

## WEEK 14 Abraham Is Tested--------Chris Watson

We have all had tests in our life. Growing up we took tests, but most often we knew what we were to study by understanding what we had been taught, so we could do well on the test. However, there are tests that may catch us off guard, tests in our day to day life that really make us think and faith God. This week we will look at one of those tests.

### Day 1

#### First Read Genesis 22:1-8

Abraham and Sarah waited many years to have their son, Isaac. They were both joyous to see God's promise of a son fulfilled. They trusted the Lord and He was faithful. But as we read today, the son they had waited on for years was to be sacrificed! Wow! I wonder what must have gone through Abraham's mind? What would have gone through yours?

Notice at the end of verse 5 that Abraham told the servants, " *We will come back to you*". He didn't say I will come back, but **we will come back**, implying Isaac would be with him. In verse 8 he also said to Isaac that the Lord would provide the offering. Abraham was truly trusting God in that situation. However, Abraham was back and forth. A few chapters back he didn't trust God to care for his wife, but now he trusts Him to care for his son.

He may remind us of ourselves. We, at times, fully trust God with everything and have no worries, yet at other times, we are not trusting at all. Isn't it nice to know that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever as we see in scripture? We can throw ourselves on Him and His promises and know that we can trust Him.

This is a great way to live, as we depend solely on God. It reminds us that God is everything and we can truly trust Him. Ask God that whatever may come your way today, that you will pass the test and trust Him.

Note: Today's passage was a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus! We were to die for our sins but God provided another sacrifice, His Son, Jesus Christ.

## Day 2

### **First Read Genesis 22:9-14**

After reading this passage, place yourself in Abraham's shoes! Can you imagine? We often think of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his son, but we don't think much about Isaac. Can you imagine what must have been going through his mind? Was he looking for a way of escape? Was he looking to run away? From what we know of the story we don't see any of this. Would those thoughts have been running through your mind?

What we do see is Isaac trusting his father. Isaac knew that his father Abraham was a God fearing man. We have to assume, that even at Isaac's age, he knew his father trusted God in everything. Therefore, Isaac trusted his father. Even when it didn't make sense, he trusted.

This reminds us of the relationship between Jesus and the Father. We know from the New Testament that as Jesus' death got closer, and even on the cross, He asked the Father if there be any way that this cup could pass from Him (another way to accomplish His will), then do so. But His next words were, "*Not my will but yours be done.*" Jesus trusted His Father. He knew what was to come; He knew the Father's plan. Although it would hurt Jesus to the point of death, He was willing to obey the Father. Incredible! Because of that obedience, you and I can have eternal life today; we get to spend eternity with God!

Thank Jesus today for being obedient to the Father; thank Him for taking your punishment! Ask the Lord today to help you obey Him in everything, just like Jesus did, even when it seems impossible.

## Day 3 **CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read 1 John 4:9-10**

As we saw from yesterday's reading, God provided a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac. Don't you know Isaac was grateful? In 1 John, we see God provided another sacrifice, Jesus! Jesus was the one that would pay

for our sins, the only hope of eternal life. Jesus became our substitute! What was meant for us, because of our sin, God put on Jesus. Read through the verses below while thanking Jesus for being our Savior!

- **Isaiah 53:6** *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.*
- **John 1:29** *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*
- **Romans 3:25** *God presented Him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood.*
- **Romans 5:8** *But God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- **1 Corinthians 15:3** *...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** *God made Him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- **Hebrews 2:17** *For this reason He [Jesus] had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.*
- **Hebrews 9:28** *Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.*
- **1 Peter 2:24** *He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.*

After taking some time to meditate and think on the scripture, thank God for His sacrifice and know that because of Him, we can truly live!!!

## **Day 4**

### **First Read Genesis 22:15-19**

The Old Testament is full of real life accounts of people who disobeyed and obeyed God. Thankfully, Abraham was one that obeyed God. Because of his obedience the Lord tells him that He will bless him. His descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the seashore. God also tells Abraham that all nations will be blessed because of his obedience. It was a huge step of obedience for Abraham to take, offering to sacrifice his own son.

Like Abraham, we have the choice daily to obey or disobey God. Those choices not only affect us, but those around us. In Abraham's case, it affected millions upon millions. Because of Abraham's faith, nations were blessed. What about you? Who is blessed because of your obedience to the Lord? Your spouse? Your kids? How about your employer, your friends, or your coworkers? The list could go on and on.

Following God's plan is huge! It has incredible blessings, not only for us but for those around us and often for those who are not near us. It can affect people that we may never know. Ask the Lord today to help you obey Him in everything, realizing that you are not merely obeying the Lord, but that your obedience is also affecting others for the good. Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts, attitudes, and desires today and be willing to follow wherever He may lead.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Psalm 5:11**

We see in this verse that the Lord is our refuge! A refuge is a place of shelter in times of danger. Psalms 46:1-3 says, *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging"*.

God is our only refuge or rescue. He is it! As we face times of uncertainty, doubt, loss of job, family problems, relationship issues, and the like, God is our refuge. In times of uncertainty and in times of danger, we go to Him. In times of health, prosperity and certainty, we also go to Him. God is our Father, a loving Father that will direct us and do what is best for us. We go to Him.

God, through Jesus Christ, has become our refuge. You and I were in great danger; we were under God's judgment. We were condemned to hell and eternity apart from Christ. We had no hope on our own. But God, rich in mercy, sent His Son, Jesus, to be our refuge, our hope, our shelter. As you go throughout your day, thank God that He is our refuge. He is our constant refuge and we can go to Him with whatever we are facing and know that we are secure.

## **WEEK 15 God Provides A Wife For Isaac-----**

**Dennis Watson**

In Genesis 24 we come to a major break in this second division of Genesis. The first division (chapters 1 — 11) deals with four great events. The second and final division (chapters 12 – 50) deals with four outstanding individuals. Specifically, in Genesis 12-23 we have Abraham, the man of faith. Now in chapters 24-26, we have Isaac, the beloved son. There are three great events in the life of Isaac and we have already seen two of them. The first was his birth and the second was his being offered as a sacrifice by Abraham. The third is the obtaining of his bride. They say there are three great events in a man's life — his birth, his marriage, and his death — and that he has no choice except with the second one, marriage. Sometimes a man doesn't seem to have much choice in that connection either, but, nevertheless, these are the three great events in a man's life.<sup>1</sup>

God keeps the process of putting His plan into experiential reality rolling. He now takes the next step in growing and extending the family of Abraham. This part of the historical account includes finding a wife for Isaac.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 24:1-9**

What a strange way to find a mate! It was time for Abraham's special beloved son, Isaac, to get married. So Abraham commissioned his most trusted servant to go and seek out a mate for him. The instructions were very specific. He was not to go to the Canaanites to find a wife, but to Abraham's country and family. It was also important that once he found the right young lady, he was to bring her back to where Isaac was. He was not to take Isaac back there. The servant, most likely Eliezer, swore that he would do as Abraham had assigned.

Now we think this was a strange way to find a mate. An arranged marriage? Can you imagine how people in that day would think about our "modern" method? We rely on feelings or looks or likes and dislikes.

<sup>1</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Our method is almost on a whim, which includes “love at first sight.” However, Abraham’s method was thought through and based on God’s plan. Isaac was not to marry one outside the faith. He was not to live in an ungodly place. God cares about who His people marry. It is a big deal and should be based more on purpose, goals, future plans, and visions, than on looks and romance. This is a pretty big love story. However, it was not a case of boy sees girl, but a case of dad seeks a bride. Make sure you enjoy this love story because you are a result!

If you are not yet married, but hope to be, pray for God to lead you to the right person. Be specific and include that the person know and love God and share in your purpose to serve Him. If you are a parent or grandparent, pray for your children’s future mates.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 24:10-14**

Praying and watching is a very exciting thing! Abraham’s servant had been commissioned to go to Abraham’s country and family to find a wife for his son, Isaac. The servant took that commission seriously and headed out on his mission. I believe he headed out hopeful and certain that God would lead him. After all, he had seen a man of faith, his master Abraham, experience God’s blessings and miraculous provision. He knew how God had provided a son for his master and his wife when they were both way past child bearing age. He had probably seen and heard about God’s provision when Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son and yet God provided the sacrifice. The servant had watched a faithful man live his life in response to God’s word and promises. I believe he ventured out with great confidence because of his master’s faith. He was in the wake of Abraham’s faith! Now it was his turn to ask of God and see God’s miraculous provision.

The servant went to Abraham’s country and to his people. Then he prayed a very specific prayer asking for God to grant him success. He then got even more specific, asking that God give him a sign. Make sure you read this, because we are often hesitant about being specific in our prayers. The servant was specific, because he was on a mission for his master. He

was asking that God grant him success on behalf of his master, Abraham. He was praying in keeping with his master's will and with God's will. For this reason, he was both bold and confident.

Is there something you need to pray specifically about, with both boldness and confidence, because you are in agreement with God?

People are watching you and how you follow God. What are they learning? Is their confidence and boldness in the faith growing because of yours? Ask God to enable you to trust Him more. There are people who need to ride for a while in the wake of your faith.

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Genesis 24:15-28**

Prayer is a wonderful blessing that God has given us to bring requests before Him. One of the things that will feed a person's prayer life is answered prayer. Talk about answered prayer! Even before the servant finished his prayer, Rebekah came up in answer to his specific request. The servant then watched as the answer to his prayer continued to unfold before him. After she filled her pitcher, the servant ran to her and asked for some water to drink. She gave him a drink and then, in keeping with his prayer, she offered to provide water for his camels also. Then God, as He often does, did more than the servant could have asked for or imagined. He discovered that she was a relative of Abraham! God had answered the servant's prayer, and then some!

Immediately the servant worshipped God and gave praise and thanks to Him for leading him to his master's family. God knows what we need even before we ask (Matthew 6:8). When a person is walking with God according to His will, he prays right in line with God. The whole thing came full circle. The servant was following his master's instructions. His master, Abraham, was following God's plan for his son. The servant found himself in the unfolding plan of God to bless the whole world. That plan was God's plan to bring Jesus, the One through whom the blessing would come. It is great to live in the middle of God's will, as best you know how.

As we read this biblical account, looking back through the Gospel account of Jesus, we know how important this romance and eventual marriage was. God knew and provided beforehand the answer to the servant's prayer. After all, God was at work to bring the Savior of the world through the family line of Abraham, through Isaac. The servant was on a Jesus mission and had no idea!

Are you seeking to live your life in the middle of God's plan? I want you to know that when you are in His plan and on mission with Him, there is a whole lot of "Wow!" to be experienced.

#### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 24:29-67**

God is by far the best matchmaker of all! Just consider Adam and Eve, and now this with Isaac and Rebekah. This is an incredible love story—written by God Himself. The servant goes to the household of Rebekah and tells her family what happened. He recounted the whole thing from the beginning. He started with his master, Abraham, sending him on a mission to find a wife for his son Isaac. Next, he told how God had led him to the well and his prayer. He told them how, even before he finished praying, Rebekah showed up. He just traced God's leading right up to the moment. When Rebekah's family heard the account they had nothing to say except that this was from the Lord, and that the servant could take her with him to be Isaac's wife. How could they possibly have responded any other way? God had orchestrated the whole thing. Each of them—the servant, Rebekah and her family could only agree with God and submit to His leading. Isn't it great when a plan of God comes together and we get to be in on it? What an amazing thing to be in on what God is doing!

In my thirty-one years at Harp's Crossing I have seen God unfold some amazing things, things that all we had to do was to show up and trust Him. When it was finished there was nothing to do but give God praise and thank Him for letting us be in on what He was doing.

Anytime we are following God and seeking His will we get to see what only He can do. The servant was merely following his master's

instructions. His master was seeking to follow God. They all got the blessing. The day came for the first encounter between Rebekah and Isaac, what an incredible moment. Here we are, thousands of years later, blessed by this divine romance and eternally blessed by another.

Look around you and see what God is doing. What are you doing to join Him in the unfolding of His plan for others? We just saw an incredible account of people following God and obeying Him, the impact of which has continued for thousands of years. Just think! When you follow and obey Him, the impact can last for thousands of years and into eternity. Don't miss out!

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:1-9**

It is an amazing thing to see the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 describe exactly the event of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The rejoicing that was prophesied and took place is because God's Son, Jesus, the Savior of the world, was coming to Jerusalem to do what He came to do. Jesus came to die on the cross and then be raised from the dead to accomplish God's perfect will.

Jesus was born as a descendant of Abraham. It is through Jesus that the promise of God, given to Abraham, that all of the world would be blessed, was accomplished. It is a case of connecting the dots, and there are many dots. In today's passage, Zechariah 9:9, a prophecy was given regarding a king riding a donkey. In the ancient Near East when a king came in peace, he rode a donkey. So when Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem before His crucifixion He rode a donkey representing His humility. When He comes again He will be riding on a steed proclaiming victory and sovereignty. Matthew quotes the Zechariah 9:9 passage and applies it to Jesus.

As we celebrate the promise and its fulfillment there are still other dots yet to be connected. In Revelation 19:11, Jesus comes riding not on a donkey but on a white horse. This is not the ride of humility but the ride of conquering. If the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled literally then

we can anticipate the one in Revelation 19 also becoming a glorious reality! Again, we are in a great place to see the promise, the fulfillment, and anticipate other promises that have yet to be fulfilled. We live between two glorious rides!

Thank God again for the perspective we have. Anticipate the next ride Jesus will take!

## **WEEK 16 Jacob And Esau-----Chris Watson**

We have all made some quick and rash decisions in our lives and then later realized that the decisions we made were definitely not the best choices. There may have even been heavy consequences to pay for such decisions. This week we will see a rash decision made and how it all went downhill from there.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 25:19-23**

Our God is omniscient, which means He is all knowing. There is nothing that God doesn't know. That's incredible! God knows what our day will hold today, He knows what will happen with a situation we are facing, He knows everything. This is obvious as we read our passage today. Rebekah is worried about the "jostling" going on within her. She inquires of the Lord and He makes known to her what it means.

I would imagine that Rebekah is startled by what the Lord tells her. It most likely was not the news that she was expecting. Rebekah had the choice to either take the Lord at His word and trust Him or not.

Today, as we hear from the Lord or as we face circumstances and the Lord reveals himself to us, we have that same choice. We can trust His plan, although we may not understand it or we can not trust it and Him and take things into our own hands. Ask the Lord to help you to trust Him today, no matter the situation.

### **Day 2**

#### **First Read Genesis 25:24-28**

Isaac's favorite son was Esau and Rebekah's favorite was Jacob. Before the story goes any further we see that favoritism was taking place. Later, in the New Testament, we read that favoritism is forbidden, that we are to love and show grace to all (James 2). However, we see in this story that favoritism was alive and well.

We have all shown favoritism at one point or another in our lives and probably still do it from time to time. We usually do it when our priorities or focus becomes out of whack. When our focus is loving and worshiping Jesus it is harder to show favoritism. In Revelation 2:4 the people were guilty of forsaking their first love, Jesus Christ. They had put other things and people in Christ's place and now things were totally out of control.

Unfortunately, it's often easy to show favoritism, it comes naturally. We are drawn to people who are often like us, but that doesn't mean that we have to show favoritism. As you begin or end your day, ask the Lord to help you not show favoritism, but, more importantly, for Him to remain your first love. Ask Him to help you focus on Him, not to become focused on other things and get off course. Today, may we fix our focus on Jesus, so that when tempted to show favoritism, we can be reminded that God loves and cares for all. May we be reminded that we are to do the same.

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Romans 9:8-15**

Yesterday, we read how the older son of Rebekah's would serve the younger. This was totally opposite of what normally took place. Normally the first born was the one who was served. So why did God do this? We see the answer in today's passage, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*" In other words, it didn't matter to God in essence who was born first; the older would serve the younger as God said.

This goes to show us that we are not saved because of how smart we are, who we are, how much money we have, who we know or who knows us, but rather because of God's mercy. Marty Machowski says, "In the end God wanted everyone to see that his people are saved by our faith in God alone, not because of when we were born or because of anything we do".<sup>2</sup> It doesn't matter whether you are the first born or last, oldest or youngest, richest or poorest, it is God's love and mercy that saves us.

<sup>2</sup>Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 84

If you have received God's free gift of salvation, thank Him. Be thankful that He gave it, although you didn't deserve it, doing nothing to gain it but you had only to receive it. You have been saved from sin, from the enemy, from hell, from yourself, and you have been saved to Heaven, God, and eternal life. If you don't know Christ, recognize you are a sinner, lost and hopeless without Him. Acknowledge that God sent Jesus to take away your sin and also restore your relationship with Him. Put your faith in what He has done for you.

#### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 25:29-34**

Remember that God told Rebekah that Jacob, the younger son, would rule over the other one? In Isaac and Rebekah's time, the firstborn son was given something called a birthright. It basically meant that upon the father's passing the oldest son received the wealth and property of his father and he would also be in charge of leading the family. So how could this be, that Esau was the firstborn and yet Jacob was to be the one who would be served?

We see the answer in the passage today. We see God's plan unfolding. God uses the foolishness of Esau and his rash decision, to start the process of Jacob being served by Esau. Now that obviously wasn't Esau's shining moment. We have even heard sermons on the foolishness of Esau. While that may be true, we see that God used it for His plan.

God knew that Esau would sell his birthright. God can see all things. He knows our past, present, and future before any of them have come to be. Be thankful that God knows everything, He sees everything, and He uses everything. Take some time to thank Him that He uses all and tell Him that you want to be in His perfect will.

## **Day 5**

### **Read Psalm 19:7-14**

There is a song that we sing, written by Keith Green, that says, "There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son, Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One, Thank you oh my Father, For giving us Your Son, And leaving Your Spirit, 'Til the work on Earth is done". Psalms 19:14 ends with, "O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer". Jesus Christ is our redeemer. Redeemer means that Jesus is our Savior, rescuer, and deliverer. He is our only hope.

God bought us back, or redeemed us, through the precious blood of Jesus. Think of that for a minute. Your only hope of eternal and holy living is Jesus. Your spouse can't redeem you, your kids can't redeem you, your best friend can't redeem you, nor can anything else for that matter. The only thing that redeems us is the blood of Jesus. That's why to most people Jesus' death on the cross is so horrific and yet so beautiful at the same time. The death and judgment that was on us was put on Jesus. When we put our faith in Him and in what He has done to take away our sins, we are saved and redeemed.

Take some time today to thank God for being your redeemer through Jesus. Let Him know that He is the only hope that you have. While He gives us many blessings and gifts, the greatest thing He has given us is salvation through Jesus. Recognize that the greatest thing you have ever been given is Jesus Christ!

## **WEEK 17 Jacob's Lie-----Dennis Watson**

Keep in mind that we are moving through the historical account of God establishing for Himself a nation, or special people, through whom He will bless the world. We have already seen that God is faithful. Man, even at his best, still depends on God's faithfulness. Man is sinful and subject to weakness, frailty, and personal struggle. We have seen that Abraham, although a godly man, was far from perfect. The human weakness of Isaac and Rebekah is really seen in their showing of favoritism with their two boys. We looked at this last week. This week we look at another one of our fathers of faith, Jacob, and his big lie.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 27:1-4**

It has been said that it is not as important how you start as it is how you finish. That is a challenge for us all—to finish well. Isaac made many mistakes but really got on a roll at the end of his life. He put himself ahead of the Lord. Isaac, the man who meditated and prayed in the fields at evening, and who petitioned God on behalf of his wife, wanted only one thing: a savory meal of venison. Instead of seeking to heal the family feud that he and his wife had caused by their selfish favoritism, Isaac continued the feud and destroyed his own family. He disobeyed God's command. He set out to bless Esau instead of Isaac. He lived by his feelings. He was blind and bedridden. You would think he would seek God's help, but instead he depended on his senses—smell, touch and taste.

Isaac had gotten old and was ready to experience the last things of his life. He was frail, blind, and near death. He had one last request. Isaac asked his favorite son, Esau, to go hunt and kill a wild animal and prepare for him a meal. After the meal it was Isaac's plan to bless Esau, his older son. He planned to do this, although he knew that God had said that it would be the other way around. The older would serve the younger.

Family feuds, even church feuds, continue when following and serving God is abandoned. It is an ugly thing when God's people make choices

and decisions based not on God's plan and will, but on their own preferences, opinions, likes and dislikes. Isaac had lost sight of his place in God's plan. Pray that you will stay on His track and finish well.

Ask God to enable you to become less focused on your own likes and dislikes and more focused on what is best for His Kingdom.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 27:5-17**

Faith is living without scheming; faith means obeying God, no matter how we feel, what we think, or what might happen. The obedience of faith was the secret of Abraham's life (Heb. 11:8), but the absence of obedient faith brought trouble to the home of Isaac and Rebekah.<sup>3</sup> Too often, like Isaac and Rebekah, people think they need to assist God. So they add to their faith some trickery of their own. The need is for innocent obedience. Innocent obedience is obeying God without manipulating or trying to control people or circumstances. God does not need our help; He desires our obedience.

