

# GENESIS

*Beginnings*

A categorial study of Genesis,  
the book of beginnings.

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# note

This work has been made with the hope that together we can search the scripture and develop a greater understanding of it. Hopefully, it will make your study of this topic more edifying, more profitable, and more enjoyable. It is not intended to take the place of your responsibility to prepare for the studies. Please devote adequate time to the material before our study, so we can all be edified by one another (Hebrews 10:24–25).

All verse references are taken from the New American Standard Bible 1995 unless otherwise noted.

# The Bible Begins

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis.

As you read through Genesis, what are some firsts, or beginnings, that you noted?


### Beginnings

“In the beginning...”. It is with the words that our Bible begins and it is with these words that the book gets its name. While the Bible is not arranged chronologically, but topically, this is also the fitting chronological start point. The book begins by explaining how everything came into being. In reality it is a fitting name because it is a record of a number of beginnings. As the record of beginnings, it is in this way that this study will be organized.

### Who wrote the book?

The author of the book of Genesis, as with the rest of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), is Moses. These five books are signed by Moses. For instance Exodus 17:14 says,

*“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”*

We also find a similar statement at Deuteronomy 31:9.

*“So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.”*

Not only does the Pentateuch ascribe Moses as the author, we can find other places in the Old Testament where other writers, some even contemporary with Moses, ascribe authorship to him. For instance Joshua 1:7-8 says,

*““Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. “This book of the law shall not depart*

# The Bible Begins

*from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”*

Other Old Testament references to the Mosaic authorship can be found at 1 Kings 2:3, Ezra 6:18, Daniel 9:11-13, and Malachi 4:4. The first five books are consistently attributed to Moses throughout the Old Testament.

Not only does the Old Testament agree that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, we find that Jesus and the apostle Paul ascribe it to Moses also. Consider Romans 10:5:

*“For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.”*

Matthew 19:8 has Jesus referencing Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and then attributing it to Moses. At Mark 12:26 Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6 and calls it the “book of Moses”. Upon examining the Biblical evidence we see that the different inspired Bible authors agree that Moses wrote the first five books including Genesis.

## **When was the book written?**

The date that is generally ascribed to Moses’ last 40 years is around 1450 BC. This would be working backwards from the reign of Solomon at 1000 BC. 1 Kings 6:1 says this:

*“Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.”*

So from the time of the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon was 480 years. Solomon’s reign is calculated as beginning at 970 BC. Thus the 480 years from the start of the reign of Solomon has us at about 1450 BC. This would have been when Moses was eighty years old as described at Exodus 7:7.

*“Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.”*

It is rather interesting to consider this timeline. As we think about how it unfolds, we

# The Bible Begins

realize that as Moses is dealing with all the issues with the people that we read about in the books of Exodus and Numbers he was also writing. He was compiling a history of the universe from creation to the captivity, he was recording the Law as Jehovah had given him, and he was keeping a chronicle of events that transpired as they were wandering through the wilderness. No doubt Moses was a busy man as they travelled along and endured hardship together.

*“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.” (Hebrews 11:24-26)*

## **Where was the book written?**

It would seem that the book was written during the last forty years of Moses’ life as the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. It is likely that Moses would have had some sources from which to work as he was compiling the history of mankind.

Even if those sources were verbal, it is important to recognize how verbal record would have been much more solid over those long periods of time than they would be today. Adam lived to be 930 years old. Noah’s father Lamech could have spoken to Adam! So Noah gets onto the ark with at worst a second hand account of creation! Noah lived for 950 years. As a result Abraham could have gone a personally talked with Noah should he have desired. Abraham was Joseph’s great-grandfather. It is only about 65 years from the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses. This is a period of about 2300 years. Thus we can see that a chain back to creation would only span the life of 5-6 men! Today that length of time would be covered by about 30 lifetimes!

## **The Beginnings**

While we understand that the main beginning that is on the mind of all and the author as the book begins with the phrase, “In the beginning...”, we recognize that they book actually records a number of beginnings. Since we begin with creation, much of what is done in the book is the first that an event of that sort has happened. We learn about the first sin, the first murder, the first metal-worker, the first city building, the first musician, and so forth.

# The Bible Begins

As we consider these different beginnings, this study will be organized by 12 different beginnings that make up the sections of the book. Below is a list of those different categories of beginnings and a brief description.

1. **The Beginning of the Universe** - This section encompasses chapters 1-2 and records the work of Jehovah in creating the physical world.
2. **The Beginning of Death** - This section encompasses chapter 3 and records the fall of man and the beginning of the curse of death as was forewarned by Jehovah.
3. **The First Murder** - This section encompasses chapters 4-5 and records the first taking of a life as Cain murders his brother Abel.
4. **The First World Judgment** - This section encompasses chapters 6-9 and records the destruction of the world by flood during the life of Noah.
5. **The Beginning of Nations** - This section encompasses chapters 10-11 and records the spread of man over the earth and the division created by Jehovah at Babel.
6. **The Beginning of God's People** - This section encompasses chapters 12-17 and records the promises made to Abraham, the beginning of the nation of Israel.
7. **The First Citywide Judgment** - This section encompasses chapters 18-19 and records the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah due to the wickedness found in those cities.
8. **The First Son of Abraham** - This section takes a closer look at chapters 16 and 21 as we consider the first child of Abraham, Ishmael.
9. **The First Son of Promise** - This section encompasses chapters 21-24 and records the life of Isaac.
10. **The First Twins** - This section encompasses chapters 25-28 and records the lives of Jacob and Esau.
11. **The Beginning of the Tribes** - This section encompasses chapters 29-36 and records the birth of Jacob's sons and the beginnings of the twelve tribes.
12. **The Beginning of God's Nation** - This section encompasses chapters 37-50 and records the beginning of the nation of Israel as it came to be in the cradle of Egypt.

# The Beginning of the Universe

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 1-2.

Who was present when the universe was created according to chapter one?


Where was the Spirit when the earth was formless and void?


What is the last thing that was created by God according to the account?


For what purpose was this created according to the account?


## Something from Nothing

The idea of spontaneous generation, the belief that life can come from non-life, originated in its organized form with Aristotle in the fourth century before Christ. This belief persisted for millennia until it was finally disproved in the 19th century by Louis Pasteur.

By the laws of physics that our universe is based upon, life cannot come from non-life and something cannot come from nothing. This is the insurmountable problem with the commonly accepted theory of the Big Bang. It requires that life comes from non-life and something comes from nothing.

However, the reality is that our universe was brought forth from nothing. It was created by Jehovah before the laws of physics existed. He created the universe and the laws that govern it.

What were the first things that were created?

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What state were they in when created?

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What is made on each day of creation?

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# The Beginning of the Universe

## Over Millions of Years

There has been a large push over recent years to try and reconcile the Genesis account with the scientific belief of evolution. This has morphed into the idea of theistic evolution. This belief basically says that the creation happened as said, but the days were actually eons. So these things unfold over millions of years rather than in seven literal days.

What takes place on day one?

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What takes place on day three?

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What takes place on day four?

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If these things happened in this order, what is the problem from an evolutionary view?

