

## **Connecting The Dots - Second Edition**

### **Volume 2**

Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion, Christ, Cross, and Consummation. These are the 7 C's of history according to Answers in Genesis. We have already looked at the first four—creation, corruption, catastrophe and confusion. Now we begin moving toward the final three. However, there is much groundwork to be laid first.

This volume of "Connecting the Dots" begins with the line of Abraham rooted in the person of Shem, one of the three sons of Noah who survived the flood. This section will trace the life and family of Abraham, the family of Jacob and Joseph being taken to Egypt. Keep "Connecting the Dots" with us and every Sunday we will be on the same page.



## **WEEK 14 THE LORD APPEARS TO ABRAHAM**--Dennis Watson

This week we are dealing with a case of “Guess who’s coming to dinner.” The Lord and two angels appear to Abraham and Sarah (apparently as ordinary men) and somehow, Abraham was able to recognize this was the Lord God Himself.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Genesis 18:1-8**

Abraham and Sarah both have new names and have been living a long time with the promise of God. He had promised them they would have a very large family that would become a great nation. They had been waiting about twenty years and as yet, there is not a single child. Both Sarah and Abraham are now very old and beyond the time of having children. Three men come to their home and Abraham immediately recognizes that one of them is the Lord God, Himself, in human form. We do not know how he recognized that it was the Lord, but God has a way of revealing Himself. Abraham greets the three guests, enthusiastically inviting them to stay for a meal.

The visit was not due to Abraham’s invitation but because the Lord chose to visit him and Sarah with a message and a miracle.

I sometimes forget or lose sight of God’s promises. When promises are not fulfilled immediately it is easy to shrink back into a kind of faithlessness. This can become normal for many believers. Delay does not mean failure! God keeps the promises that He makes. Abraham and Sarah had gotten into a routine and were living with the anticipation of passing on their inheritance to their servant. The time of the actual fulfillment of the promise of a son was twenty-four years!

Be careful not to lose sight of the promises of God. Remember His track record. He is faithful.

## Day 2

### Read Genesis 18:9-15

Abraham and Sarah had waited twenty plus years for the fulfillment of God's promise for a large family. Now God appears to Abraham to remind him once again of the promise and to tell him the time will be soon for him and Sarah to have a son. Upon hearing these words Sarah, in another room, laughs because she knew both she and Abraham were way too old to have a child. So the words of God were like a joke to her, after all she was eighty-nine years old! The Lord asks Abraham why Sarah laughed. Sarah denied laughing although she did.

Sarah had certainly been told by her husband about the promises of God. But since the wait had been so long she had pretty much given up. We need to be careful about being too hard on her. God in His mercy did not punish Sarah, He kept His promise. God knew that one of her far-off grandsons, Jesus, would die on the cross to take away not only our sins, but Sarah's, too.

Many, if not all, of God's promises seem impossible. Just giving consideration to what has happened so far in Genesis seems impossible. As we think about the rest of what we read in the Bible and what is prophesied to come, it all seems impossible. However, God gives Sarah a very important reminder, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And, of course, the answer is "No!"

One of the blessings of reading and studying God's word is that the more we read and study, the more faith is produced in us. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17 NKJV)*

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Luke 1:26-38

You will notice that both Sarah and Mary had similar situations. They both received an announcement that they would have a

child. They both were in positions in which they could not become pregnant without a miracle. Sarah was too old and Mary was very young and not yet married and had not yet known a man, which was her way of saying that she was still a virgin. Both ladies received a message; God said that He could do anything! Nothing is too hard or impossible for Him.

There are no limitations on God! He has a plan and He will carry it out. His plan included giving Abraham and Sarah a son in keeping with His promise to make Abraham into a great nation. Neither Abraham's nor Sarah's age was an issue. God made a promise and He was the One to make it happen. He would not be hindered. The promise was to come through Abraham and it did.

The same was true with Mary. She was a virgin. God was determined to send His Son Jesus into the world to bring salvation. He was also determined that Jesus had to be born not of man. Jesus was not born in the line of Adam. He was not born of the seed of man. He was the new or second Adam. Not a new version of the old but an entirely new creation.

It is a blessing to know that nothing can thwart the plan of God! God makes promises and nothing will cause Him to not follow through on His promises—NOTHING!

