

# OLD TESTAMENT BIBLICAL LITERACY

## *Lessons 6 & 7*

### GENESIS – Parts Five & Six

#### THE STORY

#### Preparation for The Kingdom In Its Old Testaments Form

#### 1. **The Fall and the Need for Redemption.**

Genesis begins with God's good creation. God and man live in "kingdom" or relationship together. God walks with man. God talks with man. Life is utopia with no tears and no problems, just complete harmony.

Then enters sin, and with it, death to perfection. Man is removed from direct relationship with God. Man and the world are no longer part of God's kingdom. They are fallen. They are under a curse. They are the domain of the enemy, Satan.

In the midst of the fall, however, God prophesizes a redemption through the offspring of woman. God will bring his kingdom back to man. God will redeem man back into direct relationship/fellowship. God will do so through woman's offspring. Genesis will spend its remaining pages following the offspring that hold the promise of redemption.

#### 2. **Adam to Abraham.**

The first eleven chapters of Genesis unfold the lineage between Adam and Abraham. We do not hold all the keys to understanding how the lineage is counted. The thrust and point of the lineage is to verify that Abraham (Abram at first) is in fact offspring from Adam, Eve and Seth.

In addition to charting genealogy, these chapters recount two stories of importance: the flood of Noah (6 - 9) and the Tower of Babel (11).

##### A. The Flood

With the flood narrative, we learn several things:

1. Wickedness breeds;
2. Wickedness is destined for God's destruction;
3. God's next destruction of wickedness will not be a mere flood.

The flood also delivers a powerful testimony that God, in the middle of a wicked and destructive world, will still bring his redemptive promise to fruition. God's people will be redeemed to live in his kingdom.

B. *The Tower of Babel*

Chapter 11 contains the Tower of Babel story. From this story, we learn several lessons:

1. A united mankind can accomplish a lot;
2. Mankind will NEVER build or find his way to God;
3. Mankind's division (in heritage and language) will be overcome only when God brings man together.

3. **Abraham to Egypt**

A. *Abraham*

Abram is called out of his home in Ur to find his way in uncharted territory. He goes in faith and becomes our first model of following God without personal knowledge of where we will end up.

With this faithful journey, comes God's promise. God will bring his kingdom through Abram (Gen. 12:2-3). Abram's travels take him from Ur, to Haran and parts of Canaan, to Egypt, and back Canaan.

As Abram travels with his family, he is put in situations that show both strength of character and weakness. Repeatedly, Abram has difficulty with honesty as he seeks to protect the virtue of his wife Sarai. Because of Abram's shortcomings, we see God stepping in to clean up Abram's mess, protecting not only Sarai's virtue, but the purity of God's kingdom promise.

Abram's integrity and faithfulness are shown in recounting Abram's treatment of Lot. Abram doesn't perceive a need to orchestrate or force a fulfillment of God's plan and promise. Abram lets Lot choose his lot. Abram will lay his life on the line to war and rescue Lot. In the midst of these events, we see God's promises renewed and further explained as Abram is faithful. But while we see Abram peacefully allowing God's plan to unfold, panic seems to set in with Sarai. She decides God is going to need some help with his promises to Abram. So Sarai tells her husband Abram to sleep with Sarai's maidservant (Hegar) in hopes of securing offspring.

Abram's and Hegar's union results both in a child (Ishmael) and in discord. God has mercy on Hegar, and Ishmael becomes the progenitor of the Arab nation.

Years later, Abram's covenant from God is renewed with a rite of circumcision. God changes Abram's name to Abraham. Abram meant "exalted father"; Abraham meant "father of many". God also changes Sarai's name to Sarah and proclaims that Sarah will give birth to a son. Abraham is to name the son, Isaac.

Importantly, we repeatedly read of Abraham's misdeeds along with his faithfulness. Genesis records clearly that Abraham's faith is reckoned as his righteousness.

Around the same time, God decides on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. After some fierce negotiations, Abraham is unable to save the towns. Lot and his family, who had not been dwelling in Sodom, are rescued only to learn a lesson about not looking back.