Conniving. There is hardly a better word for what is going on in this family. Isaac and Rebekah scheme to make sure they get the outcome they want. Remember that Rebekah's favorite son is Jacob and Isaac's favorite is Esau. Isaac has already plotted to bless Esau. Rebekah is listening in on the conversation when Isaac asks Esau to go hunt and prepare a meal for him after which he would bless Esau. Rebekah felt compelled to respond with her own scheme of deception. Both parents disregarded what God had said and set out to do things their own way.

Have you ever tried to help God? How did it work? One of the sweetest places in the world is the place of innocent trust and obedience. Innocent trust and obedience involves knowing what God wants, lining up your life accordingly, and leaving the rest to Him.

Ask God to enable you to innocently trust and obey Him. Evangelist Mike Gilchrist taught me, "Stop trying and start trusting!"

<sup>3</sup> Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Acts 3:12-15**

In today's passage Peter is preaching. It has been about 8 weeks since Jesus had returned to heaven following His resurrection. During Peter's message he refers to God as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." In light of our study this week we see that God chose Jacob, rather than Esau, through whom to pass the blessing. The first three to receive the blessings of God were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God knows all things. He knows all things possible and probable. We do not know why God chooses the way He does. However, we do know that God is good and He is faithful. Whatever He does is based on His goodness and faithfulness.

The promise came through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There were many others along the way after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the ultimate focus was Jesus, so that the promise would not be limited to one nation or race. He chose for Himself a man and a nation. The ultimate plan was to bring His Son Jesus into the world through that family and through that nation. When we read the Bible we see the unfolding of God's amazing plan. In our thinking it took a long time and is still not finished. God is not slow, but patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance and with God a thousand years is like a day gone by (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Thank God for allowing us to be recipients of His blessings of salvation and grace. Rejoice in the time in which we are blessed to live and have this perspective. Thank God for His amazing plan to redeem and make all things new.

### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 27:19-40**

Is it possible for that which God saved us from to also be that which is able to undo what God has done? In Jesus, He saved us from sin. It is not possible for our sin to undo what God has accomplished through His great salvation. *Nothing can separate us from the love of God* (Romans 8:39).

Our perfect God will accomplish His perfect will perfectly, in spite of our failings.

Remember that God had told Isaac and Rebekah that Jacob, the younger brother, would be the heir. What was going to change that? Nothing! Nothing Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, or Jacob would do, would change what God had decided. What they did, however, caused a whole host of family issues that really continue to this day. Have you ever been envious of what God has given someone else and wanted it for yourself? How often are we striving and conniving to get God's blessings or what we believe to be the blessings we deserve? Family and church feuds are often brought about because people are squabbling for position, instead of working hard in the position God has given.

Cheated? Need to fight back? Can you do what is right and leave the rest to God? That is called trusting God. Had Jacob and Rebekah left the details of working out His plan to the one who made the plan, they would have missed out on a lot of unnecessary drama. So much of the drama and struggles we experience are brought about when we try to help God accomplish His will. God's purposes cannot be thwarted (see Isaiah 14:27 NIV). Trust Him unequivocally and depend on Him to make it happen. Innocently obey Him.

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. **Colossians 3:23 (NIV)***

Determine to do and be your best for God's glory and leave the rest to Him.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Jeremiah 23:5-6**

Once again we see the term 'branch' used by a prophet. In this context, it is clearly linking someone in the future to the family tree of King David. This is that code name for Jesus, that future person born in the line of King David. Jesus will be a king in the line of David who will reign "*wisely and do what is just and right.*" The prophet Jeremiah is saying that a king

in the family line of David the King was going to come and He would not only be King, He would also have a very special designation. In Hebrew the name is "Jehovah Tsidkenu." It means the "Lord is our righteousness." He would be righteous, which means He would be totally without sin. He would also come and bring righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read that in Jesus we become God's righteousness. King Jesus would come and take away sin and then make us righteous or sinless, like He is!

How serious is God about righteousness? The plot of the biblical message is that, ultimately, righteousness would be the rule of the day forever. The plan finds its fulfillment in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the King. The ultimate fulfillment is when King Jesus returns and establishes His reign of justice and righteousness. He will reign and righteousness will prevail because the One who is righteous will prevail.

According to Colossians 3:3, we are "*Hidden with Christ in God.*" That truth, coupled with 2 Corinthians 5:21, "*we become the righteousness of God in Him,*" tells us that God makes His children righteous through the new birth. The whole of the Bible points to this, that Jesus is the King of Righteousness and in Him we become His righteousness.

Give thanks for the fact that in Christ you are His righteousness.

## **WEEK 18 Jacob's Dream-----Chris Watson**

This week we will see Isaac bless Jacob again, this time willingly. Remember, Jacob was originally going to be served by his older brother when Rebekah took things into her own hands and it became a mess. This week the mess continues to unfold but God still uses it. As you read this week's devotions be reminded that our choices affect many other people.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 27:41 through Genesis 28:9**

We all have trust issues and it seems that Rebekah had them as well. Remember that Rebekah had been told by the Lord that Jacob would be served by Esau in Genesis 25:23. The word she received was literally from the Lord. If Rebekah had trusted the Lord in this, then much of what we read about in these last two chapters might be different. But it is not. Instead, today we read about how Jacob is fleeing for his life because of the trick he played on his father and brother with the help of his mother.

However, even in this mess, God's plan is still being carried out. We see Isaac, in a sense willingly, reissuing the blessing which includes the blessing of Abraham in verses 3 and 4. So the blessing of Abraham is now to be carried through Jacob and, as we will see later, through his 12 sons we read about all throughout the Bible.

A song you may or may not be familiar with says, "In His time, in His time, He makes all things beautiful, in His time, Lord, please show me everyday, As You're teaching me Your way, That You do just what You say, in Your time". The promise had been made previously to Abraham that his descendents would be as the stars in the sky, and today we read, that continues to be carried out. We see that God will keep His promises and while we may think it takes Him too long, it is always in His time. He will even use that which the enemy meant for harm and bad. Thank God that everything is in His time and that He is never late, always on time. Also thank Him that what the enemy means for evil, God can use for good!

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 28:10-17**

In the Old Testament times, we read that God often spoke through dreams and visions. Of course He can still do this today if He chooses, but we know it took place in the Old Testament times, as we have several instances recorded. In his dream, Jacob hears God speak to him and tell him that his descendants would be many. God said He would give him the land that he was on now and God promised to see this promise through! We also read that when he woke up he was afraid. We can imagine why. The God of the universe had just spoken to him and promised him what He had offered Abraham.

We remember that Jacob had deceived his father with the help of his mother and now was running for his life. In the dream, God didn't come to him and tell him what he had done was wrong, although it was. He didn't tell him how he would be punished, but rather God told him how he would be blessed and how he would bless others. This is more proof that God's overall plan will not be thwarted. The promise to Rebekah that Jacob (the youngest son) would be served by Esau (the older son) is beginning to unfold. Although Jacob's family, with his help, is definitely causing problems, God's plan is still being carried out. His promises are remaining true.

Take some time to thank God that His plan is the best. Tell Him that although we can often mess things up, His plan is perfect. Thank Him for keeping His promises. Take some time to thank God for His grace today and be thankful His plan always prevails!

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read John 1:43-51**

It is neat to see the Old and New Testament connections. We see one in today's reading as John refers to both Moses and Jacob in John 1. The Old Testament is always pointing to Jesus, always. Sometimes we see it clearly and other times it may be a little tougher to see.

Verse 51 of John 1, in the New Testament, talks about the angels of God ascending and descending. We also see this in the Old Testament as well, from Jacob's dream. Jesus, Himself, is the stairway; Jacob's dream was pointing to Jesus. Jesus is the only way to God and the only way to heaven. John 14:6 says that Jesus is *The Way, The Truth, and The Life* and that no one goes to the Father except through Jesus. Genesis 27 and 28 are connected with John 1 and John 14. How incredible! This, again goes to show us how the dots are connected from the Old Testament to the New Testament and how the old is made new through Jesus.

As you continue to read through the Old Testament, be on the lookout for the connections to the New Testament. They are all over the place. Take some time to thank God for His Word and the Truth that is in it. Thank Him for using His Word to speak to us and to show us the way, whether it be through the Old Testament or the New Testament.

#### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 28:18-22**

Lord willing, we can all see how God has worked and is working in our lives! There are times in our lives where we have, as some might call, a "God moment." Jacob had one of these in Genesis 28. God promises to bless him and to watch over Him. This is important as we remember that Jacob was basically fleeing for his life.

God made these promises to Jacob and now Jacob wants to show his thanks to God. Setting up pillars was often how the people of Canaan worshiped false gods. This is what Jacob knew to do, so he sets up a pillar to God, except he wasn't using it to worship and thank other gods, but the one true God.

In essence, Jacob is thanking the Lord in this way, because of His promise to bless and watch over him. Jacob is setting up a remembrance of how God spoke to him and how He would continue to use him. This was a turning point in Jacob's life! Have you ever experienced a "God moment" in your life? A time where God spoke to you, either through His Word, prayer, or someone else, and you knew it was God? Maybe today you

remember that moment or that time when God spoke and worked in your life. Thank God for working in your life but also thank Him for always working on us, making us into what He wants us to be. Our only response should be that of Jacob's, thankfulness and gratefulness!

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Isaiah 11:1**

Hopefully, we are beginning to see just how important the Old Testament is to the overall story of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament always points to Jesus and this is true in the passage we read today! We read of another of the Lord's prophets, Isaiah, telling of what is to come, telling us of Jesus, though it was hundreds of years before Jesus would be born. Incredible!

This verse talks about how the Branch, Jesus, will bear fruit or good deeds. If you read the rest of Isaiah 11, you see some of that fruit. John 15: 5 says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* We know from the Gospels that Jesus did many great things while on this earth. From healing to raising the dead, but most importantly, dying for our sins. He was simply doing the Father's will. John 15:5 shows that if we are in Him, we trust in Him for our salvation, we put all our hope in Him and follow Him, that we will bear much fruit. This means as we follow Christ, we will look more and more like Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit that Galatians speaks of is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. These are some of the "fruit" that believers will bear.

Today, take some time asking the Lord to help you abide in Him, to be one with Him. We don't produce fruit, He does. The fruit comes from being a part of the tree, Jesus Christ. Today, may we love Him, know Him, read His Word, and trust Him, for apart from Him we can do nothing.