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The explanation is simple when viewed from the Biblical perspective. These things happened in the way stated. They happened in the order stated and in the time that is stated. In seven literal days all things were created in this order. People may say “That is impossible!” and they would be correct! This did not happen by natural order or by the laws of the universe. This is the supernatural and must be believed in by faith. It is not a blind faith but one that is based on evidence. That is, God has proved Himself to be true over and over in verifiable ways. Thus, since He has proved Himself to be true in verifiable ways, we can trust Him in faith on the things that cannot be verified. The idea of blind faith that is mistakenly taken from II Corinthians 5:7-8 is a worldly one. Paul tell us that we walk by trusting in the unseen because He has proved Himself in the seen!

# The Beginning of the Universe

## God Makes Mankind

Genesis 1:26 through the end of chapter two records the creation of mankind. The end of chapter 1 records the overview of man's creation while chapter two zooms in on the creation of man and woman and the creation of the garden in which they were placed.

Who said they were going to make mankind? What pronouns are used?

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What was given to the man and woman for food?

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When God was done making mankind on the sixth day, what did He do on the seventh?

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In order to get the rest of the picture we have to turn to the New Testament, namely John's gospel. When we turn to John 1 we find the following statement in verses 1-3:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”*

John 1:14 explains who the Word was:

*“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Thus we learn here that the “us” included Jehovah, Jesus and the Spirit. Jesus was there in the beginning and His hand was involved in all creation. The Father spoke and the Son carried it out in the beginning, in much the same way that things were carried out when Jesus was upon this earth.

# The Beginning of the Universe

At Genesis 2 we find Jehovah making the garden in which Adam and Eve would be placed. Verse 9 says that Jehovah caused plants that were good for food to grow so that Adam and Eve would be able to partake of them. The naming of the animals was left up to Adam, as Eve was not yet created.

What were the borders of the garden of Eden?

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What was Adam placed in the garden to do according to verse 15?

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The first few verses of the chapter explain that God caused plants to come forth, but it is probably best understood as part of bringing forth the garden.

What trees were in the midst of the garden and what did they do?

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What warning was attached to the one?

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God finally brings forth all the animals that He had created for Adam to view and name. However, no mate was found for Adam amongst the animals. Upon making this point to Adam, the Father brought forth woman from the rib of Adam to be a mate for Adam.

## **The Most Amazing Beginning!**

To think of Jehovah speaking and bringing forth all creation by the power of His word is truly amazing! We serve a mighty God who created all and did it not just in a utilitarian way, but a beautiful way for our sight.

# The Beginning of Death

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 3.

How is the serpent described in this chapter? What does “crafty” mean to you?


Do you think that Satan is operating in a similar manner today?


How might Satan do similar things to us today to draw us away from God?


What is meant by their eyes being opened?


## God’s First Recorded Words to Man

Genesis 2 records a closer view of the creation of man and woman. God’s first words spoken to man and woman are found in Genesis 1 after he created them. He blesses them and gives them the charge to rule over God’s creation. However, when we read the closer view of Genesis 2, we read the words given to Adam prior to the creation of Eve. These first recorded words for mankind are as follows:

*“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”*

The thing of first importance is to warn mankind about the devastating effect of sin. Answer the following questions from Genesis 2.

What was the purpose of the two trees in the garden?

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What would happen if one ate of the tree of knowledge?

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What state were they in at the beginning? (Genesis 2:21-25)

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What does their state reveal about their spiritual condition?

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# The Beginning of Death

## Satan's First Appearance

Genesis 3 begins with the phrase, “*Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.*” Lest we think that this serpent was just another animal, we learn that the serpent begins to speak to Eve. This serpent was crafty in the sense that it was a creature with sense, with intellect. Satan had the ability to reason and took a form here with Eve so that he could deceive her.

While the text here does not specifically call the serpent “Satan”, we can look to other places in the Bible and see that this is certainly him. On two occasions at Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:2 we find the phrase “*the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan*”. Here John calls Satan the serpent of old. Thus we have no doubt that Satan is the one up to no good in the garden.

What does Satan ask Eve?

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What is Eve's response?

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We would seem to learn more about what Jehovah had actually told Adam and Eve about the tree. They were warned not to eat it, but also not to touch or look upon it. Jehovah was trying to get them to see the danger of it and the need to protect themselves from the possibility of temptation. He wanted them to put it out of their minds. If they were going and touching it or constantly looking at it, it would only be a matter of time before they partook of it. Apparently they had been doing pretty well about this up to this point because Eve seems to state it matter-of-factly as though those were the rules that they lived by.

Satan masterfully works his deceit. He is essentially selling Eve on the fact that she is better than and knows more than God. Sure Jehovah had always done right by them and

# The Beginning of Death

had lovingly warned them about the dangers of partaking of the tree, but Eve knew better. Satan convinces her, in the face of all evidence to the contrary, that Jehovah did not know what He was talking about!

Not only does Satan convince her that she knows more than Jehovah, he also convinces her that the motivation of Jehovah is malicious! Verse 4 has Satan saying the following:

*“You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

So, you see, it is not just a matter of God not knowing what He is talking about and Satan and Eve knowing better, it is a matter of Jehovah not having their best interests at heart. Jehovah really has His own interests at heart. He is being selfish. He just does not want to share godhood with His creation.

After Satan concludes his speech, what does Eve do?

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What happens immediately to Adam and Eve?

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## **Paradise Lost**

At verse 8 we read of the Father walking through the garden in the cool of the day. The way that it is presented leads us to believe that this is something that occurred with some regularity. They were expecting it and went and hid themselves because they were ashamed of being naked. Jehovah asks them some questions, but those questions are not due to His ignorance but rather for their benefit. He is leading them to confess of their sin.

We often think about how heart-breaking this must have been for Adam and Eve. Indeed it was. It is easy to imagine them after being put out of the garden camping nearby looking

# The Beginning of Death

longingly at what has been lost. However, this is not just something that is heart-breaking for Adam and Eve, it is heart-breaking to Jehovah! He desires for us to do what is right. He wants His creation to be able to be with Him. Yet due to sin we have been separated from Him. (Isaiah 59:2)

At Genesis 3:14ff Jehovah begins to pronounce judgment on those that are involved. Firstly He deals with Satan. Satan will be cursed to travel on the ground and his fate is sealed on this day.

What does verse 15 say would happen in the future to Satan and what does it mean?

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What curses were placed on the woman?

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What curses were placed on the man?

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Why were they put out of the garden according to verse 22?

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## **An Example To Us**

Adam and Eve have become an example to us all these millennia later. At II Corinthians 11:3 we find the apostle Paul warning the Corinthians that they must be careful lest they are deceived by Satan as he deceived Eve. It is still a danger to us today. Paul says that they may be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ by Satan! Indeed we must be careful to not look down our noses at Eve, understanding that the same type event can happen to us today if we are not on guard!

# The First Murder

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 4-5.

What are some firsts that you can find in Cain's lineage in 4:16-24?


How does Cain reply when the Lord asks him of Abel's whereabouts?


How is the reply of Cain similar to the reply of Adam when he is confronted?


What was the blood of Abel doing? What does this mean?


## The Spread of Sin and Death

Adam and Eve partook of the tree and brought sin and death into the world. It was not just a matter of the two of them dying that day, they brought death to others. Now people would begin to physically die having lost access to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22) At Genesis 5 we read of the genealogy from Adam to Noah through Seth. A major point to this genealogy is found in the words "*and he died*". The Spirit is making the point that each of these individuals, regardless of their longevity, had to meet the appointment of death. This curse continues to this day! We all will meet that same appointment as the ancients.

What do we learn at I Corinthians 15:22?

