

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 1:1---2:4

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

G. Campbell Morgan, great preacher of two generations ago, toured the Observatory in California. His guide, an old man who had been working there for nearly 50 years, helped him get a glimpse through the telescope of the vast reaches of the starry heavens. Morgan was amazed and expressed his awe. The old man looked at him and said, "If you care to have it, I will give you a scientifically accurate description of this earth." Morgan said, "Of course I would care to have it. What is it?" The old guide said, "This is a scientifically accurate description of the earth: The earth is next to nothing."

Next to nothing! Atheists say that. Unbelievers say the very smallness of the earth proves our Bible to be wrong. As a matter of fact, this earth of ours is just one of 100's of millions of planets and stars in space. Even the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the earth." So why name the *earth*? Because earth is the scene of the drama of the Bible. The Bible is not about the sun, moon, or other planets or stars, except to recognize and refer to them. In God's only Book the scene of all its activity is this earth on which we are living!

Genesis means "Beginning." The first chapter of Genesis reveals the beginning of matter and life. Perhaps you have had someone say to you that Genesis is man's mythological explanation of the universe but evolution is the truth about it. It is imperative that you know which is truth and which is myth. What you believe about the origin of the world and man has direct bearing on your standard of values and morality. What you think about where you came from and why you are here will, to a large extent, determine how you live and where you will live after you leave this world. Come to BIBLE SCHOOL and learn the truth about it!

THIS IS MY FATHERS WORLD....GOD CREATED IT AND HE SUSTAINS IT.....THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION IS MERELY A MYTH AND HAS NO BASIS IN FACT! ptb

QUESTIONS:

1. Why doesn't Genesis tell about the beginning of God? Is the term "God" man's attempt to hide his ignorance of the origin of the universe or does such a person really exist? 1:1
2. What did God use to make the heavens and earth? 1:1
3. How did the Spirit of God "move"? Hebrew, *merachipheth* (see Deut. 32:11 where the same word is used). 1:2
4. How could there be light before the sun was created? Does the Bible disagree with scientific knowledge here? 1:3,14-18
5. Does the statement "each after its own kind" mean that there could be no *evolution* of the species (or genera, or phyla, etc., etc.)? 1:11,21,25
6. Is Genesis wrong in stating that God created the universe in 6 days? Evolutionists say it took billions of years to form *itself*! Could the "days" be metaphors for billions of years! 1:31 & 2:1-4
6. Newspapers often claim scientists have created life in a test-tube---have they? What is life; where did it originate? Did it arise spontaneously? 1:26-31
7. God created mankind in his own image. How does that make man different from the rest of God's creation---or does it? 1:27-28 Are animal-rights equal in importance to human-rights?

Some years ago Omni magazine carried an article entitled "When God Plays Dice With the Universe: Connoisseurs of Chaos." Too bad, but the "Connoisseurs of Chaos" are all wet! God does not "play dice" with the universe. God did not create the universe to be a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited and he rules it with divine order. This is precisely what Isaiah the prophet said in Isa. 45:18

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 2:5-25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

God is a social being. He proved that when he came in the flesh in Jesus Christ and socialized with his creatures. God made man a social being, too. Social beings, by their very nature, have to commune with one another. Above every other relationship man needs, must have, and often cries out for, communion with his God.

The ancient psalmist wrote, "As a hart (deer) longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for the living God." Psa. 42:1-2. David, in the wilderness, pursued by enemies and betrayed by friends, cried, "O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is...because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise thee." Psa. 62:1-3

A living, social being must be spiritual, have a language, be able to communicate; and have a place to live and work so as to exercise his spiritual powers; have a moral law by which he communicates his acknowledgment of truth, love and goodness; have other beings like himself who will help him grow in his spirituality; and above all else, have free unfettered access to his Creator.

When God made man a social being, he also provided all the circumstances necessary for man's perfection in spirituality. Man was made with the ability to think, choose and communicate his personality through words. Eden (Paradise) was given to man to build and protect so his "creative" powers might be developed. Man was given a law by which to live, love and grow. Someone (woman) just like him---only different---was created to help him be spiritual. And God walked and talked with them in Paradise.

This is the ideal picture of man. God communing with man, man communing with God---talking with God and listening to him. Only when the world, through the church, returns to that conception of God and man, is there any hope that Paradise will be restored. God made man and woman for Paradise.

QUESTIONS:

8. Is there a contradiction between Genesis 1 & 2 concerning creation? Was man created *before* animals (2:18-19) or vice versa (1:24ff)?
9. Why water the earth with a "great mist" instead of rain? 2:5-6
10. What is unique about man's creation? 2:7
11. Where was Eden located? If Eden was perfect, why did man have to "till" it, and "keep" it? 2:15
12. What is wrong with eating of the tree of the "knowledge" of good and evil---must we not know what is wrong before we can know what is right? 2:17
13. Do you think the names of "all" living creatures today are what Adam originally named them? 2:19
14. Why couldn't man find a helper fit for him among the animals? Since Adam had all his animal "friends" plus his God, how could he be "alone"? 2:18-22
15. Were Adam and Eve married when they lived in Eden? 2:23-25
16. How could they be naked, and not be ashamed? 2:25

"Visitors to Delhi, India, often go to see the Red Fort of Lal Qila, built by the same Shah Jahan who built the Taj Mahal. Behind the walls they get a glimpse of what life may have been like when the emperor resided there. He sat on a throne of pure gold, inlaid with rubies, diamonds and sapphires. Musicians and dancers entertained him, and in the gardens lovely fountains splashed. On the wall of the Hall of Private Audience, you can still read the inscription, 'If on Earth there is Paradise, It is This, It is This, It is This.' The most important word is the first; If. We all know there is no paradise on this earth, and if there is a paradise anywhere, it must be in the world that is yet to come."
---1000 Windows, by Robert Shannon

Dr. Stephen Langdon of Oxford University, has found that the earliest Babylonian inscriptions suggest that man's first religion was a belief in One God and from that there was a rapid decline into Polytheism and Idolatry.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 3:1—4:26
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

"If I had been Eve or Adam, living in Paradise, given all their advantages and innocent of any wrong, I would never have listened to that old Serpent!" How often we all have said or thought something similar to that? But what we think we *would* have done is somewhat different than what we have done! We have all sinned!