Thank God that there is no one like Him who makes and keeps every promise meticulously.

## **Day 4**

### **Read Genesis 18:16-33**

When we are praying for others we are doing the very thing Jesus is doing right now. Jesus is always interceding for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). In the passage today Abraham prays for the people of Sodom. He definitely had a personal interest because his nephew Lot and his family were living there. God told

Abraham that He was going to Sodom to destroy it because of the evil that was there.

Do you think Abraham was a little pushy and, maybe a little arrogant? In Luke 18:1-8 Jesus told His disciples a parable to teach them that they “should always pray and not give up.” Abraham was praying for the deliverance of the people of Sodom. We should not be critical of his persistence but we should model it. Too often we give up in our prayers. We grow weary or feel like we should not bother God. He has asked us to pray and tell Him what we want and what we need. This is especially true when we are praying for others. Abraham prayed with vision—let there be fifty righteous, forty-five righteous, forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten. He was praying with vision that God would find at least ten righteous people and then for the sake of those ten, save the entire city. Apparently, there were not even ten righteous in Sodom.

Thank God for answered prayer in your own life. We sometimes pray and receive and never bother to give Him praise and thanks. Keep a prayer list and be vigilant. Do not give up. No one is beyond God’s reach.

## Day 5

### Read Psalm 8

Psalm 8 is a Messianic Psalm. It is called a Messianic Psalm because it is quoted in the New Testament in direct reference to Jesus Christ. Jesus makes reference to it in Matthew 21:16, rebuking the religious leaders because they told Jesus to silence the children because they were singing praises to Him. If the religious leaders knew scripture they would have known the children were fulfilling scripture.

Paul quoted from Psalm 8 when speaking of Jesus’ resurrection declaring that God had “*put everything under His feet*” (**1 Corinthians 15:27**). In Hebrews 2:5-8, the quote is a direct reference to Jesus.

Long before Jesus was born David was singing praises to Jesus. He was declaring that He would come and have dominion and bring salvation. It is no wonder that the Psalmist would open and close the song with the words *“O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth.”* Once again, from our perspective (our perch, so to speak), we should be singing praises to His excellent name.

The Bible is made up of sixty-six separate books written by forty different authors over a period of more than a thousand years. It is an incredibly integrated message system. When you read and study it you should be amazed that the real author was from outside time and space. God authored it through men but He is the true originator of the message. Give Him praise for who He is and what He has done!





## WEEK 15 GOD RESCUES LOT-----Chris Watson

God uses many things to speak to us, like the Holy Spirit and His Word. Sometimes God speaks to us and directs us how we should go (Prov. 3:5-6) and other times He gives us warnings of where not to go. He oftentimes gives us discernment on situations we might be dealing with. In the situation we will look at this week, God used angels to save a man and his family.

### Day 1

#### Read Genesis 19:1-14

The people of Sodom had the attitude of let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. They were doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, and however they wanted. This place was so wicked and perverse that the Lord was going to destroy it.

We remember that the Lord destroyed the whole earth because of the wickedness during Noah's time. Now we see He is going to destroy one city because of their wickedness and their desire to do things their way. The people of Sodom forgot God and were living however they wanted.

For the people of Sodom this didn't happen overnight, it happened one sin at a time. Scripture tells us that the enemy wants to kill, steal, and destroy. **James 1:13-15** says, "*When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*" As believers we must recognize sin for what it is, repent of it, and move on. It's when we continue in the sin that we find ourselves in a huge mess.

Today, if there is any willful sin in your life be honest before the Lord. Call on Him to give you strength over that sin. More

importantly, focus on Him; the more you focus on Him, the more likely that the sin(s) will take care of themselves.

## Day 2

### Read Genesis 19:15-16

Cars are built today with warning lights and signals that will light up on the dashboard if something is wrong. Often these lights indicate a problem and allow a person the chance to take the car to a mechanic before a more serious problem occurs. However, some folks might ignore it, forget about it, not have the money, or just not have the time or make the time to take it to a mechanic.

Lot was given several warning signs that there was something terribly wrong. What went on at his house the night the angels stayed was one warning. Then in this passage, the angels straight up tell him to get his family and leave or they too, will be swept away when the city is punished. Most would think that would be all that was needed to get out of town, right?