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Physical death is not the only problem that began in the garden. Spiritual death is the real issue. Adam and Eve walked and talked with Jehovah there in the garden, but due to their sin they were separated from Him. After they are expelled from the garden that same closeness is no longer found. They are separate from Him and if that separation continues until the time of their death, then the spiritual separation would become a permanent one.

It is evident that sin was introduced and would spread to the rest of mankind when we read the next chapter of Genesis. In chapter four the focus shifts from Adam and Eve to their offspring, namely Cain and Abel. How terrible! Sin not only impacts the one that commits it, but it impacts others. It even impacts the ones that we desire to protect above all, our children!



# The First Murder

## Sin Spreads Through Choice

Lest we think that sin is inherited, we learn differently in this first account of offspring. Physical death is inherited. I will die physically because of what Adam and Eve did. However, if I die spiritually, it will solely be because of my own actions. This is made clear in the account of Cain and Abel.

Who was the first child? \_\_\_\_\_ Who was the second? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the situation that causes the countenance of Cain to fall?

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What counsel does Jehovah give to Cain?

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We notice from this counsel the emphasis on the word “do”. The Father is making clear that having the Father look favorably upon us is decided by us. He has explained to us what He wants from us and it is up to us to “do” it. It is as simple as if we do well He is pleased and if we do not do well then He is not.

When it comes to the sacrifice of Cain, we do not know for sure what the problem is. It is often assumed that the problem was the type of sacrifice itself, and that may be the truth. However, the scripture does not explicitly say this. Yet we can discern one thing for certain. God had spelled out to them what was well-pleasing just as He did to Adam and Eve in the garden. Abel adhered to it and Cain did what he wanted to do.

Jehovah explains to Cain that he needed to master sin. It is crouching at the door waiting for the opportunity to overtake him. Essentially he is telling Cain the same thing that Adam and Eve were told. As Eve reports, they were not to partake of the tree or even touch or look upon it. This was the Lord’s way of explaining to them that their guard must be up against sin. Cain is told the same thing, but sadly he falls to it as they did.

# The First Murder

## The First Martyr

At verse 8 we learn how Cain responded to the counsel of the Lord. Jehovah told him to be aware of sin, to master it, and to just do what the Lord told him to do. Sadly, Cain took another route. Instead of mastering sin, he decides to brood over his failures and make it easy for sin to overtake him. At some point Cain and Abel are in the field and Cain rises up against his brother and kills him in that field.

What a tragic thing! The first child commits the first murder! The first person to decide that he has the right to end another person's life. We may ask ourselves why this would happen. Why would Cain do such a thing? The reality is that this is the natural end to sin and lying. Consider the following passages.

What is Satan called at John 8:44? What was he from the beginning?

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What sins are tied together at John 8:44?

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What brings forth murder according to Matthew 5:21-26?

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What is the cause of murder according to James 4:1-2?

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Thus we learn from these passages that murder springs from hatred and jealousy against my brother. This is exactly what happens here in the heart of Cain. He buys into the lie that sin is telling him. The lie that his feelings and desires are more important than anything, even the life of another individual.

# The First Murder

When we boil it all the way down we learn something about Abel. He was actually the first martyr. He was the first person to die because of the testimony of the Lord. His death happened because he was a faithful servant of Jehovah. Jesus tells us this is the case at Matthew 23:34-35.

*“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”*

The persecution of the righteous ones of God began with Cain and was still occurring at the hands of the Jews during the time of Jesus Christ. As was the case with the Jews of Jesus' day, so it was with Cain, he was impenitent. The Lord told Cain that he was to be a vagrant and wanderer, so what did he do, he went and built a city. He would not even accept the punishment that the Lord had bestowed righteously upon him. (Genesis 4:16-17)

## Mastering Sin

Things were different for Cain and Abel than they were for Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had to decide whether they would obey that simple command of God or allow sin into the world. Cain and Abel had to learn to live with sin and how to deal with it. Adam and Eve had to deal with temptation, but Cain and Abel were as we. From the time that they were old enough to know what sin was, they had done it, thus the need for the sacrifices they were making to begin with.

The counsel given to Cain is sound counsel for us. We are in the same boat as Cain. We have problems like his where we want to do right, but we fail. We have problems where we want to do right, but we want to do what we want to do more. If we are to succeed and not go in the way of Cain, then we must learn to master sin. We must not let our failures and desires push us away from God. Rather we need to allow those things to push us closer to God. That is, when we sin and fail, our natural response must be to go to Him as the source of forgiveness and strength. May we all master sin!

# The First World Judgment

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 6-9.

How long would it be from the time God decided to destroy mankind to the flood?


What do you think is meant by the earth being full of violence?


What does Noah do to check the water level when leaving the ark?


What impact upon us does God's promise have at 8:22?


## Downward Spiral

Sadly things went from bad to worse for the ancient world. The sin that Adam and Eve brought into the world just got worse and worse. Initially we find Cain murdering Abel and this type of behavior just continued.

Genesis 4:16-24 records Cain's genealogy. What are some things against the will of God that occurred in his people?

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What happened at Genesis 4:25?

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What did the descendants of Seth begin to do at verse 26?

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It would have been nice if this would have continued, but it did not. Cain's descendants followed in the wicked course that he set. Seth's descendants followed in a righteous path for a time, but they soon became just as wicked as Cain and his descendants.

By the time that we get to Noah about 1600 years have passed since the creation as calculated by the genealogies. Things have not gotten better, but far worse.

What is the condition of mankind according to 6:5?

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# The First World Judgment

How did God feel about His creation at this point?

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What was the condition of mankind according to 6:11-12?

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What is His solution according to 6:7-8, 13?

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Noah is a man that is unlike the rest of creation. He has found favor in the eyes of the Lord because of his great faith and righteous way. He is a man like Abel.

What are the commands given to Noah at Genesis 6:14-21?

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How did Noah respond? (6:22)

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How many of each type of animal was to be taken onto the ark? Where is this found?

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What happened to the world outside of the ark?

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# The First World Judgment

## Starting Over

Essentially what we have here is a complete destruction and recreation of the world. Over the course of the year that Noah and his family were on the ark the earth was radically transformed. All human landmarks were gone and destroyed. Mankind was blotted out and gone. It was Noah and his seven family members starting out as fresh as was the case when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden.

What does Noah do upon exiting the ark?

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Where did the animals for the sacrifice come from?

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What promise does the Lord make upon witnessing the sacrifice?

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What does He do for Noah and his family according to chapter 9?

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What command is given to them?

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## God's Warning

It is interesting the warning that the Lord gives to Noah and his family upon being released to the earth. They are to be fruitful and multiply. They are to go about and fill the earth. God then makes clear to them that shedding innocent blood is a terrible wickedness. The person that does this will have their blood required of them.

# The First World Judgment

The choice of Cain to kill his brother Abel is one that mankind must understand is not to be repeated. The serious nature of this is ingrained on Noah and his family from the start. As we have seen, Cain killed his brother Abel. Then his descendant Lamech seemed to have no problem with killing whoever crossed him. By the time of the flood we find that the earth is filled with violence. Noah and his family must understand from the start that this violence is the reason for the destruction of the earth and that righteous people must stand against such things.

## The Second Fall

We also note that in the creation and fall account in Genesis 1-3 that God created the world for mankind to rule over. They fell into sin and the consequences were disastrous. We see a similar thing occur after the second creation. God wipes the earth clean of the wicked and Noah and his righteous family alone are left. However, chapter nine explains that grave sin quickly enters and more curses are pronounced.