And what tragic consequences sin brought to God's "good" creation! Of first significance is the guilt, shame and *alienation* from God incurred by man. No longer was he able to walk and talk with his Creator. He lied, he evaded, and he hid. The tempter, who had promised so much freedom, turned out to be man's enemy and enslaver. Sin merited God's curse upon his creation. Pain and frustration between man and his earthly habitat was the sentence. Then, the pronouncement of a dreadful dissolution of the human body and its return to the dust of the earth was God's ultimate sentence in this life for sin.

Because Eve and Adam thought about rebellion against God and actually experienced evil, the possibility to do the same was opened up to every human being descended from them. So the Bible becomes the tragic story of their offspring, sinning, hating, and killing one another (Cain and Abel, *et.al.*).

But wait! There is a flash of brilliant light in the midst of this darkness! There is hope; there is love; there is grace, and it comes from God. It is the *Proto-evangelium* (Gen. 3:15). God promises to make man victorious over the evil tempter. The Seed of woman shall *crush* the head of the serpent.

A Man will come, born of woman. He will be attacked by the tempter and offered the kingdoms of this world if he will rebel like his ancestor, Adam. But he will not do so. He will not sin. He will earn back man's standing before God as Man, Very Man. For all men who trust him and enter into his covenant, the war will cease. Peace between believers and God will be forever established. And man may enter into eternal life.

*"The will of God will never lead you where the grace
of God cannot keep you."*

QUESTIONS:

1. Where did evil begin? Why? 3:1
2. Was this a real serpent? 3:1 (see John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 19:9; 20:2). Was there some other being involved in this scene? Who?
3. How could another being use a "beast of the field" against man" (see Num. 22:28; Matt. 8:31; Mark 5:11; Luke 8:32; 2 Cor. 11:14).
4. Can you identify all the *subtleties* the devil used in his seduction of Eve? 3:1-6
5. What was the response of the woman and the man when God confronted them with their rebellion? 3:8. Why did they react in such a manner?
6. Why did Adam blame Eve? 3:12. Was it all Eve's fault? Aren't human beings now wise enough to deal forthrightly with their sins?
7. Was it right for God to curse the serpent which *he* allowed to tempt Eve? 3:14
8. Why was Abel's sacrifice pleasing to God and Cain's not? 4:1-7
9. Are you your brother's keeper 4:8-16 (see Luke 10:29-37); 1 John 4:7-12; Rom. 15:1-3). What was the "mark" God put upon Cain?
10. Where did Cain get his "wife"? 4:17

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, "For all of sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these, 'It might have been.'"

Bret Harte countered, "If, of all words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these, 'It might have been,' More sad are these we daily see; 'It is, but hadn't ought to be.'"

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 5:1—7:24

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“What’s this world coming to—society’s going to the dogs!” So said Mr. & Mrs. Noah, or something similar, as they sat eating their beans and cornbread one evening. Well, we don’t know if this is *exactly* what they said, but they undoubtedly discussed the wickedness of their society many times. They also daily vowed to remain true and faithful to Elohim, the God of their ancestors, and to instruct their children to do the same.

Then one day God spoke to Noah and told him judgment was about to fall upon the wickedness of that society and it would destroy the whole world, except those who believed in God and kept his commandments. God told Noah how to be saved from this judgment. He also told Noah to preach this plan of salvation to the whole world. Noah preached 120 years and only 8 people believed him. The day came when Noah was called to leave his world behind forever—Noah and his family obeyed God and were saved.

Do you ever sit around your supper table, watch the news, and say, “What’s this world coming to—society’s going to the dogs”? Listen! It’s coming to judgment—again—but worse than in the days of Noah, this judgment will be final. The Biblical account of Noah is no “fairy tale.” God *did* destroy the whole world of mankind and all living things except the 8 people who believed what he told them. The fossils in the earth prove it!

Jesus is coming again “to render vengeance upon those who do not know God and who do not *obey* the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:8). That is no “fairy tale” either! Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is commanded to take his word to the whole world. The believer is not responsible for the response—only for being the messenger. Those who hear are answerable for their own response.

BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL—LEARN TODAY’S PLAN OF SALVATION (read 1 Pet. 1:22-25 and 3:13-22 in addition to Genesis chs. 5-7). YOU’LL BE GLAD YOU CAME!

QUESTIONS:

1. Who wrote the “book” of Adam’s generations? 5:1
2. Why did God “take” Enoch? 5:24
3. Did Methuselah actually live 969 years? How is that possible? 5:27
4. Who were “the sons of God” marrying “daughters of men”? 6:1
5. Who were the *Nephilim*? 6:4
6. How can God be sorry for something he made? 6:6
7. If the grace of God is a gift, how could Noah “find” it? 6:8
8. How did Noah get all those animals into that little “ark”? 7:1-15
9. Did the flood Noah experienced cover the North American continent? 7:16-24. How do we know that? (Read 2 Pet. 3:1-7)
10. Isn’t the story of Noah just a myth? (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-29).

“...within the last few years, an Actual Layer of Mud, evidently deposited by the Flood, has been found in three separate places: Ur, which was 12 miles from the traditional site of the Garden of Eden; at Fara, traditional home of Noah, 60 miles further up the river; and at Kish, a suburb of Babylon, 100 miles still further up the river; and, possibly, also a fourth place, Nineveh, 300 miles still further up the river ...Dr. C. L. Woolley said that 8 feet of sediment implied a very great depth and a long period of water, that it could not have been put there by any ordinary overflow of the rivers, but only by such vast inundation as the Biblical Flood.

The civilization underneath the flood layer was so different from that above it that it indicated to

Dr. Woolley ‘a sudden and terrific break in the continuity of history.’”

—*Halley’s Bible Handbook, 1965, p. 77*

“I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed.”—Jonathan Swift

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 8:1—9:29

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Noah and his family were in the ark 1 year and 17 days. Not one word of complaint or questioning is recorded. Can you imagine what it must have been like? There were probably 75,000 animals on that ark to be tended. Those 8 people had very little time to fret about boredom! Yet, we can imagine that Noah and his family were anxious to see land again—to see what God had done by this great cataclysm. If you think Mt. St. Helens is spectacular, you should have seen what Noah saw!

It was *awesome*—terrifying! It was strange and incomprehensible! Some would have been overwhelmed with fear, despair and pessimism. But not Noah; he built an altar and made a sacrificial offering falling on his knees to worship God. Noah “became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.” God used this man of faith to preserve the human race and become the progenitor of Jesus Christ (Luke 3:37)—the Redeemer of the human race.

Noah may have been the preserver of the human race, but he could not be the Redeemer for he sinned! As faithful and obedient as he was, Noah fell into sin. And the Bible does not attempt to conceal his fault. There is no false modesty in the Book of Books! It is the only book in the world which portrays human character realistically. Once again we are thrown down—man cannot redeem himself—God has to do it!