However, verse 16 says, *“he hesitated”* (NIV). For whatever reason, he didn’t respond to the angels’ warnings and didn’t leave when instructed. Thankfully though, scripture tells us the angels took them by the hand and literally led them out. God was truly showing His mercy and kindness to Lot and his family.

Most likely we have all had people in our lives that have grabbed us by the hand, physically or spiritually, and led us out of harm’s way. Can you think of a time the Lord used something or someone to lead you out of an area of sin or evil? Did you go right away or did you need some help? We often need people to grab us by the hand and lead us. What about you? Are you being like the angels and helping others get out of harm’s way, flee the scene of evil and sin, and lead them to Christ? Thank God for those who may have grabbed your hand and led the way. Ask the Lord for you to be that person for someone else.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read 2 Peter 2:6-9

Came to My Rescue, a song by Hillsong United says, “I called, you answered and you came to my rescue and I, I wanna be where you are”. This summer while at the beach, a family from another country was playing in the ocean and was totally unaware of the rip current. Moments later they began struggling and two lifeguards had to be called to help them out. They were unaware of the dangers of the rip current, but by the time they got out of the ocean, they were well aware.

There are times we are in need of rescue and realize it, as the song above says. There are also times we are not aware but we are still in need. God sent angels to let Lot know he needed to be rescued. It was literally a matter of life and death. Without God speaking to and rescuing him, he would have been wiped out also, as we see in Genesis 19.

We are all like Lot, whether we know it or not; we need to be rescued and we need Jesus to rescue us, because He is the only one who can. If you have called on the name of the Lord to save you from your sin and put your trust in Jesus, then you have been rescued. While salvation takes place in a moment we need to be saved from ourselves and the snares of this world every day. Thank God for saving you and ask Him often to save you from yourself and from this world and ask to walk in Him. We can't do it alone. Our only hope is in Christ! Is your hope in Christ? Is He your only rescue? If not, call on His name today to rescue you. If you already have, share the rescue with others.

## Day 4

### Read Genesis 19:16-29

If we obey God there are often blessings to follow and if we disobey, there are often consequences. We see this in scripture and we see it in our own lives. Can you think of times when you have

disobeyed God and it has cost you? Can you think of times when you have obeyed God and you have seen His blessings?

Oftentimes we think our own choices and decisions affect only us. We know that's not true. For example, Adam and Eve's decision to disobey started the chain of sin that we still wrestle with today. Thankfully, through Jesus, God has broken the curse of sin and death.

We may often categorize sin as either little or big sin, as if there is such a thing. From scripture we see that sin is sin, no matter what it is. There may be different consequences with sin, but it is still sin. In today's passage we see that Lot's wife chose to disobey God and it cost her, it cost her life. Of course, that affected Lot and his daughters. God used the angels to tell Lot and his family not to look back and if they did, they would be swept away (v.17). The consequence of disobeying what God said was very straightforward here. Yesterday we looked at the warning signs. This is not so much a warning sign as it was a command to flee and not look back, or else.

We can speculate as to the reason Lot's wife looked back. What we do know is she turned into a pillar of salt because she didn't obey. In scripture, we see all kinds of commands and ways we are to obey God. The greatest is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The truth is, if we are focusing on loving God with all we have, all the other commands, including loving our neighbor, will come as a result of that. Take some time today to think of promises that come with obeying God and also consequences of disobedience. Ask the Lord to help you to obey Him at all times, not looking back but pressing on.

## **Day 5**

### **Read Isaiah 42:1-3 and Matthew 12:18-21**

We have seen several prophecies fulfilled in the first twelve weeks and here we come to another. We see Isaiah's prophecy

in Matthew which is, of course, talking about Jesus. Sin is in the world, yet God is Holy. You and I are sinners; scripture tells us the wages of our sin is death. It would be bad if the news stopped there but we can thank God it doesn't! Verse 21 of Matthew 12 says the nations will put their hope in His name (Jesus). Jesus is our only hope.

In God's eyes, we are either forgiven or unforgiven. There is no choice. If we have put our faith in Jesus as the only way to have our sins taken away and realize our desperation for Him, we are forgiven. As we see in scripture, we will also continue in the faith knowing Jesus is our only hope. By placing our faith in Jesus our sins have been paid in FULL. If we haven't placed our faith in Jesus, then we are unforgiven and we will pay the price for our sin, death and eternity apart from Christ in hell.