## **WEEK 19 Jacob and Rachel-----Dennis Watson**

Of course, when you are in love time does not matter. Well, what about seven years? That is how long Jacob worked to be permitted to marry the girl of his dreams. However, at the end of those seven years, he was deceived and did not receive the girl of his dreams, but her sister. He would work another seven years to get the girl of his dreams as his wife.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 29:1-14**

Jacob had to run for his life from his brother Esau. Isaac sent Jacob away with the blessing willingly after having been deceived. Esau was outraged and made a vow to kill his brother. The trip from Beersheba to Haran was about 500 miles—traveling 25 miles a day, that trip would take three weeks. On the journey, God repeats to Jacob the promise made to Abraham and Isaac. It is clear that God is leading the way. Once again, be reminded that no plotting of man can prevent God's plan.

After weeks of travel, Jacob finally arrives at the hometown of his mother. He arrives in Haran at a well. God has led, but the leading continues. God has led him to the region of Rebekah's family. If that were not enough, Rebekah's niece Rachel shows up at the well to water her flock of sheep. Jacob gets so fired up he moves a massive stone from the well's opening so all the shepherds can water their flocks. He greets Rachel and tells her who he is and how he has come to be there. Rachel gets so excited about what is happening that she leaves her flock, runs all the way home, and tells her family what has taken place. Her father Laban goes to the well and invites Jacob to their home.

Another romance in the making! God is at the center of it all. He has led and orchestrated His plan to accomplish His purposes. His plan was to bless the whole world through Abraham and his family—through Isaac and now Jacob. Still connecting the dots!

God is in the details. Thank Him for how He accomplishes His purposes so faithfully and for allowing us to be encouraged by it! Realize that you too, are part of that plan as it continues.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 29:15-20**

When Jacob left his father Isaac's home in Beersheba, he left in a hurry. Therefore, he left empty-handed—he had no money. When he came to Laban's home and met Rachel, he wanted to marry her. Having no money, he could not pay the normal bridal money to marry Rachel. Instead, he made a deal with her father Laban. The deal was that he would work for Laban and that would serve as payment to have Rachel to become his wife. So he, with great anticipation of the blessing of marrying Rachel, faithfully worked for Laban those seven years. The time was nothing to him because of his love for her.

Jacob got lost in his labor because he was working for something, something more than a paycheck. He was working for his life, his life companion, and the future. He was not concerned with just finishing his time or getting in his hours. It was all about his life and his vision and his future.

Too often people view their job as only a means toward a paycheck. The goal of each day becomes to make it until quitting time. Simply punch the clock at the beginning and punch it again at the end of the work day. Jacob learned a valuable lesson and we can learn from what he learned. A job is more than the means to a quick paycheck. A job is a way to make a life. We should be more concerned with making a life than with making a living. Jacob saw those seven years as making a life.

Thank God for your work and ask Him to enable you to see your work as a means to making a life, not just a living.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Genesis 29:21-35**

Little did Jacob know what was coming his way! He was blindsided by one of his own tricks. A Biblical principle was about to come to bear on Jacob—you reap what you sow. Jacob cheated his brother out of his

birthright and then stole his blessing when he deceived his father, Isaac. Jacob's name even means 'deceiver.' Jacob had cheated and deceived; now it was coming back on him.

Laban had made a deal with Jacob that he would give his daughter to Jacob as his wife, if Jacob would work for him for seven years. After the seven years, the day of the wedding came. However, Laban deceived Jacob and gave him his older daughter, Leah, as his wife instead of Rachel. Jacob was shocked and angered and asked Laban, "*Why have you deceived me?*" Laban tells him that the normal practice is for the oldest daughter to marry first. Jacob agrees to work for another seven years so that he could have Rachel as his second wife. So he married Leah and then Rachel.

With the passing of time came children. God has ways of accomplishing His purposes even though people scheme, connive, cheat, and deceive. Leah had sons and one of those sons was Judah. Jesus was born as a descendant of Judah. In fact, He is called the "*Lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Revelation 5:5).

Do you see the thread of God's plan and purpose? It flows through the Bible. It all points to Jesus. Everything God does has its meaning and destiny in Jesus. Thank God for His faithfulness in accomplishing His purpose in spite of man's foolishness. Keep your eyes open as we read the Bible to see the "Scarlet Thread" of redemption that flows through the Bible.

## **Day 4**

### **First Read Luke 3:23-28**

Genealogies can be very boring, except when you are paying attention and connecting the dots. How many times have you read quickly through a genealogy or just skipped it all together? As we go through the Old Testament, you may get to the point where the genealogies come alive. Luke spells out the family tree of Jesus and you can see some of the people we have been looking at in Genesis. We have seen in our study Adam, Seth, Noah and Shem . The 'stand-outs' for where we are now

are there—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and now Judah. When you read these genealogies in the Bible you get context and see that God, all along the way, has been working out His plan with precision. The names are not there just to complete a list, but to help us see the unfolding of God’s plan. The Bible is not random, but deliberate.

A few years ago I was given a subscription to Ancestry.com. I really enjoyed researching my family tree and coming to realize that many, if not all, of my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents, were followers of Jesus Christ. Perhaps that is not the case for you, but if you are a follower of Jesus then you have had influences from other family trees that have shed the light of the gospel on you. No man or woman is an island. We do not live for or to ourselves alone. We have been influenced and we influence. We have spiritual family trees in addition to our bloodline family trees. You, too, are a significant branch in someone’s spiritual family tree. God never sees an individual as the end. He sees each of us as dear to Him, but also as a link to others who are dear to Him. It is so very important that we realize we have a very significant role to play in the lives of others, for generations to come and for eternity.

Ask the Lord to enable you to see those around you as part of your spiritual family tree both coming and going.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Micah 5:2**

It is an amazing thing to read in the Old Testament the prophet Micah’s prophecy regarding the coming of the Messiah. This prophecy was pretty specific. Seven hundred years before the fulfillment, Micah says that out of the family line of Judah, in the little town of Bethlehem Ephrathah, one to be Ruler in Israel would come. He would be from of old and from everlasting. There is only one person who could possibly have fulfilled this prophecy—Jesus. The prophecy was specific. There were two Bethlehems, so the prophet was careful to designate which one would fulfill the prophecy—Bethlehem Ephrathah. After seven hundred years, with so many intervening events, there was little likelihood that one

in the line of David could be born in Bethlehem. It was almost entirely out of the question. The odds were against it. There were no members of the family of David living in Bethlehem any longer.<sup>4</sup>

We have looked at the prophecies and the account of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem for so long that the remarkable nature of it has grown dull. However, we are talking about 700 years and a specific place and a specific family line! That is amazing! Today, we can look back and observe the connections: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, eventually David and, finally, Jesus the Messiah of God. The people to whom Micah and the other prophets wrote anticipated the coming Messiah. We have the blessing and privilege of seeing the connections right up to today. We, like the people of the Old Testament, also get to live in anticipation, the anticipation of the coming again of the Messiah.

Enjoy the look backward and live with anticipation of what is yet to come. It is all there in your Bible!

<sup>4</sup>Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

## **WEEK 20 Jacob Flees From Laban-----Chris Watson**

As we will read this week, Jacob did just about everything Laban had asked of him. He had done his part. However, Laban still wanted Jacob to stay. Jacob agreed to stay for particular wages that we will read about today. We will see God's plan continue to be played out this week!

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 30:25-31:9**

Jacob had worked for Laban for 14 years in exchange for marrying his daughters, Rachel and Leah. Now he wanted to go home. However, Laban wanted him to stay, so he did, in exchange for all the animals that had spots or streaks!

As we see in verse 35, Laban didn't play by the rules. It was if Jacob had no shot at getting any animals that he wanted, because Laban had tricked him. Nevertheless, God gave Jacob wisdom and, in the end, Jacob ended up with much more than he most likely would have started with. Laban didn't do things God's way, he didn't keep his word and hold up his end of the deal, yet God blessed Jacob as we see in Genesis 31:9; God was the one who provided Jacob with the livestock.

Here we see a continuation of the promise given to Rebekah in chapter 35, the promise that Jacob would rule over his brother. God's plan, all along, was to bless and use Jacob for His glory and in this passage we see the furtherance of it. No matter what we face or what we go through in our life, if we are God's children we can be assured that God will take care of us. It may not be how we envision it or how we dream it, but we can place our hope in God and know that He is always in control of all things all of the time! Take some time to thank God that He is always in control.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 31:10-21**

Remember Genesis 28:13-15? It says, *“There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”*

In today’s passage, we see the first part of the promise that God made to Jacob in Genesis 28:15 beginning to take shape. Jacob was headed home to the place that God had promised he would bring him back to. God protected Jacob and had him leave while Laban was away.

Here we see God keeping His promises. He promised to be with Jacob and watch over him and He was. He promised to bring him back to the land, which He did. God always keeps His promises, praise the Lord! As humans, we often break our promises and it often gets us in trouble. However, God is a promise keeper and we can always depend on His Word and the promises that we read there. Take some time to thank God for the promises that He has made and kept. Thank Him that He is faithful 100% of the time.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Matthew 2:13-16**

Watch the news or turn on the radio and it doesn’t take long to realize our world is evil, I mean really evil. If you are like me you might wonder, can it get any worse? While it is true that evil is all around us, it was also prevalent in the time of Christ.

Yesterday we read how God appeared to Jacob in a dream and told him to flee from Laban. Today we read a story where Joseph of Nazareth is spoken to in a

spoken to in a dream and told to escape to Egypt. During this time Herod reigned and he was very evil. His desire was to kill Jesus and when he was outwitted and couldn't get his way, he gave the command for all boys in Bethlehem, two years old and under, to be killed. Now that is evil at it's worst, a dictator giving orders to kill all male babies.

However, despite this detestable evil, God's plan would not be thwarted. Even amid the evil we see in the world today, God's plan will carry on. It has and it will. We know that Jesus was sent during this time and, years later, He died to save us. Even as Christians it's sometimes hard to see or know what God may be up to at times. Thankfully, it's not necessarily our job to know what He is up to, but rather to trust Him in it. Ask God to help you today to trust Him in whatever you may be facing. While the situation make look bleak, thank Him that He is still in control and He still knows and controls the big picture.

#### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 31:22-55**

Laban was now hot on Jacob's heels! He was furious that Jacob had left, especially without saying anything. Plus, Laban felt that everything that Jacob had was really his. God, through another dream, spoke to Laban and warned him to be careful in what he said.

We can imagine, and also see in reading today's passage, that Jacob was probably nervous and anxious when Laban caught up with him. Still, God's promise to allow him to return home safely must have lingered in Jacob's mind. Even in the trials and difficulties that he was facing in being hunted down, he could trust God's promise.

