

Sunday – January 15, 2017

Preparation

As you prepare yourself for the coming “pursuit of Christ” by attending today’s church services, truly enter the day with a heart of worship. As the songs are sung, think about each word, rather than just absent-mindedly repeating the words. Truly hear the song’s message. Focus on the message being preached as the word of God is exposed. Perhaps today, we all should ask, as David asked, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

In the next five days of our pursuit of a deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ through the reading and studying of His word, we will come to the accounts of some of the most well-known men of the Bible: Jacob who will be the father of God’s chosen nation, Israel; Joseph, Jacob’s first-born son of his beloved Rachel; and we will be “introduced” to the man who shall be called Moses, “Because I drew him out of the water,” as stated by Pharaoh’s daughter in Exodus 2:10. We will read of how each of these men of God, were called of God to fulfill a particular purpose for God that is forever recorded in the word of God, for our “example” (1 Corinthians 10:6) and “ensamples” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Our reading will consist of all three layers of biblical application: historical (these events really happened and people and lived); prophetic (this history also pictures things that will happen in the future); and devotional (things of history, pointing to things of the future, and applicable to us today.) Though we will read of some deaths, we will also read of some births. Though we read of some beginnings we will also read of some endings. Through them all, we will see Christ in many ways pictured as our Sustainer, Shepherd, and Sole Deliverer so that no matter what trial, temptation, or terrible situation we are facing, we can trust that God is right there with us through it all so that we can say with the psalmist, “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” (Psalm 118:6)

Monday – January 16, 2017

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 32-36

OVERVIEW:

Jacob gets word that Esau is ensuing; Jacob wrestles with the Angel of God; Jacob's name is changed to Israel; the peaceful reunion between Jacob and Esau; Dinah, Jacob and Leah's daughter is raped; the revenge carried out by Simeon and Levi; Jacob's return to Bethel; God reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

When we left Jacob in chapter 31 in yesterday's reading, he had finally rid himself of his adversary, Laban. As chapter 32 begins, he has to concern himself with an even greater adversary, his own brother, Esau, who had threatened to take his life 20 years earlier.

But before he can be reconciled with his brother, he first needed to be reconciled with his God. Notice in 32:34 that "*Jacob was left alone.*" Many times God is most at work in our lives when we feel most alone. That night Jacob wrestled all night with the "man" who is the "angel" of Jehovah in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God brought Jacob to this place of aloneness because He wanted to break him. God wanted Jacob to cry "uncle," as it were, or in the words, of Galatians 2:20, "*Not I, but Christ.*" The key was in getting Jacob to face who and what he really was.

God asked Jacob his name (obviously, knowing it full well!), so that he would have to say, "I am Jacob." Or in other words, "I am a schemer, a deceiver, and a liar." Once Jacob admits his name, God graciously changes it! Jacob ("supplanter"), becomes Israel ("God prevails"), signifying one who has "power with God and men." Verse 31 indicates that God had given Jacob the dawn of a new day. He not only had a new name, but a new walk. For the rest of Jacob's life, he would walk with a limp.

Interestingly though, as chapter 33 begins, he is not living up to his new name and his new position with God. He is called "Jacob," not "Israel," and he "lifted up his eyes." (ie. He is walking by sight, not by faith.) He is a graphic picture of believers in Christ who are given a new name (Acts 11:26; Rev. 3:12) and a new position

(Phil 3:15; Eph. 1:4), yet don't live up to who they are "in Christ." Chapter 33 finds Jacob continuing his scheming, his lying, and his disobedience. Though he has the mark of God on his life, he is walking like the man he used to be before his life-changing encounter with God. Ephesians 4:22-23 says, "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*"

Keep in mind as we are reading of Jacob's "journeys," that back in chapter 31:13, God had called Jacob to return to Bethel. As he journeyed toward Bethel, the place of his vision and his vow, he discovered the beautiful valleys and opportunities for financial gain near Shechem (33:18). Jacob ended up staying there for 10 years (!), until his precious 14 year old daughter was raped by the king of Shechem's son. As an old song says,

Sin will take you farther than you want to go, Slowly, but wholly, taking control. Sin will leave you longer than you want to stay. Sin will cost you far more than you want to pay.

In chapter 35, God again reminds Jacob of his previous instruction to return to Bethel (31:11-13). Sadly, Jacob had been living in Shechem for 10 years, when Bethel was only 30 miles away! It serves as a great reminder to us that it is easy to be moving in the right direction spiritually, and yet fall far short of full surrender (Heb. 4:1,9,11).