Christ brought salvation, grace, and mercy and we see it in verse 20. It's very important that we understand verse 20 to help us get the context of the passage: "A bruised reed shall he not break. The reed, a hollow cylinder, if bruised has its strength destroyed. It thus becomes the symbol of the bruised spirit. The tender Savior will not break, but heal. Smoking flax/smoldering wick. The wick of the lamp that had ceased to burn clearly. The violent would put it out and fling it away. The Lord does not use such violence with those disciples who give forth some light, even if it is imperfect. Till he send forth judgment. Till he shall sit in power and triumph on the throne of judgment".<sup>1</sup>

Verse 20 reiterates again that our only hope is in Jesus. As Psalm **145:8** says, "*The LORD is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and rich in love.*" Today, may we bask in His love if we know Him and share it with others. If we don't know Him, maybe today is the day of salvation for you. Call on the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson's Notes on the New Testament. The Gospel According to Matthew.



## **WEEK 16 ISAAC AND ISHMAEL-----Dennis Watson**

It took a while, but God kept His promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son. The two sons, Ishmael, born of the slave woman, and Isaac, born of Sarah, brought conflict into the home. Ultimately Isaac, the son of promise, was the son through whom God brought the ultimate blessing to the world—Jesus Christ the Messiah.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Genesis 20**

Abraham, like all of us, was imperfect. It is often our thinking that the people who served God in the Bible were perfect. That was not so! What made Abraham great was not his exploits but his great God! In this account in Genesis 20 Abraham appears to be the ungodly man while King Abimelech shows himself far more upright than Abraham. Abraham, due to his lack of trust and dependence upon God, feels compelled to lie to the king and say that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife. As is often the case we forget that a half-truth is still a lie. It was a half-truth, because she really was his half-sister. But most importantly, she was his wife. His intention was to deceive to protect himself. God is our protector.

God is the one who makes us appear to be great. Look what God did. He warned the king in a dream that Sarah was a married woman. In doing so, God protected the king, Sarah, and Abraham! How many times has God protected you? God is faithful, period. I like to say that with the period because we want to say, “God is faithful, even when we aren’t.” Just forget the last phrase and rejoice in His faithfulness.

Just trust God enough to tell the truth and leave the outcome to Him. He can handle it and then we are free to be honest. This was the tug-of-war of trust. Abraham needed help with his unbelief. He believed the worst, the things that would probably never happen, and then he lived dishonestly.

## Day 2

### Read Genesis 21:1-7

*“And the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken.”* That is how the last part of verse 1 reads. God is a promise-making and promise-keeping God. Although a period of more than twenty years had passed, the promise of a child became a reality. And one thing was sure—God was the one who accomplished it! There was no room for any person to claim credit. Romans 4:19 speaks of Abraham’s body and Sarah’s womb being as good as dead. God can bring forth life out of deadness! Only God could be credited with a man of one hundred years old and a woman of ninety years old having a child!

Sarah and Abraham knew it. A sweet lady told me once, “I love it when God tickles me.” That statement made me laugh. Isaac’s name means laughter. For sure, every time Abraham and Sarah called Isaac’s name they were reminded of how God “tickled them.” By this time most people their age were grandparents and great-grandparents.

We have a “double tickle” on this one. We can join Abraham and Sarah in the amazement of having a son at their age. We can also rejoice greatly that God reached way out and brought as one of the blessings a far-reaching grandson of Isaac, Jesus Christ the Son of God and Savior of the world!

Give thanks to God for His incredible plan to bring salvation and to show His greatness in the impossible!

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read 1 Corinthians 1:28-31

I believe that there are no great people, only a great God. Any greatness that any person may achieve is because of the way God made them. Just think of some of the people who have been labeled great. Just think if they gave glory to the One who made



them and gave them the ability they had. God made it clear that Abraham and Sarah were mere recipients of His greatness. They had no claim to fame in the whole thing.

The same is true for us who have been made children of God through Jesus Christ. We have no claim on the glory of that. Ephesians 2 tells us that our salvation is by grace through faith and we are not to boast as if we had some hand in it. It is entirely a gift of God and it is from His glory and for His name's sake.