What did Noah do after he departed from the ark?

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What did Ham do and what were the curses placed upon him for his wickedness?

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Thus we immediately see after the creation of this new world that a righteous line and a wicked line developed. This foreshadows what was to come in the future when the Israelites, descendants of Shem, came and took the land from Canaan's descendants.

## A New Heavens and A New Earth

We look forward also to a time when this wicked world will be removed and the righteous can be in a new place with the Father. II Peter 3 explains that just as in the days of Noah people will be ignoring the impending doom, but the righteous ones are forewarned. Let's be people who are living in expectation rather than taken by surprise.

# The Beginning of Nations

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 10-11.

What is the land of Cush as we would recognize it today? (10:6)


What did Nimrod do and how was he known?


What is the land of Shinar as we would recognize it today? (10:10)


How is Moses organizing this genealogy? (10:31-32)


## Fill The Earth

Jehovah gave the command to Adam and Eve from the beginning to fill the earth. (Genesis 1:28) After Noah and his family exited the ark the command given to them was the same. They were to go and fill the earth. (9:1) Genesis 10-11 records mankind doing exactly that as prompted by God at the tower of Babel.

As we look at the descriptions that are found of the land that was inhabited by these people we realize that they were spreading over the middle east, the far east, and even into northern Africa as we would call it today. From the humble beginning of eight souls mankind is multiplying and filling the earth at a rapid pace.

These chapters essentially record the beginning of nations. The sons of Noah went forth and built cities. One man by the name of Nimrod was quite prolific.

What cities is Nimrod credited as beginning?

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This basically made him the father of what powerful nation?

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It is during this time that the land of Canaan is settled with all the nations that would one day be destroyed by the Israelites. It is also the time when the future conquerors of Israel would be established. Thus when we read some of the ancient Akkadian literature we are reading some of the most ancient words written.



# The Beginning of Nations

## The Tower

At Genesis 11 we read a side story to the genealogy that is taking place. Chapter 10 records the genealogy of the three sons and then the end of chapter 11 records the line that would be the line of promise in greater detail. This is the line from Shem that results in Abraham being born. In the middle of these two genealogies we find the account of the tower of Babel.

Sometimes people have a difficult time reconciling the account of the tower with the genealogies. That is understandable if we are looking at it as though it were chronological. That is happened after the peoples were divided up, especially in light of the verses at 10:5, 20, 31. These passages say that people already had different languages and then you read of the account of the tower at Genesis 11 and it is confusing. However, that confusion goes away when we realize that Moses is taking an aside at this point. He gives an overview of the descendants of the three sons of Noah in chapter 10 and then at chapter 11 he explains what it was that ultimately motivated the people to separate.

Why did the people say that they wanted to build the tower?

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What was the problem with doing this?

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The scripture says that the Lord came down to see the city. This is not to mean that Jehovah was unaware that they were doing this. Rather it means that Jehovah actually sent a representative down to see the city and tower and experience it first hand. Much like later on representatives of Jehovah would come speak with Abraham, Lot, and Jacob. When Jehovah looked upon what they were up to and why they were doing it, He was displeased. He had commanded the people to fill the earth and instead they were rebelliously trying to do the opposite of His command. They did not want to be separated. They did not want to fulfill His wish for them.

# The Beginning of Nations

**Now nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them...**

We read these words at Genesis 11:6.

*“The LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.”*

What exactly does Jehovah mean by these words. Does He want to limit mankind from accomplishing things? Absolutely not. This passage is best understood when considered in the context of what has already happened. God created the world and sin was brought in. God tried to direct them, starting with Cain, in the way of handling sin. However, as time went on by the entire world is lost and only Noah and his family find favor in the sight of God. When man is just left to their own devices, this is what happens.

As we then consider the above passage from this perspective, we realize that the problem that Jehovah had with nothing being impossible for them is that there is no sin that would be impossible for them. That is, if they were all allowed to band together they would all again depart from God and end up just as terrible as mankind became prior to the flood. Thus the Lord realizes that mankind must be motivated strongly to do what He told them to do in the first place. As was told the serpent in the garden, the Father was working toward a savior for mankind. If all mankind just balled up together and all became corrupt again, they would be no closer to that Messiah coming forth. People needed to separate so His people would be able to come forth and then bring forth the Messiah.

How does Jehovah get the people to stop building and to separate?

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Why do you think that this would make the people scatter?

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How do you think you would feel if your friends suddenly became unintelligible?

---

# The Beginning of Nations

## From Noah to Abraham

The genealogy of Shem that is found in chapter 11 ends with Abraham. It has a decidedly different tone than the first genealogy that is found in chapter five. While chapter five is all about the total years of one's life and then death, the genealogy of Shem is one of hope. It is about what a person accomplishes as far as children are concerned. It is about bringing forth a good man that would be the father of the children of God. We really get down to the beginning of God's plan of redemption at this point.

Who was Abram's father? \_\_\_\_\_ Who were Abram's siblings? \_\_\_\_\_

Which sibling was the father of Abram's nephew? What is that nephew's name?

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What happened to that sibling of Abram?

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Why do you think the place where Terah died was named Haran?

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## Designed By God

One thing important to note here is birth order. We always say "Shem, Ham and Japheth" as is found at Genesis 10:1, but the birth order was actually Japheth, Shem and Ham. The same is true here at Genesis 11:26. Abram, Nahor and Haran are given in this order, but the birth order did not actually begin with Abram. Abram left Haran at the age of 75 after his father died at the age of 205. Thus Abram was born when Terah was about 130. Yet, Genesis 11:26 explains that Terah's firstborn came when he was 70 years old. So there were many years between Terah's firstborn and Abram. Why would these lists be given in this way? Simply because of importance. Shem and Abram are mentioned first because they are the sons through which the Bible's theme of redemption would be fulfilled!

# The Beginning of God's People

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 12-17.

How old was Abram when he departed Haran? When Ishmael was born? Isaac's birth?


A covenant is entered into in chapter 15. What is a covenant?


Where was Lot when he got into trouble in chapter 14 and had to be rescued?


What were Abram and Sarai's names changed to and why?


## Three Promises

Some 2000 years has passed at this point from the creation to Abraham, per the genealogies. God told Satan that his head would be crushed by the seed of the woman, a reference to the crushing blow that would be dealt by the Messiah. Satan succeeded in deceiving Adam and Eve into introducing sin into the world, but that success was temporary. A Messiah was coming. At Genesis 12 we read of the promises that were going to make that happen.

The chapter begins with God calling Abram and then making three promises to him.

What was Abram called by God to do?

---

What are the three promises made to Abram? (see also Genesis 13:14ff, 15:1-21, 17:1-8, 22:15-24)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

These promises would be fulfilled throughout the history of the Jews. We see the great nation that became of Abram as the people exit Egypt numbering a million or more. The land promise is fulfilled after the wilderness wanderings through the conquests as recorded in the book of Joshua. The seed promise however was going to much farther in the distance. It would be

# The Beginning of God's People

fulfilled when Jesus Christ came nearly 2000 years after the promise was made to Abram. It is important for us to note that this promise is what the others were about. The promise to make a great nation and to give them the land of Canaan was only important so far as it was necessary to bring forth the Messiah. Though some today look for a time when the nation and land will be restored, that time has passed. The Messiah has come and there is no need for the land and the nation any longer. We are now a part of the church, spiritual Israel!