In chapter 35, Jacob leads his family back to Bethel, where God reaffirms to him the Abrahamic Covenant, and the fact that He had changed his name. Praise God for His unbelievable mercy and grace!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In BENJAMIN – Gen. 35:16-19 Notice in this first mention of "Bethlehem" in the Bible, that a mother is told, "*Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.*" And she gives birth in the city of Bethlehem, to one to whom the father calls "*the son of my right hand.*" Centuries later, another mother is told, "*Fear not,... thou shalt... bring forth a son.*" (Luke 1:30-31). And she gives birth in the city of Bethlehem (Luke 2:4,7) to the One God the Father calls "*the Son of My right hand*" (Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3,13: 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

Tuesday - January 17, 2017

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 37-41

OVERVIEW:

Joseph's dreams; Joseph sold into slavery; the enticement and lies of Potiphar's wife; the imprisonment of Joseph; Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams; Joseph is made a ruler of Egypt.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The narrative in this section dealing with the life of Joseph is very interesting reading, completely self-explanatory; and the applications to the believers life are abundantly clear.

By "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:10, 13), however, this section reveals that Joseph is the most comprehensive type of Christ in the entire Bible! Consider these amazing "coincidences" (similarities) in the life of Joseph and Jesus.

1. Both were beloved by their fathers (Gen. 37:3; Matthew 3:17).
2. Both regarded themselves as shepherds (Gen. 37:2; Jn. 10:11-14).
3. Both were sent to their brethren by their fathers (Gen. 37:13, 14; Lk. 20:13; Jn. 3:17; Heb. 10:7).
4. Both were hated by their brethren without cause (37:4, 5; Jn. 1:11; 7:5; 15:25).
5. Both were plotted against by their brethren (Gen. 37:20; Jn. 11:53).
6. Both were severely tempted (Gen. 39:7; Mt. 4:1).
7. Both were taken to Egypt (Gen. 37:36; Mt. 2:14, 15).
8. Both were stripped of their robes (Gen. 37:23; Jn. 19:23, 24).
9. Both were sold for the price of a slave (Gen. 37:28; Mt. 26:15).
10. Both were bound (Gen. 39:20; Mt. 27:2).

11. Both remained silent and offered no defense (Gen. 39:20; Isa. 53:7).
12. Both were falsely accused (Gen. 39:16-18; Mt. 26:59, 60).
13. Both experienced God's presence through everything (Gen. 39:2, 21, 23; Jn. 16:32).
14. Both were respected by their jailors (Gen. 39:21; Lk. 23:47).
15. Both were placed with two prisoners, one of which was later lost, and the other saved (Gen. 40:2, 3, 21, 22; Lk. 23:32, 39-43).
16. Both were around thirty when their ministry began (Gen. 41:46; Lk. 3:23).
17. Both were highly exalted after their sufferings (Gen. 41:41; Phil 2:9-11).
18. Both took Gentile brides (Gen. 41:45; Eph. 3:1-12).
19. Both were lost to their brothers for awhile (Gen. 42:7,8; Rom. 10:1-3; 11:7,8)
20. Both forgave and restored their repentant brothers (Gen. 45:1-15; Micah 7:18, 19; Zech. 12:10- 12; Rev. 1:7).
21. Both were visited and honored by all earthly nations (Gen. 41:57; Isa. 2:2,3; 49:6).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In JOSEPH – (see connections made under HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS) By the WISDOM OF JOSEPH – Gen. 41:39 (Col. 2:2-3)

Wednesday – January 18, 2017

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 42-45

OVERVIEW:

Joseph's brothers buy corn and bow down to him; Simeon is detained and Benjamin is summoned; Joseph's brothers return to Egypt for food; Judah offers to take the place of Benjamin; Joseph reveals himself to his brothers.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As God spotlights the life of Joseph in these final chapters of the Book of Genesis, it is interesting how God introduces to us the life principle that "what goes around comes around" or, to state it in biblical terms, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* Ironically, Jacob, who willfully deceived his father by the skins of "the kids of the goats" (Gen. 27:16), is deceived by his sons in a similar manner in chapter 37:31-33.