Whatever you have that you consider to be great and wonderful blessings, give thanks and credit to God. In doing so we come full circle; He blesses us so that He can bless through us. When you take credit you break the circle. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Is there something in your life you have taken credit for and have failed to give thanks and glory to God? Begin now to give Him praise and glory for the many incredible blessings He has given you.

## Day 4

### Read Genesis 21:8-21

Sarah and Abraham had plotted to help God out by making sure that Abraham had a son. We read about this in Genesis 16. The result of their unbelief and sin was the offspring of Abraham and Hagar. Ishmael was born and is called in **Galatians 4:23** the son of the *"bondwoman according to the flesh."* Isaac, on the other hand, was called the son of the *"free woman through promise."* You can imagine the tension this brought to the household. Not only was there sibling rivalry, but Sarah was jealous and wanted Hagar and Ishmael sent away. She was making sure that Ishmael had no place in the inheritance that was to come to Isaac.

God took care of Hagar and Ishmael, providing for their needs. He also promised to make Ishmael a great nation. In Genesis 16 it is said that Ishmael would be *"a wild man and his hand shall be against every man."* The conflict is obvious. Isaac was born as a

result of the promise. Ishmael was born as a result of man's fleshly decision, one of the promise and the other of the flesh. This tug-of-war continues today. Israel and her friends have been in conflict with the descendants of Ishmael ever since. Each of us finds a more personal tug-of-war going on in our own lives, the conflict between the spirit and the flesh.

Thank God for His faithfulness to accomplish His purposes. In the middle of conflict, jealousy, and struggle, it is easy to forget that God is still in control. When you face such times, be still and know that He is God.

## **Day 5**

### **Read Zechariah 6:9-13**

Just about every one of the fifth day of the week's devotion gives us the great opportunity to see that we are looking at the Bible from an incredibly privileged position. What a position! Don't take for granted that we get to read prophecy and then we get to see so much of it fulfilled. The events told about in the Bible sometimes appear random. They are not random. We need to approach the Bible with the understanding that it is the record of God's unfolding plan. Our part is to connect the dots.

God gives the prophet Zechariah a symbolic crowning which pictures the coming of Jesus Christ to reign on the earth. J. Vernon McGee says that the name of the three captives means "robust, God's goodness and God knows." When you put the three together with the crowning, not of a king but a priest, the symbolism is clear. God knows that through His goodness He intends to put His king on the throne and He will do it in a robust and powerful manner. The prophet uses a code name "*Branch*" for Jesus. Jeremiah 33:15 and Isaiah 11 use this code name connecting Jesus to the family line of David. Jesus will be God's King on the throne of David.

King Solomon, King David's son, built the first temple out of stones. Jesus builds a temple out of living stones, the people He saves by His death and resurrection. Today all believers together form the temple of God.

Give thanks to God for the "*Branch*" out of Jesse and David. Rejoice that you are in that connection!



We have all had tests in our lives. Growing up we took tests, but most often we knew what we needed to study to understand 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 put our faith God. This week we will look at one of those tests.

## Day 1

### 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.

Abraham 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, whatever may come your way, 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

### 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 Isaac's 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, 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, then to 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 for you to obey Him in everything, just like Jesus, even when it seems impossible.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read 1 John 4:9-10

As we saw from yesterday's reading, God provided a ram to be sacrificed instead 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**

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

The Old Testament is full of real life accounts of people who either disobeyed or 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 the 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 those around us and often those that are not near us. It can affect people that we may never know about. Ask the Lord today to help you obey Him in everything, realizing that you are not only obeying the Lord, but 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

### 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, *<sup>1</sup>“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; we had no hope. 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 18 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>2</sup>

Passing it on! God keeps the process of putting His plan into experiential reality rolling along. 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**

#### **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.

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<sup>2</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Today we think this was a strange way to find a mate, an arranged marriage. Can you imagine what people in that day would think about our “modern” method? We rely on feelings, looks, or likes and dislikes. 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 nor was he 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**

### **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 has 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 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**

#### **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 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, as best you know how, live in the middle of God's will.