## The Mark of Israel

Abram's name is changed to Abraham at Genesis 17 as Sarai is changed to Sarah. Along with names that were more fitting for the purpose they had been called to, the mark of Israel was also received. God's people would wear a mark called circumcision. Abraham was a man who was called out from his people. Most people around him would have looked similar. Yet this mark would distinguish him from the rest of mankind. The people of God would be known in this way.

How long does Genesis 17 say the covenant of circumcision would last?

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Who was to be circumcised?

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What would happen to the one who was not circumcised and why?

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God entered into a covenant with Abraham at Genesis 15. Animals were brought and then were divided in half. If Abraham and his descendants would keep their responsibilities to God, then God would give them the land of Canaan. Thus we see what is meant by the uncircumcised be cut off from his people for breaking the covenant. He would not receive

# The Beginning of God's People

the blessings that those of the mark would receive.

## Lot's Poor Choices

Lot tended to suffer because of the decisions that he made. This is interesting in light of what Peter says of him at II Peter 2:7.

What does Peter say of Lot?

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It basically seems that Lot was a good man who just happened to make choices that put him in the wrong place at the wrong time. In Genesis 13 we see the beginning of those choices. His father died in Ur, so Terah brought him to Haran with him. When Abraham left Haran after Terah died, Abraham brought his nephew Lot along. God greatly blessed Abraham and Lot as we find in the text. Chapter 13 explains that they had so much livestock between them that the land could not sustain them both.

What solution does Abraham bring to Lot?

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Where does Lot go?

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At chapter 14 we learn that Lot's decision got him kidnapped. Chedorlaomer king of Elam along with some others rose up against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and others. Lot and his possessions are taken in the battle and Abraham has to rescue him. Abraham was so mighty that he was successful in rescuing Lot and ending the war! From this we learn that it is possible to be righteous like Lot, but not necessarily make the best decisions. We should be careful to be righteous but to also take steps to ensure that our families will do the same and that we can avoid evil men as much as possible.

# The Beginning of God's People

## **Priest and King**

After the battle for Lot, Abraham meets a most interesting character at Genesis 14:17-24. The man went by the name Melchizedek, king of Salem. This would likely be more of a title worn by him that meant "my king is right". He is not just any ordinary king, however. He is a king and a priest of the most high God! Abraham pays a tithe to him and receives a blessing from him. The Hebrew writer explains the significance of this at Hebrews 7. If Abraham was father of the Israelites, yet he paid a tithe to Melchizedek thus signifying that Melchizedek was greater than he, then Melchizedek's priesthood must of necessity be greater than that of the Levites who were still in the loins of Abraham! (Hebrews 7:10) Melchizedek foreshadows the great people of God that would arise from the Israelite people, that is, the church, spiritual Israel!

## **Helping God**

One of the great lessons that we learn from Abraham is the danger of trying to help God rather than just do it His way the first time. By the age of 86, eleven years after he was called, Abraham begins to become restless with regard to the promises. He is supposed to have all these descendants, but he has yet to have one child with his wife! She is still barren. Thus Abraham decides to bring forth a child through Sarah's handmaid, Hagar. Through this union Ishmael is born as recorded in Genesis 16, but this is not the plan of God. Jehovah explains that He will indeed bless Ishmael, but he is not the one of promise. In reality, the nations that arose from Ishmael would end up being a thorn in the side of the people of God. (Genesis 16:11-12)

## **God's People Begin**

These records tell us of the life and times of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, the man from whom all nations would be and at this point have been blessed. It would be a long road from the time of Abraham to when the Messiah would finally come, but the Messiah would be sent when the time was right. According to Genesis 15:6 Abraham was reckoned as righteous because of his faith. This godly example is a great one for us to follow today. He had faith in what was to come, though he would never see it. Indeed "he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10) May our faith be of this sort!

# The First Citywide Judgment

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 18-19.

Do you think that the bargaining Abraham did was more for him or for Jehovah?


Why do you think Lot, a righteous man, would have remained in Sodom?


How does Jehovah feel toward the Moabites and Ammonites per Deuteronomy 23:3?


What woman was of Moab and an ancestor of Jesus?


## The Rainbow

When Noah and his family exited the ark he did what any righteous man would do. He offered a sacrifice to the Lord. Genesis 9 tells us that the Lord smelled the soothing aroma of Noah's obedience and was pleased. As a result of the righteousness of Noah, Jehovah made a covenant with Noah and mankind in general.

What was that covenant as found?

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What symbol did Jehovah give?

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While this promise was made, we realize that the present heavens and earth are reserved not for water, but fire. Peter makes this clear at II Peter 3:7.

*“But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*

Thus Jehovah had promised that He would never again destroy the earth in such a way. Rather than doing as He had done in the flood, He would turn to a more targeted approach. Sometimes it came down to dealing with a wicked individual such as Nadab and Abihu at Leviticus 10:1-3. At other times it came down to dealing with an entire city of individuals or an entire nation. This is something that we see occurring throughout the writings of the prophets. Wicked nation after wicked nation would be destroyed. This is actually alluded to as



# The First Citywide Judgment

part of the covenant made with Abraham at Genesis 15:16. There were nations that would have to be brought low due to their irreverence. At Genesis 18-19 we read of the first citywide judgment against a wicked people. Those cities were Sodom and Gomorrah.

## God's Love for Abraham

Genesis 18 records the angels coming to Abraham to tell him that in a year Sarah would have a child of her own at the age of 90 years old! It was a joyous, though unbelievable, occasion for Abraham and Sarah. Sadly, there was other business that would have to be dealt with that was not nearly as pleasant.

What is troubling the servants of the Lord?

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Why do they feel the need to tell Abraham?

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What is Abraham's reaction to the news?

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Why do you think that Abraham would do such a thing and why would God tolerate it?

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Indeed Abraham had a different relationship with the Lord. There were very few men throughout the Bible that had similar relationships. Jehovah cared for Abraham deeply and wanted to make sure he understood what was happening and why.

## The Angels Arrive

At Genesis 19 we read of the arrival of the angels to Sodom. Lot is living at Sodom and

# The First Citywide Judgment

happens to be at the gate when the angels arrive. Lot is unlike the rest in Sodom and respectfully arises to meet them and bows down before them. Lot is a righteous man who shows hospitality.

What do the angels want to do?

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What does Lot urge them to do instead?

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What happens in the night and how is the problem dealt with?

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Why do you think Lot would offer his daughters as he did?

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As is seen here in this chapter, Sodom (and Gomorrah) was an exceedingly wicked place that was fully deserving of the wrath of Jehovah. The men of the city were given over to whatever desires they had. Homosexuality, rape and other forms of abuse were rampant and seen as no big deal. They were essentially a microcosm of the wickedness that the earth had devolved into prior to the flood. Their thoughts were only evil continually and they were full of violence.

## Judgment

The angels immediately tell Lot to gather his family for the Lord is about to destroy the city. Lot went to his son-in-laws, but they were of no mind to listen to him. The idea that Jehovah would destroy them was such a foreign thought to their minds that they would not listen, but rather thought that he was joking.

# The First Citywide Judgment

Lot is indeed a righteous man. He is so hard-pressed to leave his son-in-laws and the rest of the city behind that he has difficulty getting up and going. Finally the angels take him by the hand and lead him out of the city along with his wife and two daughters.