The principle is often fleshed out in Scripture. For example, Pharaoh, who called for the destruction of God's people by the waters of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:15) saw his own people drowned by the waters of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28). Korah, who caused a division among God's people (Num. 16:1-3) was swallowed alive by a division in the ground (Num. 16:31-32). Haman, who built the gallows upon which to hang a godly Hebrew (Esther 5:14), was hanged from those very gallows (Est. 7:10). Because of this biblical principle, as adverse situations unfold in our lives, it is always a good practice to step back and ask ourselves, *"Is this happening in my life because I am reaping according to what I've sown?"* God may be trying to reveal to us how it is that we need to *"cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (II Cor. 7:1).

The whole story of Joseph's dealings with his brothers in this section foreshadows that coming day in another time of tribulation (Rev. 6:5-8) when the remnant of Israel will confess its guilt in connection with the death of the Messiah and will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son (Zech. 12:10).

As the brothers make their second trip back to Joseph, you can begin to detect a change of heart:

Judah, who so ruthlessly sold Joseph for profit with no concern for his father's heartbreak in chapter 37, pours out his heart in intercession before Joseph in chapter 44, offering himself as a slave to spare his father the doubly-painful

sorrow of losing Benjamin. Judah moved from selling his brother into slavery, to being willing to become a slave in his brother's behalf.

The brother's willingness to return the money.

And, the confession of the truth to Joseph's steward.

Though these were positive signs of their change of heart, they were also evidence that they were making some horrendous mistakes. Such as, taking Joseph a present, and confessing their sins to Joseph's servant rather than to Joseph himself. This mistake has been made by lost sinners throughout the history of the church. God works in the life of the sinner to bring him to the end of himself, and to God Himself, but many seek to win their salvation by what they bring to God, or by confessing their sin to a man rather than to God Himself. Or, like Judah, by making some sort of sacrifice. Salvation would be graciously offered to Joseph's brothers upon simple confession and repentance. Likewise, salvation in Christ is graciously offered to sinful men upon simple confession and repentance (Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 17:30).

Notice in 45:13, Joseph, the incredible type of Christ, tells his brothers, "... *tell my Father of all my glory.*" John 13:31 teaches those of us who are Christ's brothers (Heb. 2:11), that God is glorified as we glorify His Son! Tell the Father today of all of Christ's glory!

Philippians 2:9-11 says, "*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through JOSEPH'S DEALINGS WITH HIS BROTHERS – Gen. 45:4-15 (Heb. 2:11; Rom. 5:8)

Through JOSEPH'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE AFFAIRS OF LIFE – Gen. 45:5-8 (Eph. 1:17, 20-22)

Thursday – January 19, 2017

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 46-50

OVERVIEW:

Jacob's vision at Beersheba; the journey to Egypt; Joseph and the famine; the best land given to Jacob; Jacob blesses Joseph's sons; Jacob's prophecies upon his sons; the deaths of Jacob and Joseph.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In today's reading, Jacob begins the journey toward Egypt to be reunited with his beloved son, Joseph. At Beersheba, God spoke to Jacob in a vision of the night, assuring him that it was his will that he go to Egypt, and that though he would die there, God would eventually return His people to the Promised Land. As has been already noted, God is consistently hammering the point that Egypt is a downward move, and one must be brought up out of Egypt (Gen. 46:4). Egypt is a picture sin and the world.

When Jacob is reunited with Joseph, it has been 22 long years, with an incredible amount of "water that has passed under the bridge." Joseph is now 39, and Jacob is 130.

Joseph introduces his father to the Pharaoh and he grants Jacob the best part of Egypt for his family to settle in, an area called Goshen.

After 17 years in Egypt, Jacob realizes that he was close to death. He has one major thing that he makes Joseph promise him: "*Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.*" (47:29-31).

Chapter 48 records Jacob's (Israel's) last blessing. Joseph brings his two sons before his father, and he adopts them as his own sons and assures them of an equal inheritance. A strange thing happens as Israel bestows the blessing upon his sons. As Joseph brings his two sons before his father, Manasseh is brought toward Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim is brought toward his left hand. As Jacob reaches out to impart the blessing, he crosses his hands, giving the firstborn blessing of his right hand to Ephraim, the younger son. Though Joseph objected, Israel explained that God was once again going to bestow the firstborn blessing upon the younger son.