As we read this biblical account, looking back through the Gospel account of Jesus, we know how important this romance and ultimate 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**

### **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 that even before he finished praying, Rebekah showed up. He told them of God's leading right up to the moment. When Rebekah's family heard the account they had nothing to say except that this is from the Lord, you can take her with you 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-six years at Harp's Crossing I have seen God unfold some amazing things, things that all we had to do was 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**

### **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, fulfillment and anticipate other promises 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 19 Jacob and Esau**-----Chris Watson

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

### **Day 1**

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

Our God is omniscient which means He is all knowing. There is nothing that God doesn't know! Isn't that incredible? God knows what each of our days will hold. He knows what will happen with any and all situations 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 God 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 take things into our own hands. Ask the Lord to help you to trust Him today, no matter what the situation.

### **Day 2**

#### **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 going on. 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 is alive and well.

We have all shown favoritism at one point or another in our life and probably still do 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 when we are tempted to show favoritism, we can be reminded God loves and cares for all. May we be reminded that we are to do the same.

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

#### **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 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>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 84

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.

If you have received God's free gift of salvation, thank Him. Thank Him that He gave it although you didn't deserve it, doing nothing to gain it, just receiving 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**

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

Remember that God told Rebekah that Jacob, the younger son, would rule over the older son? 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 was also 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. 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 Esau would sell his birthright. He sees all things. God knows our past, present and future, before any of them came 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 Psalms 19:7-14

There is a song that we sing 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 or anyone else for that matter. The only thing that redeems us is the blood of Jesus. That’s why, to most, 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 20 JACOB'S LIE** -----Dennis Watson

Keep in mind that we are moving through the historical account of God establishing Himself a nation of 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 already 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— Isaac and his big lie.

### **Day 1**

#### **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 to enable you to seek what is best for His Kingdom.

## **Day 2**

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

Faith is living without scheming; and 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>4</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 not a better word for what is going on in this family. Isaac and Rebekah connive to make sure what they want to happen, does happen. 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 and then he would bless Esau. Rebekah had to respond with her own scheme of deception. Both parents disregarded what God had said and set out to do things their own way.

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<sup>4</sup> Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch



Have you ever tried to help God? How did it work out for you? 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 and 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!”

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

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

In today’s passage Peter is preaching. It has been about eight weeks since Jesus had gone into heaven after 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 saw 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 a 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 that 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

### Read Genesis 27:19-40

Is it possible for that which God saved us from to also be 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 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.

Have you ever cheated? Have you ever felt that you needed to fight back? Can you do what is right and leave the rest to God? This 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 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

### 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 the code name for Jesus; the person in the future 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, 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 21 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, but then 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**

#### **Read Genesis 27:41-28:9**

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, 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 twelve sons that 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 descendants would be as the stars in the sky, and today we read this continuing 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. 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, He can use for good!

## Day 2

### Read Genesis 28:10-17

In the Old Testament times, we read how God often spoke through dreams and visions. 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 and God also promised to see this promise through! We also read that when Jacob 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 He 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. God's promise to Rebekah that Jacob (the youngest son) would be served by the older 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 often mess things up, His plan remains perfect. Thank Him for keeping His promises. Take some time to thank God for His grace and be thankful His plan always prevails!

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read John 1:43-51

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

Verse 51 of John 1, talks about the angels of God ascending and descending. We also know of this in the OT 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."*

It is incredible that Genesis 27 and 28 are connected with John 1 and John 14. This again goes to show us how the dots are connected in 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 everywhere. Take 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 the Old Testament or New.

## Day 4

### 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, what 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 to worship and thank 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 gratitude!

## Day 5

### Read Isaiah 11:1

Hopefully we are beginning to see just how much the Old Testament is important 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. He was telling us of Jesus and it would be hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus.

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 the earth. From healing to raising the dead, but most importantly, He died for our sins. He was simply doing the Father's will. John 15:5 speaks of how 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 22 JACOB AND RACHEL** -----Dennis Watson

When you are in love time does not matter. Well, how would you feel 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**

#### **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, the 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 home town 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 was 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 was happening that she leaves her flocks, runs all the way home, and tells her family what had taken place. Her father Laban goes to the well and invites Jacob to their home.