What commands are given by the angels to Lot and his family?

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When Lot still refuses, what is he told by the angels?

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What reason is given at verse 29 for the Lord's patience toward Lot?

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What happens to Lot's wife and why? Why would God do this?

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## Consider Our Families

Lot escapes from the city with nothing but his two daughters. It is rather unreal to think that he entered the city as a man of enormous wealth, but left with nothing. Sadly, we see the toll that living in that wicked place had taken upon his family. His wife could not bear to depart and looking back was destroyed. His son-in-laws were so far from Jehovah that they could not see the impending judgment. His daughters then do not recognize the saving power of Jehovah and actually consider that they are the only ones left on the earth, though the Lord had promised that the earth would not be again destroyed until certain things happened at the least. As a result of their lack of godliness they trick their father into incestuous relationships and bear children to their father! From them come the Moabites and the Ammonites, two nations that would also be problematic to the children of Israel. We must learn that God will not bear sin forever and our families must be protected!

# The First Son of Abraham

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 16 & 21.

How much say do you think Hagar had in the events that unfolded around her?




Do you think Sarah was despised in Abraham's sight?




What is meant by "he will be a wild donkey of a man" with regard to Ishmael?




What was Ishmael doing in Genesis 21:9 that caused anger?




## Helping God

When Abraham was first called in chapter 12 he was 75 years old. As we learn later he was 10 years older than Sarah. Thus she would have been 65 when Abraham first received the promises. She was well past the years of child-bearing when the promise was first made. The first piece of information we are given about Sarah is found at Genesis 11:30. The verse says,

*"Sarai was barren; she had no child."*

Thus it was well-known already that Sarah was not going to be having any children. It must have been an incredible thing when Jehovah first said to Abraham that he was going to be the father of a great nation! That his seed would be innumerable! That his people would require much land! That his seed many years later would bless all nations under heaven! Although incredible, it was absolutely the truth.

This promise is first made to Abraham when he is 75 years old and is confirmed a number of times in between. He is given comforting words from Jehovah such as is found at Genesis 15:1.

*"Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."*

Even though he received a good bit of reassurance, he could not see any way that it would be possible for him to have children through his wife Sarah. After 11 years, at the age of 86, Abraham decides that matters must be taken into his own hands.

The decision is not his alone. Sarah wants to see the promise to Abraham come about also.

# The First Son of Abraham

What does Sarah do according to Genesis 16:1-3?

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What happens as a result of this?

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What is Sarah's reaction toward Abraham when she finds out Hagar has conceived?

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What is Abraham's solution?

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Indeed we see that things can become a great mess when we try to help God. Jehovah has already made it clear to Abraham that a child would be born to him if he would be patient. (Genesis 15:1-4) This did not require action on Abraham's part. Only he had to wait for it to take place. As a result of his actions Sarah feels slighted and Hagar is mistreated. It did not make for a pleasant home!

## **Hagar Is Comforted**

No doubt Hagar is wondering what is happening at this point. Sarah and Abraham concoct this scheme with Hagar being given likely without a say. Then when she conceives, just as was intended, she is mistreated because of it. The ill-treatment is so severe that she flees and is found in the wilderness by Jehovah. No doubt she is scared and feeling rather helpless and hopeless. Jehovah, however, knows all things and knows just how to comfort her.

What command does Jehovah give to Hagar?

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# The First Son of Abraham

Why would He tell her to do this?

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What is prophesied regarding the child she was carrying?

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What was she to name the child? \_\_\_\_\_ What does the name mean? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Hagar say of Jehovah after meeting with Him?

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## **Sarah and Hagar, Round Two**

The animosity of Sarah toward Hagar and Ishmael did not go away after the events of chapter 16. When we get to chapter 21 we read about the birth of Isaac to Sarah. The servants of God had prophesied that in a year they would return and Sarah would then have a child. Just as was prophesied it took place. Isaac was growing and was finally weaned. As this time was approaching, Sarah began to have a problem.

What was Sarah's problem according to Genesis 21:8-11?

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How did Abraham feel about this?

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Where did God stand on the matter this time?

---

# The First Son of Abraham

As a result of Sarah's wishes and the words of Jehovah, Abraham sends Hagar and his son away. It was no doubt a terribly difficult thing to do. We may overlook the fact that Abraham did not see Ishmael as some sort of reject, but rather he loved him as the son that he was. Yet, Abraham fulfilled the wishes of Jehovah and sent them away.

Why do you think Abraham gave them such small provisions?

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What happens to Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness?

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Ishmael was separate from his father from this point forward, but he still loved his father and apparently respected him. At the time he was driven away he would have been 14-15 years old, basically grown. When his father Abraham dies at Genesis 25:9, Ishmael comes to him to assist Isaac in burying him. Just as God promised he became the father of 12 princes. We read of these at Genesis 25:12-18.

## **Ishmael the Antitype**

As a result of his position, he was not respected by the Israelites. He was seen as a gentile and thus not worthy of their respect. He was not the son of promise. However, much to their chagrin, he is shown to be a type for the Israelite nation at the time of the apostle Paul. Galatians 4:21 begins a discussion that explains this. Basically it is this, Hagar represents Mount Sinai and the slavery the Jewish people had to the Law. Sarah represents freedom, Zion, and the child of promise. Thus the Jews who were clinging to the law were actually making themselves not of the children of promise, but rather the children of slavery! He even goes a step farther and explains that they were persecuting the children of promise just as Ishmael did Isaac! No doubt this is not what a Jew wanted to hear.

Paul's conclusion is sound words to us also. *"We are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman."* We have freedom in Jesus Christ. Thank God that we are of the promise!

# The First Son of Promise

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 21-24.

How old was Abraham when Isaac was born to him according to Genesis 21:1-7?


How old was Sarah when Isaac was born to her?


Where does Isaac's wife come from? Why did they go all the way there for a wife?


How old was Isaac when he married per Genesis 25?


## 25 Years of Waiting

Abraham was 75 years old when called out of Haran. He was made wonderful promises by Jehovah, promises that would require a son. After waiting for 25 years, that son of promise was finally delivered!

What was Sarah's reaction to the child being born?

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What did Abraham do when Isaac was eight days old?

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Thus Isaac is joyously brought into the family and is brought into the covenant Jehovah had made with Abraham. Isaac was the son of promise. It was through Isaac and his descendants that the blessings would come.

What do you think it would be like to wait 25 years in faith for something that seemed impossible?

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How likely do you think it would be that your faith would waver?

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What kind of man do you think Abraham was when called?

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# The First Son of Promise

## The Test

Isaac was weaned and then continued to grow. This child that Abraham had been promised all those years before was doing well. By chapter 22 we see that he was already of some size as he was able to carry firewood. (Genesis 22:6) Then the Lord asked Abraham to do the unspeakable to Isaac.

What did God ask Abraham to do?

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Why would God ask him to do this?

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What would this demonstrate about the character of Abraham to Jehovah?

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How do you think this made Abraham feel?

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What does Hebrews 11:19 reveal about Abraham's mindset with regard to this?

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What is meant by "received him back as a type"?

---

After Abraham shows his great faith to Jehovah, he is once more assured of the promises that were to come through his son Isaac. At Genesis 22:16-19 we find the three promises in their entirety. Jehovah will not withhold from Abraham what has been promised just as Abraham would not withhold his only son from Him!