The good news is we know how it ends! Revelation 22 tells us that Christ is coming soon and He will take His followers with Him. Although we may face difficulties, trials, temptations, and hard times between now and then, we still know how it ends. God will protect us and keep us till the end. Jacob knew God would see him home, no matter what happened. As believers, we can rest assured that Christ will see us home, no matter what happens. Take some time to thank God that regardless of the circumstances we can depend on His promise that He is coming to take us home!

## Day 5

### **First Read Psalm 3**

In Psalm 3 we see David fleeing from his son Absalom! What a sad and terrifying time this must have been for David. Throughout chapter 3, we see how David put his hope and trust in the Lord. Even when his very life was in danger!

More than likely, most of us do not fear for our own physical lives. We don't have anyone on our heels trying to kill us. However, we should still be able to relate to the words of David. David says, "*you are a shield around me, O Lord*" and "*from the Lord comes deliverance.*" Like me, I am sure you can relate to those statements. Our God is not only our shield, but He is our deliverer. If we are caught in a lifestyle of sin and destructive habits the Lord can deliver us. If we are facing a situation that may be difficult to grasp or understand, we can put our trust in the Lord and He will guide and direct us (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Our physical life doesn't have to be in danger for us to cry out to the Lord! We need to cry out to the Lord daily, many times a day, asking Him to help us follow Him and His ways. Truth is, God has never let us down. Oh sure, our ways are not His and His ways are not ours. While at times we may want things to be different, we can still trust Him knowing He is in control. I am sure David didn't want to be hunted down by his own son with his life in danger, but even in that, he put his hope and trust in the Lord. Today, ask God to help you put everything you are into everything He is!

## **WEEK 21 Jacob's Wrestling Match-----Dennis Watson**

The favor or the grace of God is inexhaustible. There is no end to His kindness and His grace. However, we can rebel and be disobedient and obstinate and find ourselves detached from His grace. It is always available, but He does not force it on us. Jacob has left his father-in-law and is heading to the home of his father, Isaac. It has been fifteen years since he ran away from home because of his brother Esau's threat to kill him. He is about to meet up with Esau, but God gives him some reassurance.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 32:1-2**

It has been 15 years since Jacob left home. Most of that time he spent at the home of his father-in-law, Laban. He now has two wives, Rachel and Leah, eleven sons, and one daughter. It was time for him to leave his father-in-law and return to the home of his father, Isaac. He did not leave on the best of terms with his father-in-law, but that was resolved.

God had made a promise to Jacob that He would be with him and would protect him (Genesis 31:3). When Jacob ran away from home, due to the threat of Esau, he had a dream as he travelled to the home of Laban. He had a dream about angels. In that dream, God encouraged Jacob (Genesis 28). His response to seeing the angels was to call the place "Bethel," which means house of God. God then gave him reassurance with the angels. In today's passage Jacob is fleeing once again, this time from Laban. He is about to have an encounter with Esau, his brother, who wants to kill him, according to his last words. So, he is desperately in need of some confidence. He again encounters the "angels of God." And, once again, Jacob gives the place a name, "Mahanaim," which means "God's camp."

Jacob was in a time of great distress. He had run away from his father-in-law. He was going home, but he was about to meet up with his brother Esau. God is so gracious to give us little reminders of His presence. He has promised to always be with us. Pay close attention. He is with you

and there are reminders. Don't miss them and don't discount them.

Give thanks for God's presence and His subtle reminders.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 32:3-21**

What would you do or what have you done when you had to meet with someone who had been talking about you behind your back? Were you out for revenge? Were you fearful of the meeting? Jacob was about to meet his estranged brother for the first time in fifteen years. Their separation at that time included a threat by Esau to kill Jacob. As you can imagine, Jacob was really concerned about the encounter. So he made a plan. He prayed and then he divided his family into two groups. The plan was to send several groups of animals ahead as gifts for Esau. His plan was to soften Esau before they met. He prayed and reminded God that He had promised to be with him and make him into a great nation. He asked God for deliverance from his brother.

In his prayer he said several things. First, he reminded God that he was obeying Him in returning to his country and relatives. He was saying, "God, this trip is your idea." Good place to begin—with a reminder that he was obeying God's instructions. Second, he acknowledged God's blessings on him in spite of his obvious unworthiness. When Jacob left home he had only his staff and he was returning with wives, children, and great possessions. Thirdly, he prayed for God to save him from his brother. Although the struggle with his brother was his own fault, he asked God to deliver him from the consequences. That is what salvation is all about. We ask God to save us from the mess we have created. Then Jacob reminded God of the promise to make him into a great nation with many descendants.

Give thanks to God for the blessings He so graciously gives us, none of which we deserve. We are blessed in spite of ourselves. If you have never done so, ask Him to save you as Jacob did.

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Genesis 32:22-32**

Jacob had sent his family on ahead and was alone for the night. It was when he was alone that an Angel of The Lord came and began to wrestle with him. I have to wonder, was the wrestling match really necessary or was Jacob just that stubborn? I know that I often need to be hit hard to hear what God is saying to me. Many of the God-life lessons are learned through the hardest of times. It is then that, like Jacob, we are more prepared to hear from God.

They wrestled all night and Jacob continued to struggle. The angel touched Jacob's hip and caused it to go out of joint. The angel then asked Jacob to let him go, but Jacob said, *"I will not let you go unless you bless me."* The angel asked Jacob's name, although I am sure he already knew it. He just wanted Jacob to say it so he could be reminded that his name means 'deceiver.' Then the angel gave him a new name, Israel. The new name means "Prince of God." What a change from one who deceives to one who is a Prince of God. Jacob, now Israel, had a new identity!

Now, how does this connect to Jesus? Well, this is what could be called a theophany or an appearance of Jesus. Jacob, after wrestling with the angel (Jacob, now Israel), called that place Peniel, which means "face of God." He called it that because as Jacob said in Genesis 32:30, *"I have seen God face to face."* This was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. In the Old Testament, Jesus was prophesied to be Immanuel which means "God with us." John says of Jesus that God *"became flesh and dwelt among us."* Jacob had an experience with Jesus and in doing so he was changed forever.

Jesus has come to abide with us forever. We are never apart from God. He wants to bless you. How badly do you want His blessing? When was the last time you sought Him as Jacob did?

## Day 4

### **First Read Genesis 33:1-11**

Whew! What anticipation Jacob must have felt. He gets up from an amazing encounter with the Angel of the Lord and what does he see? Esau and four hundred men coming in his direction! That often happens to me. Not four hundred men, but gripping fear. Right after a high spiritual time there comes what I think is an attack, only to discover that it is not an attack but a blessing! Jacob got his family together in groups and headed in Esau's direction. Jacob himself ran on ahead and bowed down before Esau. To Jacob's surprise, Esau ran to him and threw his arms around him and kissed him. It was obvious, that what Jacob had feared did not come to pass. Instead, he discovered that his brother had forgiven him and the rift that had severed their relationship had been healed. Esau was curious about all of the droves and the gifts. He asked what they were all about. Jacob tells him they are a gift. Esau graciously declined, but Jacob insisted that Esau take them.

Esau had already forgiven Jacob, but now Jacob received that forgiveness. God is faithful to keep His promises. He had made a promise to Jacob, now Israel, that He would be with him and protect him and prosper his offspring. God showed Himself faithful on Israel's behalf.

Have you ever experienced a time when you came face to face with someone you thought was your enemy, only to discover that they had forgiven you? All they had remaining for you was grace and kindness. Forgiveness is a powerful thing! In fact, it is a major theme of the Bible. It reaches all the way back to Genesis 3. In Genesis 3, God covers Adam and Eve's nakedness. Also in Genesis 3, God gives a hint of the conflict that will exist between the seed of the woman and the serpent. God, from the earliest of time (and beyond time), had His plan to forgive or cover man's sin. Proverbs 10:12 says, "*Hatred stirs up strife but love covers all sins.*" Jesus atoned for our sin. He covered it with His blood. If Jesus is your Savior, He has forgiven your sins. Since that is the case, is there someone you need to forgive?

## Day 5

### **First Read Zechariah 10:3-6**

The people of Israel had been carried off into exile and were now returning. During this time Zechariah started his prophetic ministry encouraging the people to spiritual renewal. He also motivated them to rebuild the temple. He did this by telling them about the coming Messiah and God's plan for their future. George L. Robinson has called the Book of Zechariah "the most messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological of all the writings of the Old Testament" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956, 5:3136). In other words, Zechariah had much to say about the coming of the Messiah.

In today's passage of prophecy from Zechariah, we have another dot connecting opportunity. Zechariah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says that there would be One who would come from God through the tribe of Judah who would be "the cornerstone." In the New Testament Jesus is called the cornerstone and the "stone...the head of the corner." It is obvious that the writer of Zechariah was writing about Jesus, although he did not know it. But New Testament writers knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy.

A cornerstone was both a foundation stone and a stone for alignment. In Ephesians 2:20-21, Jesus is the stone upon which the living stones are built, that is the church. But a cornerstone also lined up two joining walls. Jesus brought the two covenants together in completion.

God was not concerned ultimately with building a physical temple but a living temple, built with living stones and built upon a living foundation—Jesus.

So here we continue to see Jesus in the Old Testament and brought to light in the New. He did come from the tribe of Judah. He is the cornerstone. He is the foundation of the the spiritual house God is building (See 1 Peter 2:5). Jesus is the focus of the Bible.

*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, <sup>5</sup> you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **1 Peter 2:4-5 (NKJV)***

Make sure you don't miss Him!

## **WEEK 22 Joseph's Dream-----Chris Watson**

Where is our trust? This week and next we will see that Joseph trusted God in some very adverse circumstances. Over the course of several years God used Joseph, because he trusted God and was willing to follow God's plan and ways.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 35:1-7**

You might remember from our earlier readings (Genesis 28:18) that Jacob built a pillar to God and called the place Bethel, meaning house of God. In our passage today, Jacob is now instructed to build an altar to God at Bethel. Earlier, Jacob promised God he would make Him his Lord and God if He would protect him and bring him safely home.

Jacob is now beginning to follow through with his end of what he promised. He tells his people to get rid of the foreign and fake gods and they were going to build an altar at Bethel. Jacob realized that God was true to His Word and there was no other God than the one true God.

If we are honest, we are often like Jacob's people and we trust and put our hope in other "gods." It's most likely not a statue or something we "formally" worship, but maybe something like our house, money, car, job, or relationships. It's our security. For Jacob and his people, their security was the foreign gods, but on this day they would put those gods away and not worship them; they would worship the one true God. Now, of course, houses, money, job, etc., in and of themselves, are not evil, but when we worship them or put them in the place of God, they become like God to us. What or who in your life have you placed as your security or god? Might you lay that before God today and tell Him you want to trust Him with everything in your life?