What is the meaning of this bizarre story? It is all an incredible picture! The Bible refers to Christ as the “firstborn among many brethren,” who is “seated at the Father’s right hand.” When we came before the Father, and asked Him to bestow the blessing of eternal life upon us, God the Father crossed His hands. Since He only has one gift of eternal life, and that life is in His Son (I John 5:11- 12), God took His right hand and placed it on us, and took His left hand and placed it on His Son. He gets our *sin*; we get His *righteousness* (II Cor. 5:20). He dies our *death*; we get His *life* (Rom. 5:10). He gets our *curse*; we get the firstborn *blessing* (Gal. 3:13-14).

The scene in chapter 50 as the dying Jacob calls his sons into his bedroom is not only incredibly prophetic (Gen. 49:1 – “*Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days*”), it is also an incredible picture! It is an extremely graphic and detailed picture of the Judgment Seat of Christ! (II Cor. 5:10-11)

As Joseph comes to the end of his life in Genesis 50, he has the same passion as did his father before him, manifest through one major request. He wanted to be certain that his bones did not remain in Egypt! Like his father, he wanted to be buried in Canaan. Why? Because Canaan was the land of Promise. Jacob and Joseph both realized, that though they were in Egypt (the world), they were not of Egypt (the world)! (John 17:11-16) Joseph’s request was not forgotten; 400 years they were not of Egypt (the world)! (John 17:11-16) Joseph’s request was not forgotten; 400 years later, as the children of Israel set out for Canaan, Exodus 13:19 says that they took Joseph’s bones with them. We also have the promise of God that He will not allow our bones to remain in Egypt (I Thess 4:11-17)!

Genesis begins with a man in a Garden and ends with a man in a coffin. It begins with life and ends with death. God says, “*The wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23) and “*sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*” (James 1:15).

As we conclude the Book of Genesis today, here is a simple way to remember the content of this vitally important Book. The Book of Genesis is comprised of:

FOUR KEY EVENTS (Genesis 1-11)

1. Creation (1-2)
2. The Fall (3-5)
3. The Flood (6-9)
4. The Tower of Babel (10-11)

FOUR KEY MEN (Genesis 12-50)

1. Abraham (12:1-25:8)
2. Isaac (21:1-35:29)
3. Jacob (25:21-50:14)
4. Joseph (30:22-50:26)

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through JOSEPH, WHO SUSTAINED LIFE AND OFFERED PROVISION FROM HIS POSITION ON THE THRONE – Gen. 47:15-17 (John 6:33)

As SHILOH, THE ONE WHO HOLDS THE SCEPTRE FROM THE TRIBE OF JUDAH – Gen. 49:10 (Luke 3:23-33)

Friday – January 20, 2017

TODAY'S READING: EXODUS 1-4

OVERVIEW:

The bondage of the Jews in Egypt; Moses' birth and early life in Egypt; Moses' flight into Midian; the burning bush; God commissions Moses and Aaron to deliver Israel; Moses' return to Egypt.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The word "*exodus*" means "*the way out.*" The Book of Exodus is the story of Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt. It should be noted as we begin this portion of the Bible, that more column inches are given to the record of Israel's exodus than any other thing in the entire Bible! It is the subject matter, not only of the Book of Exodus, but the Books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy! Why so much detail about one event? I Corinthians 10:1-11 tells us why. The exodus is not just a PORTION of Israel's history. It is a PORTRAIT of the Christian life! God tells us that we're given this incredible record of Israel's history, so that the same thing that happened to them doesn't happen to us! (see I Cor. 10:6,11) The sad reality is that for most believers, it does!

To help you to "*develop the pictures*" as we make our way through Israel's exodus, keep in mind that: EGYPT is a picture of the world and sin that is in opposition to God's people and seeks to hold them in bondage. (Eph. 2:2)

PHARAOH is a picture of Satan who exercises his will in taking God's people captive. (II Tim. 2:26)

ISRAEL is a picture of the individual believer. Please note that Israel is not a picture of the church! In Exodus 4:22-23, God plainly declares that "*Israel is my son*" and commands Moses to tell Pharaoh to "*let my son go, that he may serve me.*" In the New Testament, God reveals that as individual believers in Christ, we now possess the title, "*son of God*" (I John 3:2; John 1:12; Rom. 8:14). Making the proper connection between Israel and the individual believer will keep you from "*wrongly dividing the word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:13), and misapplying God's Word to your life.

MOSES is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the redeemer.

AMALEK is a picture of the flesh, which constantly wars with our spirits as we seek to walk with Christ (Gal. 5:16-17).