# The First Son of Promise

## **A Wife for Isaac**

Chapter 24 records the search for a wife for Isaac. People today often have little concern for spiritual matters when it comes to selecting a wife or when it comes to training their children in looking for a mate. It basically boils down to finding someone that you are attracted to and that you can stand to be around. However, we learn from Abraham that spiritual concerns are paramount!

Abraham charges one of his servants with going to find a wife for Isaac. Abraham, according to verse 1 of chapter 24, is too old to go do the search himself. Since Abraham was unable to do this on his own, he gave the charge to his most trusted servant. This servant was in charge of all that Abraham owned and now he would be in charge of the most important task. It is important to realize just how vital this task was. As the son of promise, any woman would not do. A woman had to be found that was fitting for the son of promise. In reality this task was too great for Abraham or any other man to accomplish. It would have to be left in the hands of the Lord.

What orders does Abraham give his servant with regard to finding a wife for Isaac?

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What is the prayer of the servant of Abraham when he reaches Nahor?

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What does this demonstrate about this servant? Contrast this with Lot.

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How is the wife of Isaac ultimately decided?

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# The First Son of Promise

## **He Brought Her Into Sarah's Tent**

Sometimes there may be some confusion to how a wife was taken. It is often said that Isaac took Rebekah and had relations with her, making her his wife. This is found at Genesis 24:66-67. However, it is important to note that there was more to this account than this.

Firstly, Isaac wanted a wife. We see his agreement to what has been done at 24:66-67. The consent of the groom was needed for a marriage to take place. Secondly, we note that Rebekah was not just taken. Her consent to the arrangement was agreed upon also. We find this at 24:58. Through these two actions we essentially have vows. They both agree to be with the other. Essentially we see the same elements for marriage that we have today. Consent and vows.

## **Isaac Was A Righteous Man**

Isaac definitely walking in the path of his father. We find in several places him doing exactly what we would expect a righteous man to do. He was a prayerful man who worked to be well-pleasing to his father and to Jehovah.

What was Isaac doing when Rebekah arrived?

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What did Isaac do according to chapter 25 when Rebekah was barren?

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## **To Those Who Wait**

God's promises will come. They may not come in our time. They may not come as quickly as we would like them to. Yet, in the Lord's time they will come about. As Abraham did, we must do. We must trust in Him who has promised. We must trust that He will do as He has said and look out in faith to the future. Today we are children of promise. We have been promised Heaven if we live according to His pattern. May we be of faith!

# The First Twins

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 25-29.

How old was Abraham when he died? What was his condition when he died?


What does Jacob essentially trick his brother into doing?


What reflection did this have on the mindset of Esau toward holiness?


Why does Isaac move and what is promised to him?


## Two Nations

Rebekah, like Isaac's mother, was barren. Isaac was that son of promise just as Abraham was the man that the promise was made to. Just as Abraham would have to bring forth a son for the promise to come, so would Isaac. Isaac was 40 years old when he married and was 60 years old when the twins were born. (Genesis 25:26) Thus Rebekah did not have a child for 20 years after marrying Isaac. Isaac responded to the barrenness of Rebekah by going to God in prayer. Isaac prayed and Genesis 25:21 says that God answered!

However, things were not as they should have been when the child was old enough to move within her. Since there was no ultrasound during that day, Rebekah went to God in prayer to find out why the child was struggling within her so violently.

What did Jehovah tell her?

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What was unusual about the children when they came forth?

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What are the names of the twins and what do they mean?

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What mistake does Rebekah and Isaac seem to make with regard to Jacob and Esau?

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# The First Twins

## The Despised Birthright

When Rebekah inquired of the Lord she was told that the older would serve the younger. This is of course not due to a lack of free will, but rather would be due to the choices that Esau would make. He became a man whose focus was on his desire rather than what was pleasing or good for those around him, including Jehovah.

What does Esau do with his birthright in Genesis 25 and why?

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What was the birthright?

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What commentary does Hebrews 12:16 give with regard to Esau's character?

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## A Departure from Spirituality

It is interesting to note that with each subsequent generation from Abraham that there seems to be a further departure from Jehovah, at least among the sons that were not of the promise. At Genesis 26:34-35 we find the following statement:

*“When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.”*

How sad to see the difference in the selection for Isaac versus Esau's choice. Abraham was determined that his son would have a wife that was fitting for his position as the child of promise. Yet his grandson did not have the same patience. Isaac apparently waited until his father thought the time was right. Esau just went out on his own and did what he wanted. He chose a woman that was not of his people, but rather of the people that would one day be driven out by the Israelites. As a result of his choice it cause problems for him and brought grief to his parents. We must be careful to train our children in the proper way of

# The First Twins

choosing a mate, otherwise we, along with them, will be brought to grief.

What kind of grief do you think may have been brought to his parents?

---

## **The Stolen Blessing**

When we get to chapter 27 Isaac is now old and is blind. Isaac believes that his time of departure is at hand according to verse 2, so he decides that the time to bless his eldest son has come. So he brings Esau to him and gives him a charge.

What does Isaac tell Esau to do?

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What does Rebekah and Jacob do?

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What blessing was bestowed on Jacob?

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How did Isaac react to the deceit and what do you think about Jacob's actions?

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What does Esau receive rather than a blessing?

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What does Esau commit himself to do when he discovers what has happened?

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# The First Twins

## Jacob Flees

Upon discovering that Esau was planning to kill Jacob, Rebekah goes to Jacob and Isaac to deal with the situation. She tells Jacob that he needs to flee and then tells Isaac that Jacob needs to go to their people to find a wife. A wife that is better than the wife of Esau that gave them grief. Esau is no fool; he understands exactly what has happened. He even tries to remedy the problem in his mother's eyes by going to Ishmael's people and marrying one of his daughters.

As Jacob travels, he came towards Haran. He reached a place called Luz which he would rename Bethel. While sleeping there he used one of the stones as a pillow. It was upon this "pillow" that he had a dream.

What was the dream?

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What did the Lord tell Jacob?

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## Spiritual Ramifications

Indeed what Jacob did to receive the place of honor was dishonorable. However, it is easy to come away from this thinking that Esau was in the right. Esau was a wicked man who was fighting against the will of God. Had he been righteous he would have cared about the promise enough to want a part of it. He would have cared enough to not sell it. He would have cared enough to have chosen a proper spouse. Instead he chose the path that gave grief to those around him.

Romans 9 explains as it alludes to Malachi 1 that God chooses what nations he will lift up and which ones he will humble. Jacob (Israel) was exalted while Esau (Edom) was brought low. Esau could have righteously yielded his will to the father and been righteous, but this was not the man he was. Jacob loved the promise and as such received it.

# The Beginning of the Tribes

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 29-36.

Who is the first one of his household that Jacob meets when he gets to Haran?




Who was her father and what kind of man did he turn out to be?




What “wages” did Jacob decide upon when asked by Laban what he desired?




What problem did Jacob’s family have per Genesis 35:2?




## More Than He Bargained For

To say that things did not go as smoothly among his people as it did for the servant of Abraham when looking for Isaac’s wife is an understatement. When Jacob arrives at Haran, he first meets Rachel and is taken with her beauty.

How does Jacob think of Rachel and her appearance?