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 37:1-4**

Parents often raise their children the way their parents or guardians raised them. This is not always the case, but it is generally true. Sometimes, though, we might say something like, "I would never do this or that with my child. My parents did that and I will never do it." Either way, we often follow what was modeled for us.

In today's passage we see that Jacob loves Joseph more than his other sons. Wait! Haven't we already seen something like this? Sure, remember Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob? We would like to think that Jacob would have learned from this, but he didn't. In fact, Jacob loved Joseph more and it caused huge problems that we will look at in the days to come. However, God still used this situation.

One of the biggest problems it caused was envy from the other brothers. Verse 4 of today's passage tells us Joseph's brothers couldn't even speak a kind word to him, they were so envious. Galatians 5:21 makes known to us that envy is a sin. If not dealt with properly it can really hurt a lot of the relationships we have with others. It is good to go before the Lord with any envy that may be in your heart and to ask Him to work on our heart. As we will see later in our devotions, envy taken too far can really cause a lot of damage. Place any envy you might have before the Lord today. Ask Him to take it and for Him to work on your heart!

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Genesis 35:9-12**

In today's passage we see Jacob's name being changed to Israel! Of course if you watch the news these days, we see a lot of things going on in and around Israel. Not only would Jacob's name be changed to Israel, this would also be the name of God's Chosen people.

Israel actually means “he struggles with God.” Israel, many years later, would still struggle with God as the people would worship Him one moment and then worship idols the next. Even in this, God was still holding to His promise. The promise that was given to Abraham and Isaac is now given to Jacob, (Israel), God would give him the land that was promised to those before him. God had kept His promise that started with Abraham and was now being passed down to Israel.

All that we see here is a continuation of the promise of the One who would take away the sins of the world, the ultimate King of Israel. God changing Jacob’s name to Israel is part of His plan. It is neat to read the Old Testament and see God’s plan unfolding from the beginning! As you continue to read through the Old Testament, ask God to help you see the connections and link them to Jesus! There are so many connections and we have seen some already. Thank God that even way before Jesus was born to Mary, His plan was being orchestrated, even before time began.

#### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 37:5-10**

Joseph’s brothers were not exactly his best friends, since he was their father’s favorite. So we know from the story, and also from what our own reaction might be, that telling them about the dreams he had only made them hate him more, as we see in verse 8. Now, Joseph could have kept the dreams to himself if he wanted, but as a part of God’s plan he relayed them to his brothers and his father.

If you are familiar with the story of Joseph, you might see how these dreams may have been encouraging to him, especially in light of the things he was about to face. God was possibly showing him that, even in difficult times, God is still in control and would take care of Joseph even though Joseph didn’t know what was to come.

Has God ever given you a word that seemed somewhat strange or not right for where you were in your life? You wondered maybe if it was for someone else or maybe you heard wrong. However, as time went on, you realized that God gave that word to you and was preparing you for what

was to come; you just couldn't see what was coming. I think we see God doing the same thing here. He was preparing Joseph for what was to come and the dreams he had were from God, and they were a sign of what was to come.

Take some time to thank God when He speaks to you. While you may not understand it all now, He may be getting you ready for things to come. Ask Him to help you remember the word for later. Thank God that He speaks to us through His Word, through prayer, and through others, and seek to hear His voice today.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Genesis 49:1-2 and 8-10**

God revealed His plans to Jacob and he passed them onto his sons. Marty Machowski says, "Jacob tells Judah that the scepter will not depart or leave Judah. That means that Judah will always have a king. The scripture also says that all the different peoples of the world will be obedient to him, he will be the ruler of all nations. Jesus is the king Jacob spoke about who sits on heaven's throne ruling the nations. Jesus will rule on his throne forever."<sup>5</sup>

God is using Jacob not only to bless his sons, but to tell of things to come! This passage, as we see, points to Jesus. Revelation 5:5 refers to the "*Lion of the Tribe of Judah*". This is Jesus. It's so neat here to see the very first book of the Bible and the last book connected with literally hundreds of years between them.

God was King before Genesis, during the time of Genesis, during the time of Revelation, and today. He will always be King, He will always be in charge, always. He rules over all nations and our job is to go and take His name to the nations. Matthew 28:19 tells us to go to all nations and make disciples and the reason for this is so they will know Jesus. They will know the one King, one Ruler, the Giver of Life, and Life itself. Today, may we take His name to our family, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and to the nations!

<sup>5</sup> Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 116

## **WEEK 23 Joseph Is Attacked By His Brothers -----**

**Dennis Watson**

Perhaps as an adolescent, Joseph had a problem with his pride over dreams he had. However, God used not only his dreams but even his arrogance. We will see during this week one of the many ways God uses human frailties to accomplish His purposes. Nothing limits the power, the will, and the work of God.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 37:12-20**

Joseph had shared his dreams with his brothers as we read last week. They were definitely outraged because of the dreams and the favoritism that their father showed him. One day Israel, Jacob, sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were out taking care of the family flocks. When the brothers saw him approaching, the anger they felt toward him really came to the surface. As he got closer, the anger turned to a murderous plot and another plot to cover it up. It was not just an attack on their brother, but on their father, also.

You see here the danger of secret sins. To hold on to a sinful thought is like holding on to a lighted firecracker too long! I did that when I was a kid and just about blew off my fingers and almost lost my hearing. In James 1:15-16, you find what I call the anatomy of sin. Sin begins as a thought, temptation, a mental toy and then, if not dealt with, it becomes a sinful act. Joseph's brothers may have complained before about their brother, but now it was about to move beyond feeling and talk; added to that, there was mob mentality. All of Jacob's brothers together were displeased with him and while one of the brothers alone probably would not have hurt him, all of them together, the mob mentality caused them to feed on each other.

Have you ever been a part of such? Have you ever, along with others, ganged up on a person because you were all in agreement? Have you ever had to cover one wrong with another? The brothers were just getting started on a plot that would thicken for many years!

Well, the good thing is, God really does cause things to work together for good!

Give thanks to God for His goodness no matter what we do!

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 37:21-30**

When mob mentality takes a turn for the really bad and wrong, someone has to provide a corrective word! It is what believers are to be—salt and light. Reuben tried to talk sense into his brothers. When Joseph arrived, they took the advice of Reuben; instead of killing Joseph, they threw him into a pit. Reuben had a plan to later come back and rescue his younger brother. For some unknown reason, Reuben disappeared from the scene for a brief time. Perhaps he had gone to make his plan to deliver Joseph. While he was gone a band of traveling traders, who were called Ishmaelites or Midianites, came along. These people were descendants of Abraham by his wife's handmaid, Hagar. At the urging of another brother, Judah, the brothers decided to sell Joseph to them. Both Reuben and Judah were trying to do at least "the lesser evil." Reuben was very upset when he returned to see that Joseph was not in the pit and learned that he had been sold to traveling traders, who would eventually take Joseph to Egypt and sell him there.

What an exhausting account! Can you imagine how Joseph may have felt? What about the brothers? How might they have felt as they journeyed home to tell their father?

It is a wonderful thing for us to know that God uses all things and no plotting of people can frustrate God's plan. Even our worst or softened evil plans will not stop God from accomplishing His plan!

Give thanks to God for His power, faithfulness, and determination to accomplish His perfect will!

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Matthew 27:1-10**

You see some similarities between the account of Joseph's rejection by his brothers and the rejection of Jesus by His own people. Joseph was sold by his brothers, the sons of Israel, for twenty silver pieces. Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples, also a son of Israel, for thirty pieces of silver. Both accounts appear, at first, to be tragic and so very sad. However, we know that God used the rejection of His Son Jesus, to cause Him to be crucified on the cross. This event accomplished salvation for all who will receive His death as payment for their sin debt. We will see in the weeks to come how the rejection and selling of Joseph resulted in the deliverance of the people of Israel from famine and slavery. God is in the saving and delivering business! We see this throughout the Bible and the account of Joseph is what is called a "type of Jesus." A type is a person or event that resembles another and allows us to see God at work in both with one being greater than the other. Joseph went to Egypt in what appeared to be a tragic situation that later turned out for good. Jesus went to the cross in what appeared to be a tragic situation. However, God accomplished salvation through the rejection and death of His Son.

Judas and Joseph's brothers received payment for their betrayal. Did the money do them any good? Of course not! Concerning money given to Judas, he tried to return it, but it could not be accepted because it was blood money. It was used to buy a field for his eventual burial after he committed suicide. As for the money given to the brothers, there is no further mention of it. No amount of money can make anyone happy; it is deceptive.

Thank God for His incredible plan!

### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 37:31-36**

All of the brothers compound their crime with a lie. This was a cover-up! They killed a goat and put the blood on the special coat that Israel (Jacob)

had given to Joseph. Their plan was to show it to their father and tell him that a wild animal had killed his son. This is the way sin works. When you commit a sin, if repentance and obedience do not follow, then more sin follows, compounding the sin.

But there is a big uh-oh here! Did you notice it? The brothers killed a kid of the goats to put blood on the coat to deceive their father. Years earlier, Jacob (Israel) and his mother Rebekah killed a kid of the goats to deceive his father, Isaac. They used the meat to prepare a meal and the fur to put on Jacob so that his father Isaac would think it was Esau. In doing so he deceived his father to get Esau's blessing. So now Jacob (Israel) was about to be deceived in a similar way. The brothers brought the blood-stained coat and showed it to their father and asked, "Do you recognize it?" He immediately recognized it as the coat he had given to Joseph.

That is the way sin is; it compounds. One sin is covered with another and then there are layers of sin piled on. Not only does it compound, but our sin comes back around. The Bible teaches that we reap what we sow. Jacob had deceived and cheated his brother, Esau. Now Jacob's sons deceive their father and cheated his son Joseph.

Be very wise. Sin is destructive. Do not leave sin lying around. It will hurt you and it will hurt others. It will compound and it will come back around. Repent, obey and follow God's best way!

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Numbers 24:15-17**

God uses anyone and anything to speak and accomplish His purposes and deliver His message. In the biblical historical account there is a non-Israelite prophet through whom God spoke—Balaam. Balaam's donkey also spoke to Balaam and inspires me to say, "God still uses donkeys." As the Israelites were headed for the Land of Promise they were approaching Moab. The King of Moab was a man named Balak. Balak was concerned about the approaching Israelite army and called for Balaam to come and curse the Israelites so that he could defeat them. However, God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel but only to bless them. In today's

passage Balaam gives a prophecy of a coming king. The coming that he spoke of was King David. A great king would come from Jacob (Israel). He would rule, reign, and defeat Israel's enemies. Many prophecies in the Old Testament had both an immediate fulfillment and then a more distant one.