Here we see 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—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**

### **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 for seven years 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 their future. He was not concerned with just finishing his time or getting in his hours. It was all about his life, 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 in 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

### 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 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

### 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. Adam, Seth, Noah and Shem, we have seen in our study. 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 has been, all along the way, working out His plan with precision. The names are not there just for 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 ancestors, 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, and to, ourselves alone. We have been influenced and we influence. We have spiritual family trees as well as 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

### 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. The 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—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>5</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! For us, 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 also, like the people of the Old Testament, get to live in 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!

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<sup>5</sup>Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.



## **WEEK 23 Jacobs Flees from Laban**-----Chris Watson

This week we will read that 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**

#### **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.

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

Here we see a continuation of the promise given to Rebekah in chapter 35. A promise that Jacob would rule over his brother. God's plan all along was to bless and use Jacob for His glory, and here in this passage, we see the continuation of that plan. No matter what we face or what we go through in our lives, 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

### Read Genesis 31:10-21

Remember **Genesis 28:13-15** 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 beginning 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 him. 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 did. He promised to bring him back to the land of his fathers 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. Thank Him that He is faithful one hundred percent of the time.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### 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, 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 is 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. When Herod couldn't get his way and was outwitted, he gave the command for all boys in Bethlehem two years old and under to be killed. This is evil at its finest, a dictator giving orders to kill all male babies.

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

## **Day 4**

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

Laban was now hot on Jacob's heels! He was angry that Jacob had left, especially without saying anything. In addition, Laban felt that everything that Jacob had really belonged to him. 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. However, God's promise must have still been somewhere in Jacob's mind that God would allow him to return home safely. Even in the trials and difficulties that he was facing in being hunted down, he could trust in God's promise.

The good news is we know how it ends! Revelation 22 tells us that Christ is coming soon and He will come to take His followers

with Him. Although between now and then we may face difficulties, trials, temptations, and hard times, we know how it ends. God will protect us and keep us till the end. Jacob knew no matter what happened God would see him home. We can rest assured, that as believers, no matter what happens Christ will see us home. 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

### Read Psalm 3

In Psalms 3 we see David fleeing from his son, Absalom! What a sad and terrifying time this must have been for David. Through chapter 3 though, we see how David puts his hope and trust in the Lord even when his very life was in danger! Most likely, most of us do not fear for our own physical life, we don't have anyone on our heels trying to kill us. However we should still be able to relate with the words of David. For instance 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 these 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 from this. 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. His life was in danger, but he put his hope and trust in the Lord. Ask God to help you put everything you are into everything He is!



## **WEEK 24 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, finding 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 and God gives him some reassurance.

### **Day 1**

#### **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 go to the home of his father, Isaac. He did not leave on the best of terms with his father-in-law but that had been 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. Then God gave him encouragement with the angels. In today's passage once again Jacob is fleeing, this time from Laban. He is about to have an encounter with Esau, his brother, who according to his last words wants to kill him. So he is desperately in need of some encouragement. He again encounters the "*angels of God.*" And, once again Jacob gives the place a name—'Mahannaim' 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, however, he was about to meet up with his brother Esau. God is so gracious to give us little reminders of His presence with us. 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

### Read Genesis 32:3-21

What would you do, or what have you done, when you had to meet up 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 as gifts for Esau. His was trying 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 now 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 reminds God of the promise to make him into a great nation with many descendants.

Give thanks to God for His undeserved blessings; which are all of His blessings. 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

### 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 God 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 for me, 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, and then the angel asked Jacob to let him go. 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? This is what could be called a theophany or an appearance of Jesus. 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

### Read Genesis 33:1-11

Imagine the 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 a 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 them 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 of animals and all the gifts. He asked what they were all about and Jacob tells him they are a gift. Esau graciously declined, but Jacob insisted.

Esau had already forgiven Jacob but now Jacob receives it. 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 had, from the earliest of time (and beyond time), plans 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, isn't there someone you need to forgive?



## Day 5

### Read Zechariah 10:3-6

The people of Israel had been carried off into exile and were now returning. This is the time when Zechariah started his prophetic ministry encouraging the people to spiritual renewal. He was also motivating 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."<sup>6</sup> That is to say, that 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 corner stone.*" In the New Testament Jesus is called the corner stone 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 corner stone 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 corner stone 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 corner stone. He is the foundation of the spiritual house God is building (See 1 Peter 2:5).