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As a result of his feelings toward Rachel, Jacob is willing to make a bargain with Laban, Rachel’s father. He worked for Laban for a month and when Laban inquired of what he wanted for his labor, He told Laban that he desired Rachel. However, it would not be as easy as just taking her back to his home. He agrees to work for seven years for Laban for Rachel. This agreement is entered into.

How does Jacob feel as he works those seven years?

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What happens when he tries to claim his wife?

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Do you think Jacob may have in some way deserved this?

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What does Laban change the agreement to?

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# The Beginning of the Tribes

## The Twelve Sons

Jacob is the father of the twelve sons that would later become the twelve tribes. On the lines below write the names of the twelve sons in order under their mother's name. Also write what their names mean.

Leah

Zilpah

Rachel

Bilhah

1. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

These twelve would not exactly be the tribes, but they were the starting point. Levi would not receive land as they were priests. Joseph would not receive land either, but his two sons would be two of the tribes and have land.

It is easy to see the trouble that would become of a man who had two competing wives. Abraham had plenty of difficulty dealing with the one wife and her servant. However, this was in the plan of God. These twelve men would be the start of the tribes that would exist that would later become like states in the nation of Israel.

How would you describe the attitude of Rachel?

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How would you describe the attitude of Leah?

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# The Beginning of the Tribes

## God Blesses Jacob

While Jacob was in the household of Laban his wealth continued to grow. He had an enormous family and was just generally well-blessed. Laban wants Jacob to stay with him for a longer period of time. No doubt he was enjoying having his daughters around. He had many grandchildren to be with. In addition to all this he explain to Jacob at chapter 30 that the Lord had blessed him on account of Jacob. Rather than agreeing to another time period of labor, Jacob works out another plan.

What does Jacob agree with Laban to do after he had completed his 14 years?

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What do you think was going on with the rods?

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## Laban's Anger

At chapter 31 we find that Laban and his son's were no longer happy with Jacob. They saw him as one who had come in and taken their inheritance. Jacob certainly was acting wisely, but Laban was a victim of his own greed and wickedness.

What does Jacob say Laban had done ten times?

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What does Jehovah tell Jacob?

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How did his wives feel about their father and Jacob's decision to leave?

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# The Beginning of the Tribes

## Jacob and Esau Reunite

Jacob had great trouble with Laban, but as he nears home there is another danger. His brother Esau. At this point it has been 20 years since he fled. When he hears that his brother is coming to meet him, he assumes that it is for war, but he finds that his brother has gotten past the trouble of the past.

After departing from Esau, Jacob comes to Shechem in the land of Canaan. He then does something that had not yet been done. His grandfather Abraham never owned land as far as we know in the promised land except a gravesite for Sarah. Jacob however buys the land where he pitched his tent. Sadly, this would be a bad place for him. His daughter Dinah is defiled and his sons avenge her causing trouble in the land.

Where does God tell Jacob to go now?

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What happens in this land?

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Who finally dies? How long is this after he thought he was going to die?

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## Dealing Justly

While it is true that Jacob received his inheritance through guile, he certainly paid for it and then some. Laban basically took 20 years of his life and had it not been for the providence of God Jacob would have left with nothing to show for it. When we examine it all we come away with the understanding that we need to be people that deal justly! Jacob was unjust in his dealings and ended up with a man that was unjust in his. God's will can always be accomplished without guile! How much life and time with family was wasted by unjust dealings! We make the most of our time and relations when we are just.

# The Beginning of God's Nation

## IN PREPARATION

Read Genesis 37-50.

Who does the focus shift to when we get to chapter 37? Who was his mother?


What happens to him in this chapter? What impact would this have?


Judah was the fourth oldest. What does he do in chapter 38? Who did he wrong?


What other twins do we read about in this section?


## Fulfilled Prophecy

At Genesis 15 Abraham enters into a covenant with Jehovah. Animals are brought and are cut in two. Abraham and Jehovah pass through the center to mark the covenant. Part of the covenant is a prophecy of what is to become of the descendants of Abraham.

What is prophesied at Genesis 15:13?

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How will this prophecy be fulfilled?

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With the account now shifting its focus to Joseph, we begin the march toward the first promise being fulfilled. Jehovah has promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation. This will take place in the cradle of Egypt with things set in motion by the wicked actions of Joseph's brothers against him.

## Joseph's First Trial

Genesis 37 records how Joseph would end up in Egypt. Joseph was loved by his father being that he was the firstborn of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife and that he was the child of his old age. (Genesis 37:3) This playing of favorites did not sit well with the other sons. To make matters worse, Joseph kept sharing dreams with them that did not paint the type of future they would like. The dreams basically put Joseph, almost the youngest, in a place of power over his brothers. They were unhappy to say the least.

# The Beginning of God's Nation

What did Joseph's father give him? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the first dream that Joseph had?

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What was the second dream?

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What did his brother's do to him? Who spared him from death?

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Although their actions were terrible, how did this work out to everyone's advantage?

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## **Above Reproach**

Joseph ends up in Egypt. Although he was away from his family and away from all that he knew, Joseph decided to make the best of the situation. He worked hard and became a successful man because the Lord was with him. (Genesis 39:2) Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the bodyguard. As time went by he became well-trusted by Potiphar so much so that Joseph was running his household. Genesis 39:6 says that the only thing that Potiphar had to worry about was what he ate!

However, being in the house daily with the wife of Pharaoh turned out to be a bad thing. She wanted him to fornicate with her and he refused. Finally she pressed him so hard that he had to flee. As a result of being rebuffed, she lied to Potiphar and had Joseph thrown into prison. Joseph did what was right regardless of the cost.

How might we do something similar today?

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# The Beginning of God's Nation

## Joseph's Second Trial

Joseph was sold into Egyptian slavery. He lost everything that was gain to him. So he started over from nothing. The Lord was with him and he prospered. Now for a second time everything is snatched away from Joseph and he must decide what he will do.

How would you react to losing everything for a second time in this fashion?

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What do you think the temptation might have been to Joseph?

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What happens in chapters 40-41 that brings his name back before Pharaoh?

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What was the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream?

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Joseph's second trial lasted for over two years. However, he maintained his faith and trust in Jehovah and the Lord remembered him. While these trials were certainly terrible, Joseph learned patience and trust in God that was far above the patience and faith of the average person!

## The Family Is Reunited

The seven years of plenty comes about just as was prophesied and Joseph wisely stored up plenty for the time to come. After this time the seven years of famine begin. It was a terrible famine that affected the entire area. Not only did it affect Egypt, it also affected the land of Joseph's family. Jacob finally sends his sons to go to Egypt to buy grain. Little did they know that their life was about to drastically change.

# The Beginning of God's Nation

What happens when they get to Egypt to buy grain?

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Which brother stayed behind and why?

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What does Joseph command of the brothers?

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How does Pharaoh react when he hears of the news? What does he command?

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How does Jacob sum up his life to Pharaoh? How is this unusual?

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How does Joseph sum up his trials at Genesis 50?

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## God's Nation Begins

Of all the beginnings in the book of Genesis, this one is of the greatest importance to us. It is through the beginning of this nation that we have Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins. The sin of the garden brought alienation from God, but the promises made to Abraham that took form in this nation brought reconciliation. We find beginnings of wickedness in the book, but we likewise find the beginnings of restoration. In the years to come the children of Israel would leave Egypt and be a great nation. They would go to the land that had been promised and bring forth the Messiah! May we all appreciate this beginning!

This book belongs to:

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