Keep in mind as you read about Israel's affliction in today's reading, that the Jews had gone down to Egypt and lived off the best of the land (Gen. 47:6). This luxury has now turned into sorrow and suffering. It is an inescapable principle of life! Sin promises freedom and happiness, but in the end, only leads to bondage and sorrow. Be constantly on guard against the "*deceitfulness of sin*"! (Heb. 3:13; Rom. 7:11; Eph. 4:22)

As the Hebrews remained in bondage for 400 years(!), it seemed as if God was either unaware or unconcerned of their situation. They, no doubt, felt forsaken, and wondered why God had not provided their deliverance. Had they only remembered what God said in Genesis 15:13-16, they would have known that God had already prophesied that the duration of their bondage would be 400 years. During these years when it seemed as if God was doing nothing, He was actually preparing His people (Ex.1), preparing the deliverer (Ex. 2-4), and waiting in mercy by giving the wicked nations of Canaan time to repent (Gen. 15:16). When you feel that God is unaware or unconcerned about your circumstances, remember that God is constantly at work in your life for your good and His glory (Rom. 8:28-29), even when you can't see it with your physical eyes!

At 40 years of age, Moses determined that it was time to accomplish the mission for which He had been called: to deliver Israel. There was only one problem, however. It wasn't God's time! Exodus 2:12 says that Moses "*looked this way and that.*" Moses wanted to do what God said, but he was walking by sight and not by faith (II Cor. 5:7). God had 40 years of training ahead for Moses in the land of Midian serving as a shepherd for his father-in-law's flock, before he would be prepared for the difficult task that lie ahead in leading God's flock.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through MOSES as SHEPHERD and DELIVERER – Ex. 3:1, 11 (John 10:11-14; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 5:4; Rom. 11:26; Titus 2:14)

Note: Moses is one of the most perfect types of Christ in the Bible. Moses himself makes this declaration in Deut. 18:15.

As the Great I AM – Ex. 3:13-14 (John 8:58; Heb. 13:8)

Saturday – January 21, 2017

Reflection

As we began our week together in the word of God, we were confronted with Jacob's appraisal of himself before an Almighty God. Jacob's statement might remind us of Isaiah's response we find in Isaiah 6:5, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." In studying the Bible, we find that when God reveals Himself to men, they see themselves in the light of His glory, causing a true reality of man's worthiness. Oftentimes, throughout "Christianity", it seems we might find ourselves actually believing that we deserve the gift that God provided through His Son, Jesus Christ. In reading the scripture and comparing ourselves to the stories at hand, let us never lose sight of our "unworthiness" and be thankful that He is worthy of all glory, honour, and praise.

The Bible, in providing its account of Joseph, reveals the reality of how truly magnificent this Book really is. Through the Bible's depiction of Joseph, we are able to get a sneak peek into the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph provides the greatest picture of our Saviour throughout the history of the Bible. By way of examination, or contemplation, keep in mind the very providence of God throughout Joseph's life, and furthermore Joseph's faith in God's overall plan. Perhaps all of us could take away this attribute from Joseph by trusting God, no matter what difficult scenario, or situation, we are facing. Again, Joseph provided living proof of the truths revealed in Romans 5:3-5, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

In beginning our study through Exodus, God reveals Himself in possibly the most incredible way He could. We find in Exodus 3:14 "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." As Moses is preparing to present himself before Pharaoh, he asks God, "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (Exodus 3:13). God's reply was simply, "I AM THAT I AM". Wow! What an incredible statement our God makes in relation to Himself. When the people of Israel were in need, God provided. When

they were lost, He was their direction. Praise God that even on this day God is still "I AM". He is God, He never changes (Malachi 3:6) however, He is all that we need whenever we need it. Let us be confident in the very fact that God is sufficient for all we need.

To further understand this thought, we could go to the Book of Revelation. In the first few chapters, there are letters written to seven different churches. As God authors each individual letter, we find that he presents Himself differently to each church, depending on their current situation and what is found is that through each situation these people faced, God appeared to them exactly as they needed at that time. Suffice to say God is truly "I AM". May we never find ourselves looking to another for satisfaction for we serve a God that was and will always be, "I AM".

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

Genesis 32:10 *"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."*

Genesis 41:38 *"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"*

Genesis 45:4 *"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."*

Genesis 47:23 *"Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land."*

Exodus 3:14 *"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."*