Dr. Ira North said, at the North American Christian Convention in 1971, “I think the tradition that Sunday School is for children was fathered in hell...I’ve got news for you—if you’re 70, you’d better be in Sunday School...You need it worse at 70 than you do at 17..You’re pretty close to your ‘finals’...You’d better be cramming.” No matter how old you are, you don’t know all you need to know about Noah, the Flood and God’s mercy for man. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL NEXT LORD’S DAY!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the raven not return to the ark like the dove? 8:1-12
2. Where did all that water go when it “subsided from the earth?” 8:13
3. Why did God mention again that the “imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth...”? 8:20-21
4. Is there Biblical sanction to teach that man be a total vegetarian in his diet? 9:1-3. What about using animals for clothing? For medical experiments?
5. Why the prohibition of eating flesh with its blood? 9:4 (Acts 15:29).
6. What was the *third* command God gave Noah after the Flood? 9:5-6
7. Why did God put the rainbow in the sky? 9:12-17
8. Why was Ham wrong in telling his brothers about the nakedness of his father? 9:22 (see Lev. 18:6-30).
9. What was the “curse” predicted of Canaan? Why Canaan? 9:25-29

“If the minimum length of the cubit (18 inches) is used...for calculating the size of the ark...then the three floors would give a displacement of 43,000 tons. This would be just a little smaller than the largest of the pre-war (WWII) Italian liners of the Rex Lines, which had a displacement of about 50,000 tons. Many of our largest ocean going ships have a displacement of 25,000 tons, a much smaller capacity than the ark would have had according to the above calculations. There would have been plenty of room in the three decks of the ark for Noah, his family, the animals, and their food.”

—*Archaeology and Bible History*, Joseph Free, 1969, pp. 42-43

“Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, Greeks, Chinese, Phrygians, Fiji Islanders, Esquimaux, Aboriginal Americans, Indians, Brazilians, Peruvians and indeed *every branch of the whole human race*, Semitic, Aryan, Turanian—have traditions of a Great Flood that destroyed all mankind, except one family, and which impressed itself indelibly on the memory of the ancestors of all these races before they were separated.”

—*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, pp. 75-76

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 10:1—11:32

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“What this world needs is the uniting of all nations under one centralized government—a sort of ‘United Nations.’” Is that so?! This, apparently, was Nimrod’s dream. Genesis 10 & 11 documents history’s first attempt at a “United Nations.” Nimrod was not the last human being to dream such an ill-boding scheme. It didn’t work then and it will never work because such efforts are based on the human desire “to make a name” for humanity and on man’s arrogant rebellion against God’s sovereign rule of his creation.

Ever since Nimrod the devil has seduced numerous people into believing that they can build their own Utopia independently of the revealed will of God. Men have theorized that under “one-world” government commerce would flourish, science would become a panacea, the arts would satisfy and there would be perfect understanding among people so that human injustice would disappear. One-world imperialism has been tried under the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Colonialism has been tried; Fascism has been tried; and ersatz-Communism has been tried. Men have tried “Leagues of Nations,” Alliances, Treaties, and “United Nations.” Both the word of God and history demonstrates the utter futility of human “one-world” government.

God’s prophet, Daniel, revealed that there would be only one universal kingdom for mankind—God’s kingdom. When men out of every tribe and tongue and nation come willingly under the sovereignty of God’s word, Utopia will be accomplished. Brotherhood, understanding, love and peace will become reality—not just an ideal. The kingdom of God is the church of Jesus Christ. You can be a citizen of that universal kingdom of love and peace no matter what your language or your culture. Simply surrender fully and honestly to the rule of Christ over your life. Do it today! It’s the only kingdom to last forever!

QUESTIONS:

1. Where were the “lands...and...nations” of Japheth, Ham and Shem? 10:5,20-30
2. Why was Nimrod singled out? 10:8-12 (cf. 11:1-9)
3. Where is the “plain of Shinar” and why did all mankind settle there? 11:2
4. Why did men build “a city and a tower?” 1:3-4. What was wrong with that?
5. Was God afraid they might conquer heaven should the tower be built? 11:6. Why did God “scatter” humanity? (Cf. Acts 17:26-27).
6. Why is the genealogy of Shem’s family continued? 11:10ff
7. What kind of man was Terah and why did he leave Ur of Chaldea? 11:31 (cf. Josh 24:2)
8. Where did Abram get his wife, Sarai? 11:31 (cf. Gen. 20:12).

“We The Peoples of The United Nations Determined...to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights...to establish conditions under which justice and respect...and...international law can be maintained...to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, And For These Ends, to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors...to Unite our strength to maintain international peace and security...to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and, to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples...
Have Resolved To Combine Our Efforts To Accomplish
These Ends....”

—a summary of The Preamble to The United Nations Charter,
World Book Encyclopedia

“The Bible school builds character, instructs the mind, warms the heart, feeds the soul, encourages the fainthearted, shields the tempted, and points up the way of life for all. It deserves the support, the prayerful interest, the loyal cooperation of every loving Christian.”
—the late Russ Martin, at the National Education Convention, 1956

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 12:1—13:18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

You are asked to choose a man to be the “exalted father” of a movement to bring social and moral reform to the world. Where would you look for your man? You would go to a huge metropolis famous for its unbelief and sinfulness. Then, you would call a man from that city whose father and brothers were heathen idolaters? Right? Sure!

When you call the man, he doesn’t even acknowledge your call at first. Then you find out he has a “tag-along” nephew who is rather “worldly.” Then you discover the man you’ve called would sacrifice his wife’s honor to save his own neck. He also has tendencies to polygamy. He’s a very simple middle-aged, unsophisticated man who is comfortable with a nomadic kind of life, never quite settled in any place, living in a tent all his life. Boy, can you pick ‘em!

Actually, this describes Abram (meaning, “exalted father”), whom God called from Ur of Chaldea for just such a desperately-needed world-changer. His wife, Sarai, couldn’t have children, yet this is the couple God chose to be the progenitors of the Hebrew nation. Abram was chosen to be the ancestral “father” of the Savior of the world; it was Abram’s “Seed”—Jesus Christ—who brought new birth to mankind. How could God choose such a family?

Abram was chosen because he was a man willing to repent and commit himself fully to God’s promises! Abram sinned, but he repented—that is the key. His faith in God was the source of his spiritual growth that made him into the kind of person God could use for such a great task. His faith was, of course, the result of worshiping God and calling on God’s name—even as he lived in the midst of an idolatrous society and family. The more Abram listened to God and obeyed him, the stronger and more productive he became.