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<sup>6</sup>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956, 5:3136.

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 do not miss Him!



## **WEEK 25 Joseph's Dream**-----Chris Watson

Where is your trust? This week and next we will see that Joseph trusted God in some adverse circumstances, even when it wasn't easy. Over the course of several years God used Joseph because He was willing to follow God's plan and His ways, and trust Him instead of his own plan and ways.

### **Day 1**

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

You might remember in 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 what he promised. He tells his people to get rid of the foreign and fake gods and 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 their foreign gods. But this day they would put those away and not worship them, they would worship the One True God. Of course houses, money, jobs, etc., in and of themselves, are not evil, but when we worship them or put them in place of God, they become like a god. What or who in your life have you placed as your security or god? Lay that before God today and tell Him you want to trust Him with everything in your life.

## Day 2

### 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. But wait, haven’t we already seen something like this? We have -- remember Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob? Now we would think that Jacob would have learned from this, but he didn’t. In fact, Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers, 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 hurt a lot of our relationships with others. It is good to go before the Lord with any envy that may be in our hearts and ask Him to work on our hearts. As we will see later in our devotions, envy taken too far can 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

### Read Genesis 35:9-12

In today’s passage we see Jacob’s name being changed to Israel. If you watch the news these days, you see a lot of things going on in and around Israel. Not only would Jacob’s name be changed to Israel but this would 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 they 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) in that He would give him the land that was promised to those before him. God had kept His promise that started with Abraham and was now passed down to Israel.

All this 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 was part of His plan. It is so encouraging 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 long before Jesus was born to Mary, His plan was being orchestrated, even before time began.

## **Day 4**

### **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 account, and also from what our own reaction might be, that telling the brothers about the dreams he had only made them hate him more, as we see in verse 8. Joseph could have kept the dreams to himself if he had wanted to, but as a part of God’s plan, he relayed them to his brothers and his father.

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

Has God ever given you a word that seemed maybe strange or not right for where you were in your life? You wondered maybe if

it was for someone else or maybe you just heard wrong. However, as time went on you realized that God gave that word for 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 that he had, that were from God, 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 and you need to remember the word for later. Thank God that He speaks to us through His Word, prayer, and others, and seek to hear His voice today.

## Day 5

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

God revealed His plans to Jacob and 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>7</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 pointing to Jesus. It's so exciting to see the very first book of the Bible and the last book connected with literally hundreds of years in 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

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<sup>7</sup> Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 116

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, the One Ruler, the Giver of Life, and life itself. Today may we take His name to our family, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, and to the nations!





## WEEK 26 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 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

#### 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. 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 approached, their attitudes turned to a murderous plot and another plot to cover it up. It was not just an attack on their brother, but their father also.

You see here the danger of secret sins. To hold on to a sinful thought is like holding on to a firecracker that has already been lit for too long! I did that when I was a kid and just about blew off my fingers and lost my hearing. In James 1:15-16, you find what I call the anatomy of sin. Sins begin 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, and added to that, there was mob mentality. All of his brothers together were displeased with their brother. Although one of the brothers alone probably would not have hurt him, together the mob mentality caused them to feed on each other.

Have you ever been part of this type of situation? 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!

The good thing is, God really does cause things to work together for good! Give thanks to God for His goodness toward us no matter what we do.

## **Day 2**

### **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 and 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 plans 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 both trying to do “the lesser evil.” Reuben returned and he was very upset when he saw that his brother, Joseph, was gone out of the pit. He had been sold to traveling traders who would eventually take him to Egypt and sell him there.

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

Isn't it wonderful 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**

#### **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 which turned out for good. Jesus went to the cross in what appeared to be a tragic situation. However, God accomplished salvation through His rejection and death.

Judas and Joseph's brothers received payment for their betrayal. Did the money do them any good? Of course not! As far as the 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; is it deceptive.

Thank God for His incredible plan!

## Day 4

### Read Genesis 37:31-36

All of the brothers compounded their crime with a lie. This was a cover-up! They killed a goat and put the blood on the special coat 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, 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. 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. But not only does it compound, 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, their brother 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!

## Day 5

### 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. It is also Balaam's donkey that 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 king 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 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, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it 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 in 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!



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