Meanwhile, Abraham has another problem protecting Sarah's virtue. God again intervenes and Sarah is returned to Abraham. Sarah then conceives and gives birth to Isaac. The stage is now set for a profound foreshadowing of God's ultimate redemption plan.

God instructs Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. In this ultimate challenge of faith, we see the issue Abraham is faced with: God has promised his kingdom and redemption through Isaac and yet is calling for Isaac's life. Before the sacrifice, Isaac asked his father where was the sacrificial lamb. Abraham answers prophetically, "God himself will provide the lamb." (Gen. 22:8). As Abraham is about to kill Isaac, God intervenes sparing Isaac, and giving a ram for temporary sacrifice, awaiting the day God would provide the lamb.

#### B. Isaac

Sarah dies leaving Abraham to find a wife for Isaac. Isaac finds negotiating with his cousin an opportunity. Isaac wins the hand of Rebekkah and marries.

#### C. Jacob and Esau

Abraham passes away and, after some difficulty, Rebekkah becomes

pregnant with twins. God specifies his kingdom and redemption are going to come from the younger of the twins (Gen. 25:23).

Rebecca's twins (Esau and Jacob) are as different as night and day. Esau is Dad's favorite while Jacob is Mom's. Through manipulation, Jacob "buys" Esau's birthright. Through deceit, Jacob gets Isaac's blessing through Esau. Jacob runs off.

While Jacob is off and running, God visits him in a prophetic dream. In the dream (Gen. 28:10 ff), God has angels ascending and descending a ladder that extends from heaven to earth. Jesus will later explain the prophecy in this dream as his crucifixion. God explains to Jacob the dream, in reflective of God's kingdom and redemption which will flow through Jacob.

Jacob flees the family where he seeks the hand of Rachel for marriage. The deceit Jacob lived comes back around to him as he negotiates for Rachel. After 14 years of labor, we see that Jacob has paid for his marriage to two women, including the one he wanted.

Both wives bear children, although Leah does so much more readily. Jacob is prospered much to this disdain of his in-laws. He recognizes an opportunity to leave and manages to escape -- only to find his brother Esau with an array of servants. Jacob spends the night wrestling with God and then implements his strategy for meeting Esau. Time must have healed wounds, because Esau doesn't seek to kill Jacob. Esau and Jacob make their peace.

Jacob returns to Bethel with his family that now includes twelve sons. Jacob is visited from God. God blesses Jacob and changes his name to "Israel" meaning "he struggles with God." Shortly thereafter, Jacob loses his wife Rachel in childbirth and his father Isaac.

Among the twelve sons of Jacob are two born of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. They are the youngest of the brothers. They are also Jacob's clear favorites.

The favoritism Jacob shows does not sit well with the rest of the family. Aggravating the disharmony and sibling rivalry were both the dreams Joseph would have about his own greatness and the way Joseph would share these dreams with his brothers.

D. Joseph

Eventually the brothers decide to take matters into their own hands. At first, they choose to kill Joseph, but then change their minds and just sell him into slavery in Egypt. The brothers then destroy their Dad's heart by making him believe Joseph was killed by wild beasts.

Meanwhile, Joseph rises to prominence in Egypt working for Potiphar, the Captain of Pharaoh's guard. The prominence is short lived, however, because Joseph opts for virtue instead of his master's wife.

This choice lands Joseph in prison where he becomes a clear and accurate interpreter of dreams. This dream ability is clearly from God. It ultimately results in Joseph's liberation from prison. It also catapults him into the number two power position in Egypt, right behind Pharaoh.

With Joseph running the Egyptian food supply during years of famine, his brothers come to Egypt. Time and culture have made enough difference where the brothers do not recognize Joseph. Joseph, however, does recognize the brothers.

Joseph's own dreams come true as his family comes as subjects for his aid. Ultimately, the entire family comes to Egypt to live out the famine and enjoy the blessings of Pharaoh. Jacob dies a happy man with his children. Joseph maintains his love and commitment to his brothers and family until his ultimate death as well.

Thus ends Genesis.