We are all like Abram in our failures. But we may all be like Abram in his strength and spiritual growth if we will listen to God and obey him. The best place to listen to God and grow spiritually is in Bible school. There are many interferences to your Bible study at home. So stay for Bible School—it will satisfy your soul.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Acts 7:2-4 say Abram was called by God in Mesopotamia instead of Ur of Chaldea? Gen. 11:31—12:3 (cf. Gen. 15:7). Why did Abram settle in Haran? Why did he have to be called again?
2. Knowing his wife was barren (Gen. 11:30), what do you think Abram thought about God’s promise to “make of him a great nation”? 12:2
3. Weren’t the Canaanites as wicked as the Chaldeans? 12:5-9. Why would God send Abram to Canaan, of all places?
4. Wouldn’t it have been better for us if God had not told us about Abram’s lie to Pharaoh in Egypt? 12:10-16
5. Why did God afflict Pharaoh for Abram’s lie? 12:17-20
6. Was Abram right in “pacifying” his nephew Lot just so there wouldn’t be more strife between them? 13:1-9
7. Why do you think Lot chose the land of the Jordan valley? 13:10-13. Didn’t Lot know about the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah?
8. God gave the land of Canaan to Abram’s descendants (Jews) “forever.” 13:14-18. Is this the Biblical mandate for that land to belong to 21st century Jews forever?

“I pray Heaven bestow the best of
blessings on this House

and all that shall hereafter inhabit it.

May none but honest

and wise men ever rule under this roof.”

—John Adams, in a prayer he offered as the first occupant of the American White House, November 2, 1800. It is now carved above the fireplace in the State Dining Room.

“Whether a man is burdened by power or enjoys power; whether he is trapped by responsibility or made free by it; whether he is moved by other people and outer forces or moves them—this is the essence of leadership”

—Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1960*

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 14:1—17:27

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

People who are not serious about relationships never commit themselves to others in any form of agreement, covenant, or contract. People who are selfish never want to be bound or obligated to any institution or person.

But God is serious about wanting to love man, to fellowship and share with him. So God covenants with human beings. God has always offered himself for covenant relationship to mankind. The difficulty has been in convincing people to commit themselves to covenant with God!

“I can’t become a Christian yet, I’m not good enough.” How often has this been heard? It really is simply a “left-handed” resistance to commitment in covenant with God. God has never offered himself in covenant to any person on the basis of human sinlessness. God’s fellowship is offered on the basis of *grace appropriated by faith and commitment*.

Abram (Abraham) is a classic case in point! Abram heard God’s call to covenant relationship, but he wavered. Not once, not twice, but plenty of times Abram failed perfection. On the other hand, Abram believed and committed himself to live the way God led him. Abram trusted in the grace of God although there were times when he tried to take God’s way into his own hands. What God liked about Abram was every time he failed it didn’t drive him farther away, but brought him to depend on God more. No, God is not like man demanding full collateral before offering a “contract.” The Lord simply asks faith, love and commitment—he will supply the perfection. “Abram believed God and he (God) reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). Please don’t wait until you “are good enough” to accept God’s covenant—you’ll never make it!

Roy Blackmore said this: “If a business man received from one department 90% of his workers, and practically all his new business, he would pay considerable attention to that department... ministers declare that 80-90% of the converts to Christ have been reached through the growing Bible school.” How much attention are you paying to your Bible school class?

QUESTIONS:

1. Where was all the warfare described in 14:1-12. How might Abram be affected by it?
2. What was Abram’s justification for pursuing the “Kings of the East” and bringing back booty? 14:13-16
3. Why did God allow Abram’s descendants to be oppressed 400 years? 15:12-16
4. What would prompt Sarai to offer Abram her maid to bear him a child? 16:1-6
5. Who were the descendants of Ishmael? Were they like God said they would be? 16:7-15
6. How can God promise to give Abram and his descendants land that was already occupied by other people? 17:1-8
7. Why did God insist that Abram and his descendants circumcise all their male children? 17:9-14
8. Why did Abraham laugh? 17:17 (cf. John 8:56).

“The ‘Way of the Kings’ in Genesis 14:5-6 by way of which the four Eastern kings came against Sodom, were so far east of the ordinary trade route that W. F. Albright (world famous archaeologist) said that he once considered it an indication of the legendary character of the 14th chapter of Genesis; but, in 1929, he discovered a line of great mounds, in Hauran and along the east border of Gilead and Moab, of cities that flourished about 2000 B.C., indicating that it was a well-settled country, on the trade route between Damascus and the gold and copper regions of Edom and Sinai..

—*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, p. 97

Once again, the Bible is proved to be historically accurate in minute detail. That is part of the cumulative proof that the Bible is accurate in everything else it says!

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 18:1—20:18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Don’t give up on me—God is not through with me yet!” This would be a beneficial attitude all of us could take toward ourselves and our fellow human beings. God *is* really at work in all things for every man’s good (Rom. 8:28). He is patiently and mercifully offering himself and his will for trust and love. He wants to convert all men from self-exaltation and disobedience to exaltation of God and obedience to his covenant. God wants to restore Paradise for man.

Abraham didn’t give up on himself and he didn’t give up on God. Abraham knew he had failed—he was reminded often enough. But he also knew that if he would turn back and trust God, he could find forgiveness and power to become better than he was. Abraham recognized it would not be easy; he also found it would not be quick! But he continued to yield himself to God’s way of conversion and grew spiritually until he was able to pass the ultimate test of offering his only son to God (Gen. 22). Abraham, because of his faith in God, also extended his compassion toward others. He prayed to God for any in Sodom who might be spared; he prayed for Abimelech, his adversary.

In this lesson we have a vivid documentation of Jesus’ statement, “What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.” Lot, who had earlier chosen to live at Sodom and Gomorrah, decided to give up on God’s way of working in his life and decided to find his own “paradise” in the “garden spot” of this world. Lot lost everything—his position, his home, his wife, his family, and ended up in a cave, drunk and degraded. Abraham stayed with God’s way and gained character, compassion, respect from others, self-respect, flocks and herds, a loving wife and a son, and more precious than all, the approval of God “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Gen. 22:12,16) and ultimately the title, “Friend of God” by which he will be remembered forever.

“The one best thing that the church could do would be to set itself to enthrone God’s word in the lives of its people. The rest would follow.

That one thing in itself would go further in solving all problems,
individual, social, and national,
than anything else the church could do.”

—Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, p. 817

QUESTIONS:

1. Did Abraham know who his three guests were at first? 18:1-8. How?
2. Why did the “Lord” insist on reminding Sarah she had “laughed”? 18:13
3. Why was Abraham told what was going to happen to Sodom? 18:16-33
4. Did the Judge of all the earth do right in destroying Sodom? 18:25
5. Is homosexuality a sin? 19:1-10. Is homosexuality conquerable? How? (See Deut. 23:17-18; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11).
6. What was wrong with “looking back” when fleeing Sodom? 19:15-29
7. If Abraham married his sister, Sarah, what was wrong with Lot having children by his daughters? 19:30-38.
8. How could Abraham and Sarah be forgiven for sinning against Abimelech? 20:1-18. Isn’t this the second time they have lied about their relationship?”

“The annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan was disrupted by two Gay Liberation members who spit out Communion wine near the altar. Others hugged and kissed in the pews and aisles of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

When twenty Gay Libbers marched to the podium carrying signs and shouting slogans the convention was adjourned. The disruption took place when a Gay Lib leader was not allowed to speak in favor of a resolution encouraging Episcopal churches to lend their facilities to homosexuals.”

—*Detroit Free Press* (quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1982, p. 557)

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 21:1—23:20

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The child promised to Abraham & Sarah is born! All the agonizing years of waiting were forgotten in the moment Sarah held that precious bundle in her arms. Abraham probably strutted around like most proud fathers. The exhilaration of youthfulness had been restored to their hearts as well as to their bodies. Lying in the bed at night or sitting at their meals each day they would dream and talk about the joys they would share when the child was older. They planned and predicted, laughed and lavished their love on this child. Little did they know that this child would become the focal point of the severest test of their faith they would ever know.

First, there was the mocking and persecution of the child by Abraham's son, Ishmael. God told Abraham to cast off his firstborn, Ishmael, and send him completely away from the family. This was in opposition to Abraham's paternal and emotional attachment to Ishmael, but he obeyed when God gave a direct command.

Finally, there was the ultimate test. Abraham was told to offer Isaac, his *only true son*, the son of promised progeny, as a "burnt offering." Now this not only did not make sense, it was in conflict with what Abraham knew about killing other human beings! In other words, it appears God is ordering Abraham to do something that is morally wrong and contradictory to a specific commandment God had given Noah when the human race was begun all over again! But Abraham knew that when God gave a clear, positive command, he was to be obeyed no matter what any man thought or felt.

All men who want to be friends of God and be saved from death must have the same kind of faith Abraham had! All who wish to become children of God must pass the ultimate test. COME TO BIBLE SCHOOL AND LEARN WHAT THAT ULTIMATE TEST IS FOR YOU! Sunday schools may be dying in many churches, but not in this one—here it is alive and vital and meeting the needs of human life as it is lived in relationship to the Creator.

QUESTIONS:

1. Isaac was not the only child miraculously conceived; can you think of 6 others? 21:1-7
2. How serious was the conflict between Ishmael & Isaac? 21:8-13. Why would childish mocking warrant Sarah's extreme request for banishment? (See Gal. 4:29).
3. Why would God require Abraham to banish Ishmael and Hagar? 21:14-21
4. Abraham's well was taken away from him by force—why didn't he retake it by force? Why make a covenant with a Philistine? 21:22-34
5. How could God expect Abraham to *kill* his son as a human sacrifice? Wasn't human sacrifice the practice of pagans? 22:1-24
6. How could Abraham do it? Heb. 11:17-19; James 2:18-26; Rom. 4:1-25
7. Sarah died when she was 127 years old; she had faith, but she had her failures—what did God think of Sarah? 23:1 (1 Pet. 3:5-6; Rom. 4:19; 9:9; Heb. 11:11-12)
8. Why would Abraham, a man who believed that the dead would be raised, *mourn and weep* when his wife died? 23:2-20. Is it alright for a Christian to mourn those who die? (Lk. 19:41-44; John 11:35; 1 Thess. 4:13).

A classic in the annals of the U.S. Coast Guard is the story of an African-American Capt. Pat Etheridge of the Cape Hatteras station. One night in a howling hurricane the lookout observe a distress signal from a ship that had gone aground on the dangerous Diamond Shoals, ten miles at sea. The lifeboats could be easily launched, the lookout thought, but getting them back in again would be impossible. Captain Etheridge ordered the boats rolled out. One of the lifeguards protested, "Captain Pat, we can get out there, but we can never get back." "Boys," came the reply that has gone down in history, "we don't have to come back."
—*American History* magazine, December, 1998

"So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

—Jesus Christ, Luke 14:33

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 24:1—26:35

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Stability—Continuity! Imperatives for the maturation of institutions and individuals. If God's redemptive program for man through the agency of a "family" was to succeed there had to be a continuity of faith in the covenant God made with that family. Abraham was a "friend of God" and kept the covenant. But what about Abraham's son? He would have a mind of his own! Would Abraham's son even be interested in the spiritual heritage? What about the son of Abraham's son?

God's plan had narrowed down to one family. Then, there was only one human being, Isaac, declared by God to be the heir of this covenant. That doesn't leave much margin for error!

People are prone to take their heritage for granted. They forget that *each generation* has to preserve that heritage for themselves and the next generation. This is especially true of a spiritual heritage which cannot be seen, touched or tasted. *Values* do not preserve themselves. They have to be *lived* by each succeeding generation. Moral and spiritual life is not passed on to the next generation through genetics, but through indoctrination. Abraham knew that if there was to be continuity in the spiritual heritage in his family he would have to take some definite steps toward guidance in the life of his son, Isaac. A generation later, Rebekah and Jacob took strong, incisive action to preserve that Messianic destiny.

Christians must dedicate themselves to passing on to the next generation the spiritual heritage given them in Christ. This continuity cannot be accomplished without effort. Patience, courage, faith and work is what indoctrination demands. Many hours go into preparation of our Bible school lessons and many more hours are given by teachers preparing themselves for their classes. But it is all for you—it is to assist you in passing on to your next generation your spiritual heritage. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL; BRING A NEIGHBOR; PASS IT ON!