In Numbers 22:18, Balaam says that He cannot "*go beyond the word of the Lord.*" The phrase "the word of the Lord" is used 245 times in the King James Version of the Bible. In the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, that reads like what we find in John 1 the "word was with God and the word was God. It is safe to say that the 'word of the Lord' in the Old Testament is reference to Jesus the 'word.' Balaam was speaking the 'word' of God.

In Revelation 22:16, Jesus is the "*Bright and morning star*" coming from the family of David. David defeated enemies like the giant, Goliath. Jesus defeated the enemy of sin and death. David ruled and Jesus will have all of His enemies placed at His feet (1 Corinthians 15:22-26).

Jesus is the living word of God. He is the King. Jesus is the main point to the whole Bible!

## **WEEK 24 Joseph Interprets The Dream-----Chris Watson**

Maybe you have found yourself in a bad or tough situation and, let's just say, that it was nothing of your own doing, for the most part! That is where we find Joseph in this week's readings. He is in a bad situation that seems to get better only to get worse, but God has a plan. He always does.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 39**

Maybe this is the first time you have heard this story or maybe it's your fiftieth! Almost every time I read it, I think "wow!" I wonder what my response would be with all of this happening. Joseph is first almost killed, but instead is sold into slavery, which looks bad. However, God uses this and shows favor on him, and he is placed in charge of all of Potiphar's belongings. At this point things were looking good for Joseph. Then he is tempted by Potiphar's wife and makes the right and godly decision, only to find himself thrown into prison, again for nothing that he did.

From the outside looking in, it would be easy to ask what God is doing and why God would allow this to happen. I think Joseph could have asked this question. However, he trusted God, both when things went well and when things seemed to fall apart. God used him in Potiphar's life and, as we see today and during this week, God used him even in these tough situations. I believe all during this time Joseph's faith was being strengthened and, at the same time, God was preparing him for a special purpose!

God has a plan for all of our lives. We are to worship and glorify Him and, as we do that, He directs our path. Maybe things are great right now or maybe things couldn't get any worse, as with Joseph. Do you know God? Do you trust His plan? Are you able to depend on Him even when it doesn't add up or make sense? Ask God to help you trust Him when it makes sense and even when it doesn't. Give whatever may be going on in your life right now to the Lord and say, "God I trust you!"

## Day 2

### **First Read Genesis 40**

As we read at the end of chapter 39 yesterday and in chapter 40 today, God used Joseph while he was in prison. God gave him success and also had him there to interpret dreams. One was a great dream, while the other wasn't so great. In verse 14, after Joseph had given the cupbearer a favorable interpretation of his dream, Joseph tells him to remember him when he gets out of prison. By remembering him, the cupbearer can help Joseph get out, as well. I think that would be a fair request, don't you? However, the last verse in chapter 39 says, "*the chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him*". What? He forgot him? How? Joseph had given him the best news he had probably heard since he had been in prison, but the cupbearer forgot Joseph.

Have you ever felt like the Lord has forgotten you? If you have, that feeling is probably from the enemy, it is not from the Lord. The enemy wants us to believe that the Lord forgets about us or that He sees us in difficult situations, but doesn't care. I wonder if Joseph was thinking, "any day now, I may get out of here because the cupbearer will remember me." But that was wishful thinking because the cupbearer didn't remember Joseph at this point.

God often gets the "blame" for a lot of things that happen in our lives. As we will see tomorrow, this was part of God's plan, but sometimes in the middle of the situation we can't even see God's plan. We can't even think that He would have one. We may feel deserted, forgotten, or not loved. However, this couldn't be further from the truth! Scripture tells us that all things work together for the good of those who are called according to His purpose. We may not be able to see it in the midst of the situation, but God knows and sees.

Take some time today to thank God for the times that you felt forgotten and alone, acknowledging you now see how God used those times in your life. Or, take time to thank God for the difficult times you are in right now. Trusting that He sees the whole picture and like Joseph, know that He hasn't forgotten you! Maybe He is preparing you for "such a time as this."

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Genesis 41:1-14**

Joseph was forgotten for two years. Can you imagine? I think I would have been bitter, but it doesn't appear that Joseph was. Notice how this all fits into God's wonderful plan? The Lord caused Pharaoh to have a dream and no one could interpret the dream. Not even those who were supposedly able to do so. Then, the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph. It was two years later! He tells Pharaoh about Joseph interpreting his own dream and Pharaoh has Joseph brought from prison to interpret the dream.

Joseph was in this place for a specific time and reason. He was going to save Israel from the famine that was to come. "By saving Israel, Jesus is born so we can be saved."<sup>6</sup> One has to think and believe that after God used Joseph in this way, Joseph knew everything happening was a part of God's plan. It has been said that in situations we face we can either become bitter or better. I believe Joseph became better. What about you? Has there been an event, or events, in your life in which you weathered the storm and when you came out on the other side, you were better? Or were you bitter? I imagine there are hundreds of stories of hurt, pain, and loneliness that I am not aware of. I am sure there are many stories from those reading this devotion and I wouldn't begin to imagine that I know what being in any of those situations is like. However, I know God can and will use it all. Don't become bitter; become better for God's glory. Today's devotion may be a little harder than normal. If you find yourself bitter over a situation or experience, ask the Lord to help you to let it go. Ask for your heart to be free from anger and bitterness. Lay all of those before the Lord, and like Joseph, ask the Lord to help you trust His plan!

### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 41:15-36**

God's grace is always evident, even when we don't see it. In this story we see the grace of God. There was a famine coming and there would not be

<sup>6</sup>Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 124

enough food or water for everyone, but God was going to use this famine. He could have just allowed it to happen and not offered the provisions. However, He didn't. He gave a dream to Pharaoh and Joseph interpreted the dream, allowing them to get ready and prepare for seven years of famine. Look back at Genesis 41:25. The NIV says, "*God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do*". The famine, as we see from verse 25, was first to go through God's hands, God was allowing it as part of His plan. I wonder if Pharaoh caught those words from Joseph. God was sending the famine and would use it for His glory.

I am guessing that if Joseph could see all that would happen in his life he might not have signed up to play this part in God's plan. However, if he had seen what an impact and game changer it was, then maybe he would have. Either way, here he is. Smack dab in the middle of saving God's people from the famine that God allowed, so that He could use it. As believers, we must trust God with His plan, even when it doesn't make sense. It is something that He allows. God uses difficult times to grow us and to impact others, as well. We must stop trying to figure out why it's happening and trust His plan. This is much easier said than done! Take some time today to acknowledge that all of your life experiences first flow through God's hands. While it may be hard or tough to see why He allows those times, trust Him that it is all part of His great big plan!

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Isaiah 42:5-9**

Today we read another prophecy of the One to come, Jesus! Of course Jesus has always been (John 1:1-3), but He would come into this world as a human. Take a moment to read back over verse 7. These are the words of Isaiah the Prophet, spoken some 700 years before Jesus. Notice how true they are? Let's examine verse 7:

*"To open the eyes of the blind"* – We see this happening in John 9 as Jesus heals the blind man. We can also see in Jesus' coming and speaking the truth about Himself, that people's spiritual eyes are opened as they see Jesus for who He is, Savior of the world.

*“To free captives from prison” – Luke 4:18-19 says, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* This prophecy was being fulfilled as Jesus was in Nazareth.

*“To release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness”- John 8:12 tells us that Jesus told the people that He is the light of the World!*

Folks, no one can make these things up. The prophecies from hundreds of years before are being fulfilled in the New Testament.

As you pray today make verse 7 into a prayer. Thank God, as a believer, that He has opened your eyes, He has freed you from prison, and He has given the light, Himself, the one True King!

## **WEEK 25 God Provides For The Israelites In Famine--**

**Dennis Watson**

God is amazing and powerful and will always accomplish His plan. He provided a way for Joseph to be in Egypt at a very pivotal time in history. There was a famine coming to the land and God placed Joseph there with wisdom and power to provide for His people. At Harp's Crossing we have a special fund called "The Joseph Fund." The name for this fund came from this biblical historical account. Joseph knew from dreams he had interpreted for Pharaoh that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. During the years of plenty he led the people to store up. When the years of famine came they were ready for them. Our "Joseph Fund" is like that. When we have financial surplus we store up so that when emergencies, or lean times come, we are prepared. That is what this week's devotions are about.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read Genesis 41:38-57**

As we learned last week, God provided Pharaoh with dreams that told him about things to come. God provided Joseph with the ability to interpret the dreams. Joseph then told Pharaoh what to do. Pharaoh knew that the ability to interpret the dreams had come from Joseph's God. For this reason, Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the number two man in all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, himself. As part of Joseph's job, he would oversee the storing up of food and, later, the distribution projects.

Have you ever had a time in your life when God blessed you in a huge way with finances or other provisions? What did you do? The good-ole American way is to go out and splurge. We just think this is extra money. I have learned, unfortunately not as early as I would have liked, that there is no such thing as extra money. When God provides what appears to be surplus, it is for something specific. You can be certain. We need to be careful and not be foolish. It may be that something is about to happen to your car, your home, or some other thing, for which you will need that extra money. It was not extra after all. God knew and provided in advance. Or it may be that He provided it for you to help someone else.

That is what we see here. This was the first “Joseph Fund.” When tough times came, the people still had food. People came from all around to buy food so that they would not starve.

God provides. Ask Him to enable you to see how He has provided. Ask to be wise in how to use His provisions to help others and provide for family needs and wants.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 42**

And now things come full circle. Some say, “What goes around comes around.” Numbers 32:23 says, “*Be sure your sin will find you out.*” The famine became widespread in the land. Israel’s (Jacob) family is impacted by the famine so he sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain for food. He had heard that there was plenty of grain in Egypt. There is one of his sons whom Jacob would not let go with them—Benjamin, his youngest. He could not bear to be separated from Benjamin.

The ten older brothers head for Egypt. When the ten brothers arrive in Egypt they come face-to-face with the governor over the land—their brother, Joseph. It had been thirteen years since they had sold him to the traders. He was seventeen when sold and he was thirty when his brothers arrived in Egypt. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him. He accused them of being spies and had them thrown into prison for three days. It was Joseph’s way of teaching his brothers a lesson for what they had done to him. They told him they were not spies, but were twelve brothers, but one had died and one was at home with their father. He had them released from prison and told them that if they were telling the truth they would bring their younger brother back with them. To make sure they would follow through, Simeon, one of the brothers, would be held in Egypt until they returned. When they departed with sacks of grain, Joseph returned their money hiding it in the sacks. As they were going home one of the brothers discovered the money and was terrified. When they got home they were really frightened when each one found the money in their sack. They told Israel, their father, and he was grieved by the account of the trip to Egypt. He would not let them return to Egypt. He was thinking that now he had not only lost Joseph, but also Simeon.

