselves his servants
 - They do not consider themselves his brothers
 - They lower themselves to the station of slaves
- And in this moment, the book of Genesis concludes with the most power, most meaningful picture of Christ found in the story of Joseph
 - Joseph's brothers, the sons of Israel, appear before their kinsman and lord, declaring themselves to be his servants or slaves
 - They fear his response will be anger for the way they treated him
 - They know he has absolute power to do with them whatever he wishes
 - They are at his mercy, and so the only question is what is in Joseph's heart
 - Joseph's response is to raise their thoughts to the purposes of God in Heaven
 - He asks rhetorically, am I in God's place?
 - In other words, does Joseph own this plan or this outcome?
 - The purpose in the question is to suggest the obvious answer: no
 - Joseph didn't design the plan
 - And he doesn't own the outcome
 - God in Heaven has orchestrated these events from the beginning
 - Joseph had a role, the brothers had a role, and the outcome was as God intended
 - Joseph says to his brothers, you harbored evil in your hearts toward me
 - His brothers wanted to hurt or even kill their brother
 - His brothers were jealous of him, and allowed that jealousy and hate to drive them into rising up against Joseph
 - For his part, Joseph was innocent
 - He suffered under his brothers' sin
 - He endured the shame and reproach of slavery
 - Yet he knew it was the Lord Who desired for these things to happen to him
 - Now Joseph tells his brothers that the Lord was always at work using their sin to accomplish a greater good
 - He intended to bring about the present result, that many people would be alive
 - The word for alive in Hebrew is an interesting choice, *chayah*
 - It literally means to come to life or to be healed or to be raised to life
 - Joseph says this elaborate plan was God's design to result in bringing many people to life
- Jesus was the innocent brother of the sons of Israel
 - He was born and lived among His brothers for a time
 - Until they became jealous of Him

- They harbored jealousy and hatred against Him and refused to be ruled by Him
- So they rose up against Him, rejecting His authority and sending Him to the cross
- Jesus endured their mistreatment, knowing the Father in Heaven had appointed Him to this outcome for a greater good, both for Israel and for the world
- Then in a day to come, Israel will behold their Messiah, triumphant and reigning, returning to them according to the promises of God
 - And when the sons of Israel set eyes upon the Lord, many will wonder what the Messiah will do with a people who betrayed Him
 - When He comes with all power and authority, when nothing stands in His way, when He will be free to take vengeance, will He vanquish His kinsmen?
 - What appeal can they make? What excuse could they offer?
- When that day comes, scripture tells us the Lord will come as Israel's deliverer
 - He will look upon God's people with mercy, extend them grace, and welcome them into His kingdom
 - And in that day, the people of Israel will understand that their rejection of the Messiah was the plan God the Father appointed
 - He used their sinful hearts to accomplish a great good, to send His son to death in payment for the sins of the world
 - And thereby make reconciliation possible
 - What Israel intended for evil, the Father in Heaven intended for good
 - And as a result the Lord will provide for all God's children
 - The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings
 - But it is also a story of endings, endings conceived by the Lord Himself, and written before the foundation of the Earth
 - And if we are to understand this book properly, we have to acknowledge, understand and appreciate God's limitless sovereignty
 - God brings all things to good for His children, but if this is to be true, then all things must be under God's control
 - And God is way ahead of us in everything
 - Long before Joseph and his brothers were even born, God told Abraham how it would be
 - And then He made it happen, just like He said
 - When you can learn to live with eyes that see the Lord at work in every circumstance, knowing His promises and living with eager expectation of their fulfillment...
 - Then you have learned the lesson of Genesis
 - You have learned the beginning, so you can look forward to the end... which is just a new beginning

- Speaking of the end, it's time we ended our study

Gen. 50:22 Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

Gen. 50:23 Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees.

Gen. 50:24 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."

Gen. 50:25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."

Gen. 50:26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

- Joseph lives another 54 years after the death of his father, Jacob
 - Joseph lived long enough to see his great grandchildren born
 - Manasseh gives birth to Machir
 - And Machir gives birth to Gilead
 - It will be Gilead's sons who are of the generation to leave Egypt and return to Canaan
 - Joseph's age at death is 110 years old, which is itself another demonstration of God's sovereignty
 - In Egyptian culture, the ideal length of life was considered to be 110 years old
 - In fact, ancient Egyptian texts discovered in tombs and libraries reveal no less than 27 references to the age of 110 as proof of the favor of the gods
 - So the Lord brings Joseph's life to an end at 110 to honor Joseph one last time in the eyes of the Egyptians
 - Finally, Joseph makes the same request of his family that his father made of him
 - His body was not to be enshrined in a pyramid or some other tomb in Egypt
 - Instead, he was to be preserved and left in a coffin, to be returned to Canaan in the day the Lord fulfills His promises to Abraham
 - For the next four generations, the nation of Israel will have opportunity to look upon Joseph's coffin, and bring to mind God's promise to return Israel to Canaan one day
- Will that be our legacy as a man or woman of God?
 - When people reflect back on our life and even upon our death, what will they bring to mind?
 - Will our life be a testimony to faith in God's promises?
 - Will our legacy be of one who led others to trust and rely in God's word?
 - Let's aspire to be like Joseph, as he reflected Christ
 - Let it be said we lived with eyes for eternity, looking forward to a country in

Heaven and for a reward that cannot be found on earth