QUESTIONS:

1. How could Abraham send his servant to find a wife for Isaac without even asking Isaac? 24:1-9. Is modern "courtship" an improvement?
2. Why did the servant want to see if some girl would water his camels? 24:14
3. When the servant refused to eat before the deal was completed, what does it say about his character as an "employee"? 24:33
4. Why was the servant in such a hurry to get back to Abraham? 24:54
5. How could Isaac marry Rebekah *before* he had even "dated" her? 24:67
6. Were the twins actually fighting within the womb of Rebekah? 25:22
7. Which of the two would be chosen to lead a corporation today—quiet introverted Jacob or cunning, extroverted Esau? Why would God choose Jacob? 25:25-28. (See Hosea 12:2-6; Heb. 12:14-17).
8. Who is the villain in the "exchanged birthright"? 25:29-34
9. How could pagan Philistines have scruples against adultery? 26:1-11
10. Is Isaac's peaceful forgiveness of Abimelech an example for us? 25:26-33

A young man came down the aisle and accepted Christ as Lord in one of "Gypsy" Smith's great revival meetings. The next night the young man came down the aisle again, and Gypsy Smith said, "Young man, I thought you accepted Christ as your Savior last night?" "So I did," he replied. "Then why are you here again tonight?" "I came to bring my mother," was the simple answer. The lad's mother became a Christian. The next night, the same lad came forward. "What brings you here tonight, brother," the evangelist asked. "Oh, I came tonight to bring my grandfather to Jesus," he answered. So three generations were won because a young man, who found the Savior, became a personal witness in his own home.

—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 1322

"I believe that the one chief reason that I have been kept in happy useful service is that I have been a lover of Holy Scripture. It has been my habit to read the Bible through four times a year; in a prayerful spirit, to apply it to my heart, and practice what I find there. I have been for 69 years a happy man; happy, happy, happy." —George Muller

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 27:1—28:22

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th..D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Jacob was a “mature” man whose chief aim in life was to be God’s instrument in carrying on the Messianic heritage. He was spiritually-minded and totally dedicated to the will of God for his life. Everything he did, everything he had was to that end.

People like Jacob are a *minority* in this fleshly-centered civilization. Often times true spiritually-minded people are “strangers” in their own homes and among their own kin. Esau, Jacob’s twin brother, was exactly opposite in his viewpoint of life. Isaac was partial to Esau because he was the firstborn of the twins so Jacob got the “short-end” of Isaac’s companionship. Rebekah, bless her heart, was sympathetic to Jacob’s spiritual values. What if Jacob had not had his mother’s encouragement?

The intense spirituality of Jacob which drove him to capture the birthright and patriarchal blessing, alienated Esau to the extent that Esau vowed to kill Jacob. Jacob had to flee from his home and from his mother’s help with, so far as we know, only the clothes on his back. Then he did not even have the companionship of his mother. But Jacob found the Perfect Companion as he traveled to Paddan-aram.

Perhaps you have felt like Jacob at times. Maybe you have even thought of letting down on your pursuit of your spiritual heritage. After all, wouldn’t it be better to be liked and have friends than to be a religious “nerd”?

Before you let down, let us encourage you to choose the Perfect Companion who is God. Listen to what he told Jacob: “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go” (Gen. 28:15). God revealed to Jacob that he is constantly coming down and going up his “stairway *through* the stars” as he prepares man for the eternal and perfect companionship in heaven.

Call a friend this week and tell them we are going to study about the “Ladder to Heaven.” Invite them to Sunday school. It could be the most significant hour of their life! It will help you, too!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Isaac seem to favor Esau more than Jacob? 27:1-4. Should Isaac have known to do otherwise?
2. Should Rebekah have meddled in the “blessing affair”? 27:5-17. Is it alright for women to be spiritual leaders?
3. Should Jacob have deceived Isaac into thinking he was Esau to get the blessing? 27:18-29. Did God approve or disapprove? (Hosea 12:1-6).
4. Why didn’t Isaac reverse his action when Esau cried out bitterly for the blessing? 27:38 (see Heb. 12:15-17).
5. Did Esau fulfill the prophecy of his father Isaac? 27:39-40. How?
6. What do you think prompted Rebekah and Isaac to send Jacob to Paddan-aram? 27:41–28:5
7. What significance did the “ladder from heaven” have for Jacob? 28:10-17. What did it typify? (See John 1:51).
8. When Jacob said, “*If* God will be with me...” was he declaring the conditions God would have to meet before he would tithe to God? 28:20. Should he have done so?

Early in his life, William Wilberforce (1759-1833) became obsessed with the idea of stopping the slave trade and slavery in England. He ran for Parliament and succeeded in winning a seat. Goaded by William Pitt, he spoke often against slavery and the slave trade but suffered repeated defeats in Parliament. In 1807 he persuaded his colleagues to ban the slave trade. Not until 1833 did both houses of Parliament finally abolish slavery in Britain. The news of total victory came to Wilberforce on his deathbed. He was motivated in his life’s career by an idea whose time *finally* came. Because of William Wilberforce’s indomitable perseverance a great spiritual victory was won over the satanic practice of human slavery.

Yaakov, or “Jacob,” in Hebrew language, means,
“One who holds on.”

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 29:1—31:55

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“When you have a difficult job you want done, look for a man who knows where he’s going and how to get there.” That old adage needs to be qualified somewhat, but essentially it is valid. And it applies in the kingdom of God as well as for this world.

God had a staggering task, looked at in the light of human nature, to lay upon some human being. After all, God could not work out his redemptive program for man through angels. It had to be done in human beings, and in extraordinary human beings at that! God was ready to *start* a “clan” or “tribe”—a whole nation of people dedicated to living under his rule. They would have to exemplify to the rest of the world just what the rule of God’s will in human life involved in the area of family, finances and friendships.

Jacob was God’s man. He knew where he was going! There is no doubt about that! He *wanted* the spiritual leadership of the redemptive program of God with all his being. He would not stand by and see his self-indulgent father and profane brother defile such a valuable heritage. He was a hard worker. He spent months and years at the difficult and demanding task of herding sheep and goats. None of the carefree, easy-going, thrill-a-minute life of the “macho” hunter for him.

God saw all this. Jacob was man enough to be mistreated and make the most of a complicated situation (Leah and Rachel). He was intelligent, prudent and willing to do more than was expected of him as a worker. He was completely honest and not at all mercenary with his uncle’s flocks. He had a keen sense of justice and was always quick to testify to God’s goodness in his own life—even when falsely accused by Laban. Jacob has been maligned by many commentators as deceitful, mercenary and self-serving. *The Bible may not agree with that evaluation.* Come to Bible school, get the facts, then make your own evaluation.

“He who labors diligently need never despair; for all things are accomplished by diligence and labor.”