It is better to own up to your sins and failures than it is to hide from them. It is true that eventually your sin will find you. You will have to deal with it. Better sooner than later. Ask God to enable you to be honest about your sin.

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read Genesis 43**

It was bound to happen. Due to the famine, Israel and his sons ran out of food and became hungry. Israel instructed his sons to return again to Egypt to buy grain. Proverbs 16:26 says that our appetite works for us and our hunger drives us on. Israel did not want to send his youngest son back to Egypt with his brothers, but he wanted to eat. He sent gifts, along with double the money, to return that which they found in their sacks and to buy more grain. When they left, Israel said, *“And may God almighty give you mercy before the man.”* That is what we all need—mercy from God, and more than we could ever know. Mercy includes and implies forgiveness. The brothers and their father knew they needed forgiveness for the money that appeared to have been taken. They needed mercy from God for the selling of their brother Joseph. They did not know what they were about to face. But they knew they needed food and they knew they needed forgiveness. They went to Egypt, taking along with them their youngest brother, Benjamin.

God is sovereign. He was in the process. The promise was that the Messiah, Jesus, would come from Judah’s family. God could have easily had all of the brothers killed for the way they treated Joseph. However, He had a plan. That plan required grace and mercy from God and from Joseph. All through the Old Testament we see God preserving the family members through whom Jesus would be born. God was in all of this, not just to save Joseph, but to save many others, including Judah.

God has worked and is working in your life. Not just to forgive and save you but also to give His mercy and forgiveness to others through you. Give thanks to Him for His mercy and forgiveness and look around and find those who need mercy and forgiveness from God through you.

## **Day 4**

### **First Read Genesis 44**

Joseph continues to toy with his brothers. As they get ready to return home, he has his own special silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack. He then sends his steward to follow and catch up with them, accusing one of them of stealing the cup. Of course, they deny it and say if it is found that the one who took it will die and the others will become slaves. After a search of all of the sacks from oldest to youngest, it is found in Benjamin's sack. The others were terrified. Tearing of clothes was the ancient way of expressing extreme sorrow and displeasure. That is exactly what they did. The brothers were really upset and their minds were swirling as they were trying to figure out what to do now. They might have just run out of options.

All of them were brought back to appear before Joseph. They fell down before him and pleaded for Benjamin; however, they still continued their lies. They told Joseph that one of their brothers was lost and torn to pieces. Even when they believed God was judging them for their sin against their brother, they continued to weave their deception and compound their sin. It seems that it is often easier to continue in sin, than to come to a point of decision to stop, repent, and do what is right.

Is there an area of sin in your life? Joseph's brothers lived a lie for about fifteen years. What unsettledness had to be present in their lives! That dark cloud was forever hanging over their heads and when something bad happened, they assumed that God was judging them. God forgives! But first, we must be honest and confess our sin, in order to be released from it. Sin undealt with can yank you around like a whip. Spend time asking the Lord to search your own heart and reveal any sinful ways. Confess it, repent, and do the right thing!

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Psalm 110**

This Psalm is a Messianic Psalm. That means it is one of those forward-

looking prophetic Psalms that speaks about Jesus, the Messiah. As you read it, make sure you keep in mind that this is about Jesus, written hundreds of years in advance. You will hear wording that we find in the New Testament applied to Jesus.

One such phrase that is in the New Testament book of Hebrews is Psalm 110:4. This verse says that the coming King would be a priest forever “according to the order of Melchizedek.” In chapters 5-7 of Hebrews, Jesus is the One who is this priest in the order of Melchizedek. A priest was one who stood before God on behalf of the people and stood before the people on behalf of God. Jesus came as God’s priest and, as such, He stood for and died for the people on God’s behalf. Today He is interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25). The priest made sacrifices on behalf of the people for their sins. Jesus, our Priest, did not make animal sacrifices for our sin, but became our sacrifice.

He was like Melchizedek in that we do not know of a beginning or end of Melchizedek. Jesus has no beginning and no end. In more ways than we can now know, Jesus is a Priest, forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

The Old Testament has a priesthood and sacrificial system which God gave to provide temporary forgiveness for sins. The sacrifices were reminders of sin and our need for forgiveness. We do not make animal sacrifices today, because Jesus, our priest, became our sacrifice! Give thanks to God for our Great High Priest, Jesus.

## WEEK 26 Joseph Reveals Himself To His Brothers-----

Chris Watson

Maybe you have seen one of those shows reuniting siblings or parents and children after years of being apart. Maybe they didn't even know about each other. I can imagine that would be nerve racking. I wonder what thoughts went through Joseph's brothers' heads when they realized who he was or the thoughts that went through Joseph's. We will see this week.

### Day 1

#### **First Read Genesis 45:1-5**

The emotions that must have been running through Joseph! In fact, verse 1 says that he couldn't control himself any longer. What would your reaction have been if you were one of the brothers? What if you were Joseph when he was revealing himself to his brothers? Wow! We see in verse 3 that Joseph's brothers couldn't speak because they were terrified to be in his presence. They were afraid that he would do something to them. I would have been afraid, too!

Look at Joseph's response, *"Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."* What? Joseph tells his brothers no worries, don't be upset or mad at yourselves, God had a plan and part of that plan was to bring you here as well. Incredible! Joseph was obviously aware of what God intended and, while he could have been angry, he simply shared with them that everything was okay because God used the circumstances to save lives.

I am going to be honest, I would like to think my response would be the same as Joseph's, but for some reason I am not sure it would have been. What's your response when things go bad, when things don't work out like you want, or when life just seems "unfair"? Do we complain, get upset, or even try to get back at someone who did us wrong? Or can we respond like Joseph and realize that, even if it was bad or evil, God might use it in our lives or in the life of another. Ask the Lord to help you see how He sees and to realize that when we can't understand His ways, we need to trust Him.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read Genesis 45:16-28**

As we read today, not only was Joseph saved from the famine, but so was his father and his brothers, and their families. God used what happened to Joseph to save thousands of people, including his own family. Now some would say, "That's not fair." Have you ever said this? Or if you have kids, have they ever said this? Was it fair that Joseph, who was thrown in a well, sold to travelers, tempted by Potiphar's wife, and thrown into jail for several years, is in charge of Pharaoh's things and that his brothers who started all of this get to come and be saved from the famine? Yes. Yes indeed, and while it doesn't seem right or fair, it's exactly the story of all Christians.

We all went our own way, but God sent Jesus. Our sin was what He died for, a horrific death. Jesus was spit on, laughed at, locked up, mocked, forsaken by His own, and suffered for the sin of man. It was our sin that put Jesus on the cross. Of course, it was God's plan and He went willingly. It was His plan that was carried out. We are like Joseph's brothers. We are all guilty. However, when we come to Jesus, acknowledging our guilt and sins, He takes us in. You know it's not fair. Praise the Lord. If it were fair, I would get nothing, but death and hell. But, because God loves me, He sent His son to give me life, not fairness. Mercy, not condemnation. Grace, not law. Today, thank God that He didn't give you what you deserved, but like Joseph did to his brothers, He showed mercy and brought us into the family.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Genesis 45:6-15**

Yesterday, we saw the connection to Jesus and we will see it again today. A remnant means something that is left over or a part of something. Marty Machowsik says, "God knew the famine was coming and all of Joseph's family would die if they didn't get food. So God sent Joseph ahead to Egypt so Jacob and his sons could be saved from the famine. They were important because God made His covenant with Jacob and

his father Isaac, and grandfather Abraham before them”.<sup>7</sup>

God was making sure that part of Abraham’s family is safe as Jesus was going to be born in this line. Remember the promise that God made to Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac? This plan of the famine was partly so Abraham’s line could continue and fulfill the words and prophecies spoken before hand. Wow... what intricate detail and planning.

Could you or I have come up with this plan? No way! No human could have thought all of this through. Just think, as of today (6 months), we haven’t even gotten out of the first book of the Bible and we see just how detailed, orchestrated, and intricate the plans of the Lord are. Thank the Lord today for His direction and His plans!

#### **Day 4**

#### **First Read Genesis 46:1-7, 26-30**

Everyone has differing opinions on how they feel about family reunions. Some people love them and some would rather just not have them. The family reunion we read about today, though, is not your ordinary family reunion. A son once thought dead is alive. A father who must have mourned for a while is now rejoicing and now the family is back together. Incredible!

The account of the relationship of Joseph and his brothers will continue, no matter how their story started. However, the reunion of father and son is totally different. We know from reading the account up to this point that God was in control and orchestrated all of this. It’s interesting to see all of the pieces that came together, even though it took years to happen.

Sometimes, we get to see all the pieces come together as the Lord works in a situation and, sometimes, we may not get to see it. Either way, we know that He is working and His plans and purposes will not be thwarted. As you go about your day today, think of the way God’s plan has played out in your life. Maybe you have experienced some bad or difficult situations but you have been able to see the Lord bring it all together. Maybe the Lord used you in someone else’s life because of your

<sup>7</sup> Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 134

experiences. Or, maybe you are going through a difficult situation and, hard as it is to see, you know God is working and His plan will prevail. Ask God to help you to trust His plan and His purpose. To God be the Glory!

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Isaiah 49:1-6**

This passage speaks of Jesus as God's servant! We know from John 1:1-14 that Jesus was the Word and became flesh and dwelt among men and women. God sent Jesus to carry out His plan to save the people from their sins. Today, Jesus saves us from our sins.

Think of Jesus being a servant! Jesus is God (Trinity), so the ruler of the universe lowered Himself and lived among humans. He lived among humans so that He could take the penalty of their sins and they could live with Him for eternity and know Him in a personal relationship! This is incredible and while we know this and experience it daily, may we not grow used to it or see it as something we deserve. Rather, may we be thankful for the gift of Jesus daily, many times throughout the day. Without Jesus we have only death, destruction, no peace, hell, just to name a few. With Jesus, we have life and when we pass from this life, we experience peace, heaven, freedom from sin, and fulfillment in Jesus. Praise be to God for what He has done for us. Remember, we did nothing to get it or deserve it; we just received it. We don't boast in what we did; we received what had already been done through Jesus Christ. Thank Jesus today for your salvation and what He did!

**We have concluded the period of Prehistory:  
Genesis 1-11**

**We have covered the Patriarchs:  
Abraham  
Isaac  
Jacob  
Joseph**

**Join us as we study Exodus:  
The Building of a Nation**