—Meander of Athens

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jacob so “stricken” with Rachel? Was it right for him to love his *cousin*? 29:1-14
2. Why didn’t Jacob know Leah had been given to him instead of Rachel? Why didn’t Jacob refuse Leah and return her to her father? 29:15-35
3. What would cause the two wives to get into a contest of bearing children? 30:1-13
4. Why such a fuss over mandrakes? 30:14-24
5. Did Jacob cheat Laban in the matter of the flocks? 30:25-36
6. What did the peeled rods have to do with producing striped and speckled goats? 30:37-43
7. Since Jacob was making a fortune, why did he decide to leave Haran? 31:1-21
8. List six specific statements Jacob made in defending his integrity 31:22-55.

“We must make the world honest before we can honestly say to our children that honesty is the best policy.”
—George Bernard Shaw

In 1924 Liberty magazine sent out 100 letters to people selected at random throughout the U.S. enclosing a \$1.00 bill saying it was an adjustment of an error for which the addressee had complained—the error really did not exist. Of the 100 recipients, 27 returned the dollar saying it was a mistake. Then in 1971 Liberty again conducted the same test. But now only 13 returned the money. Do we dare guess how many would return the money if Liberty were to do the same thing today?
—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 32:1—36:43

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Jacob left his homeland to seek his fortune and to “slay some dragons” in his life. While in Paddan-aram (Haran) he found the girl of his dreams (actually 4 of them), married and sired 12 sons and one daughter. He worked hard, developed a reputation for honesty, integrity and astuteness. As a result, God blessed him with wealth.

He conquered the “monsters” of impatience, doubt, parental dependence and any tendency to compromise the Messianic destiny by complete separation from paganism. He struggled with the urge to retaliate and defeated it; he fought the temptation to make worldly riches his goal and was victorious. He won his spurs and began his journey homeward.

But the return to his homeland was only the beginning of an even more significant crusade for this warrior of God. He is sent forth to establish spiritual beachheads in the land of Canaan. He and his family are to put down “roots” that will survive generations of exile in Egypt and inexorably draw their descendants back to that land.

On the journey homeward God commissions him to royal knighthood and dubs him, “Israel” (“prince-of-God”). First, he must meet his old arch-enemy, his brother, Esau, accept reconciliation and decide on Esau’s invitation to join him in Seir. Next he must endure the shame of having his daughter raped by a heathen prince and then the murderous retaliation of his sons increases his shame. All of this convinces Jacob that his family must make a complete break with any and all associations with paganism. Finally, his princess, Rachel, dies giving birth to his twelfth son, and then his father, Isaac, dies.

This “prince-of-God” has been through the fire. He will not give up. He must not give up. He must remain faithful until death and then he will receive the crown of life. What a great example he is for us. Come to Bible school and learn how Jacob “wrestled and prevailed” and then share it with others who are engaged in the great crusade of everyday living!

“The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is, that one comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won’t.”

—Henry Ward Beecher

QUESTIONS:

1. Was Jacob trying to “bribe” Esau by sending him gifts to “appease” him? 32:13-21
2. Who was the “man” Jacob wrestled? 32:22-25. What was the purpose of the wrestling match? 32:26-32
3. What is the meaning of the name “Israel”? 32:28. Who are Israelites today? (See Rom. 2:28-29; 9:7-8; Gal. 6:15-16).
4. Does Esau’s attitude toward his brother Jacob mean he has repented about his profanation of the birthright? 33:1-14
5. Why didn’t Jacob accompany Esau to Seir? 33:15-20
6. Should Dinah have stayed away from the Hivite “women of the land”? 34:1-6
7. How come the sons of Jacob made all the decisions about retaliation? What two things concerned Jacob most as a result of this retaliation? 34:7-31
8. Where had Jacob’s family obtained their “foreign gods”? 35:1-4
9. What do we need to know about the subsequent descendants of Esau? 36:1-43 (see the book of Num. 21:14,21; Obadiah, Jer. 49: Ezek. 25; Joel 3; Amos 1,2,9).

The Herodians were not of Jewish stock, but were ultimate descendants of Esau. The descendants of Esau, called “Edomites,” settled to the south of the Dead Sea in the region of Mt. Seir, and the great city which is later called Petra. The Edomites were driven from this territory into the desert (Negeb) south of Judea. When Palestine was conquered by Rome (63 B.C.) the Herods, an Edomite (“Idumean”) family, were placed in control of Judah. This was the last of the Edomites. With the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) they disappeared from history, just as it was predicted of them in the OT prophets!
—ptb

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 37:1—40:23

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Like sands through the hourglass, so are the Days of Our Lives.” The lives of Jacob’s children read like “soap operas.” Perhaps, “As The Twig Is Bent,” might be a more appropriate title to these chapters in Genesis. All children are different but parental influences are still the strongest factors in the spiritual direction a child’s life takes.

Jacob sired 12 sons and an unknown number of daughters. Each child was different physically and temperamentally. No doubt, each child had different likes and dislikes. Differences in age, genetic structuring, and, in Jacob’s situation, different mothers, would make for distinctive variations in a large family.

The “old patriarch” was, himself, a man of integrity and high spiritual intensity. But Jacob seems *not* to have exercised strong parental leadership. He let the “twigs” bend themselves too much. Some of Jacob’s actions as a father even contributed to “bending the twigs” in the wrong directions. His partiality to Joseph put a stumbling-block of envy before the other eleven sons; it caused Joseph to become proud and arrogant; Jacob’s polygamous marriage to four women probably had something to do with Judah’s promiscuous attitude toward sex.

But the real lesson we will learn from “all Jacob’s children” is that God, by his *grace* can take crooked twigs and bend them toward his will (when the “twig” is willing) so they may become partners with him in a glorious salvation. No matter how distorted the lives of children (or adults) may become, God’s grace and truth has the power to make them new and whole.

Do you know any fathers who need this good news? How about some of the children you know being bent in the wrong direction? Make this lesson a part of your life by sharing it with someone else. Bring them to Bible school or take the lesson to their home. You’ll be glad you did!

“Children in a family are like flowers in a bouquet: there’s always one determined to face in an opposite direction from the way the arranger desires.” —Marlene Cox

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think Jacob asked Joseph to report on his brothers? 37:2. Why would he do so?
2. Who told Joseph to tell his dreams to his family? 37:5-11. Did he have to? Is Joseph partly guilty for his brothers actions toward him?
3. Was Reuben’s reaction to Joseph’s disappearance remorse or fear for himself? 37:29
4. Why would God slay Onan for refusing to have a child by his sister-in-law? 38:1-11
5. Who was the guilty party in the sexual affair between Judah and Tamar? 38:12-30
6. How could God use a woman like Tamar to be the ancestress of Jesus? (See Matt. 1:3).
7. Why was Potiphar’s wife so insistent on having illicit sex with Joseph? 39:1-12. By what power was Joseph able to resist her?
8. Do you think Joseph should have defended his reputation against her false accusations? 39:13-20
9. How did Joseph learn to interpret dreams? 40:1-23. Why did it take two years for the chief butler to remember Joseph’s imprisonment?

“In planting beans the old practice was to put three in each hill: one for the worm, one for the crow, and one to live and produce the crop.

In teaching children, we must give line upon line, and precept upon precept, repeating the truth which we would inculcate, till it becomes impossible for the child to forget it. We may well give the lesson once, expecting the child’s frail memory to lose it, twice, reckoning that the devil, like an ill bird will steal it, thrice, hoping that it will take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward to the glory of God.”

—Charles Spurgeon

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 41:1—45:28

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A former “soul-group” called *Peaches and Herb*, sang, “Reunited, and it feels so good...” This may be what Joseph’s brothers sang on their way back to Canaan to get their aged father and bring him back to the safety of Egypt. Not only did their reunion “feel good” it made them fit to be used as mighty instruments of God in the redemptive program for all the world. Had they remained estranged from Joseph the Hebrew nation might never have been formed.

Their reunion was dependent first, however, on their reconciliation to the will of God (so far as they knew it). In other words, before they could really, honestly, be reconciled to their brother they had to turn over the direction of their minds and actions to God. They had to surrender to God’s word—they had to believe, trust and obey him.

The first step in this surrender to God was their acknowledgment of their sin, their guilt, and their desire for forgiveness. Contrition, penitence and the desire to be forgiven must precede all reconciliation. There can be no reunion between man and God or between human beings until that comes first.

Although Joseph was already willing to forgive his brothers, he knew they could not be the men God needed for the formation of his Chosen People unless they could acknowledge their guilt, be contrite and allow the word of God to be sovereign in their lives. God worked in providence and Joseph worked in provocation, and the nation of Israel was founded in Egypt. God still works providentially and through his word; Christians still provoke one another to faith and good works; and the “New Israel” (the church) is formed in contrite hearts this very day.

Some years ago (August 25, 1980) *Time* magazine wrote: “...lesson plans, visual aids, outings are all well and good, but Sunday schools cannot flourish if parents do not go to church with their children. Worship has to be a family experience.”

“Let the child’s first lesson be obedience,
and the second will be what thou wilt.”

—Benjamin Franklin

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Joseph’s conversation with Pharaoh about his ability to interpret dreams indicate about Joseph’s new attitude? 41:1-36
2. Why did Joseph *sell* the grain—why didn’t he just *give* it to the famine stricken people? 41:56-57
3. Why didn’t Joseph’s brothers recognize him? 42:1-8
4. Was Joseph right in “framing” his brothers as thieves? 42:9-17
5. Why did Joseph insist they return to Egypt with Benjamin? 42:18-22
6. What do we learn about Reuben’s character in this chapter? 42
7. Why did Joseph single out Benjamin at the feast with 5 portions, and then “frame” him? 43:1-34
8. Is there anything in the character of Judah that should mark him fit to be an ancestor of the Messiah? 44:1-34
9. If Joseph could look upon his tribulations as the providence of God, how do you see yours? 45:1-28

“It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proved by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

—Abraham Lincoln’s proclamation for a national day of fasting and repentance, April 30th, 1863

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 46:1—50:26

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Time.....Marches....On!” Years ago this was the closing statement of the commentator at the end of the movie newsreel. This pretty well sums up the theme of the last five chapters of Genesis. The Book of Beginnings is coming to an End. The first chapter of God’s redemptive program is about finished. An era is passing. As they say in the TV industry, after having finished taping a program, “That’s a wrap.”

These closing chapters of Genesis give us our last glimpse of the Patriarchal Era. There was another 350 years or so after the death of Joseph before the Israelites marched out of Egypt to form the Theocracy with *national* laws and leaders. During the years between Joseph and the Exodus, the Israelites existed as an unorganized, growing, learning mass of people still receiving God’s grace through the patriarchal heads of families and tribes. In the Divine wisdom of God, those years remain unrecorded except for a genealogical note (1 Chronicles 7:20-27, etc.) here and there.

Before the closing of the era, some loose ends needed tying up. The segregation of the tribes from cultural assimilation needed to be secured; Joseph’s patriarchal heritage had to be reaffirmed; future trial assignments needed to be predicted; “Israel” (Jacob) must be buried in Canaan, the “promised” land so that the roots put down there by Abraham and Isaac would be even deeper for the Chosen People.

The book of Genesis shows human life “in-the-raw.” But it also shows God’s power and his love as he patiently, graciously, constantly forgave, saved, and shared his redemptive covenant with all who would accept it in faith and obedience. We have all been strengthened by studying God’s “Book of Beginnings.” Now let’s offer that strength to someone else by sharing what we can of the truths of Genesis.

“The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man; and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?” —Benjamin Franklin 1787 at the U.S. Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia, 1787

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God have to send Jacob to Egypt to make his family a “great nation?” 46:1-4
2. Where is the “land of Goshen”? 46:28
3. Why was Joseph so interested that his father’s family be settled in Goshen? 46:33-34
4. Did Joseph institute *socialism* into the Egyptian system of government? 47:13-26
5. How is it possible that, while the Egyptians were becoming slaves to their own government, the Israelites remained free and prospered? 47:27-28
6. What was Jacob’s purpose in blessing the sons of Joseph? 48:1-22
7. How many of the prophecies of Jacob about his sons can you trace out in Bible history? 49:1-33
8. Where was the prediction of Judah, that the “scepter not depart from him” fulfilled? 49:10
9. Why was there such carefulness to bury both Jacob and Joseph in the land of Canaan? 50:1-26

It can be demonstrated that a Canaanite slave such as Joseph could be promoted to a high position in the Egyptian government. “The Egyptian archaeological discoveries tell of foreigners, including Canaanites, who achieved prominence in the course of Egyptian history.

Erman points out that “Amongst the court officials also we often meet with foreigners who may have been slaves.’ One such Canaanite was the ‘first speaker of his Majesty,’ and at one court he assumed the Egyptian name of ‘Ramses in the temple of Re.’

This is a significant parallel to the giving of an Egyptian name to Joseph (Gen. 41:45).”
—*Archaeology and Bible History*, Joseph P. Free, 1969, p. 76