

The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 5: Genesis 34-50

Tuesday Night Bible Study, June 24, 2008

--OUTLINE:

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY STUMBLE AT SHECHEM
TRAGEDY LEADING TO TRIUMPH IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH
THE LIFE OF JOSEPH AND A PICTURE OF OUR FUTURE IN CHRIST

--INTRO:

--RECAP: last week we studied Jacob's spiritual journey... from walking in fear relying on his own strength to walking in faith relying on God's strength... in Genesis 33 he reached a high point where he made peace with Esau and arrived back in Canaan, walking in the steps of faith of his grandfather Abraham.

--following the high point in Genesis 33 and building an altar to the Lord at Shechem as an expression of faith, Jacob and his sons have a major stumble at Shechem...

--JACOB AND HIS FAMILY STUMBLE AT SHECHEM:

--the contrast between Jacob's strength in ch. 33 and his weakness in ch.34 is striking and is a great reminder about how we have to always be on guard as our flesh is weak!

--Mark 14:38: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

--this incident is also a reminder of Satan's crafty ways and how he wants to destroy God's work in our lives!

--John 10:10: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

--Jacob and his family had just returned to Canaan with the promise that God was going to make them into a great nation in order to bless all other nations in the world by bringing salvation to all nations through Christ.

--Genesis 28:13-15: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land..."

--immediately Satan plots to undermine God's plan to form a nation from Jacob's descendants...

--in Genesis 9:25 Noah pronounced a prophetic curse on the descendants of his son Canaan who proved to be one of the major sources of evil in the world.

--following this prophetic curse Abraham and Isaac sternly instructed that wives for their sons not be taken from the land of Canaan.

--in Genesis 34 while camping at Shechem, the son of Hamor (the prince of Shechem) whose name was also Shechem raped Dinah, one of Jacob's daughters.

--after the rape incident, Hamor persuaded Jacob to allow his family to intermarry with the Canaanite inhabitants of Shechem and to allow Shechem (Hamor's son) to marry Dinah.

--by joining his family with the Canaanites in Shechem Jacob was acting as if he had completely forgotten God's plans for his family!

--Genesis 35:2 indicates that one devastating result of Jacob's family intermarrying with the Canaanites was that they made the pagan Canaanite gods a part of their lives.

--then Jacob's sons display the same deceitful character that Jacob used to have and tricked Hamor into instituting circumcision in Shechem as a condition for allowing Jacob's family to intermarry with the inhabitants of Shechem.

--while the male inhabitants of Shechem were in a weakened state due to side effects from circumcision Jacob's sons murdered the males in Shechem and plundered Shechem.

--this brings out weakness in Jacob and he says to two of his sons, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I." (Genesis 34:30)

--Jacob spoke as if he forgot that God was their strength and protection.

--God had not only delivered him from Laban and Esau but changed his name to "Israel" which means "having power with God".

--God then appears to Jacob again and reminds him... Genesis 35:1-12: "Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.' 2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. 5 And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. ... 9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. 11 Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. 12 The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

--Genesis 35:22-26: "Now the sons of Jacob were twelve [*the twelve father's of the twelve tribes of Israel*]: 23 the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; 24 the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; 25 the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; 26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher."

TRAGEDY LEADING TO TRIUMPH IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

--in Genesis 38 we see Jacob's son Judah make the same mistake Jacob made at Shechem about mixing with Canaanites when he left Jacob's family to marry a Canaanite woman.

--at this time when Jacob's 12 sons (12 forefathers of the 12 tribes of Israel) began having their own children, the nation of Israel was a like a newborn baby in need of protection from the elements... protection from the harsh elements of Canaanite culture. They could have easily been absorbed among the Canaanites and lost their identity.

--to protect Israel God took a tragic sequence of events in the life of Jacob's son Joseph and used them to formulate an ingenious plan to protect Israel!

--Jacob's favoritism of Joseph and prophetic dreams God gave Joseph about his plan to use Joseph to help preserve Israel caused jealousy among his brothers...

--Genesis 37:2-11: "Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. 5 Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they

hated him even more. 6 So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." 10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" 11 And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind."

--shortly after Joseph's dreams Jacob sent him to check on his brothers while they were tending the flock. When he arrived at their camp they threw him into a dry water well and then sold him to Ishmaelite slaves on their way to Egypt.

--Joseph went from being the favored son of Jacob to a prisoner being carried off to a foreign land... in his mind he probably felt like he had died and gone to hell, but this valley of suffering was the passage to a land of blessing that was far better than his wildest dreams!

--in many ways this period of suffering is a picture of suffering in the Christian life, and the future that God had planned for Joseph is a picture of the Christian's future in heaven!

--the Ishmaelite slaves then sold Joseph to Potiphar who was an officer in Pharaoh's court. While serving Potiphar God blessed Joseph...

--Genesis 39:1-5: "Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. 5 So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field."

--when things seemed to be going so well then trouble strikes Joseph again when Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him...

--Genesis 39:6-10: "Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her."

--Potiphar's wife then lied to Potiphar and said that Joseph tried to sexually attack her when in reality she tried to attack Joseph.

--Potiphar then sent Joseph to prison, and again it seemed to Joseph like his life was cursed... first he became a slave and now he was a slave in prison, **but God was working in unseen ways and Joseph's time in prison was still the path to a blessing beyond his wildest dreams!**

--Joseph's time in prison quickly took an unexpected turn as God blessed him there...

--Genesis 39:21-23: "But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper."

--then we see the greater purpose of Joseph's time in the prison...

--Joseph had the prophetic ability to interpret dreams, and while serving in the prison a butler and baker of the king of Egypt were imprisoned and had a dream that they were puzzled by.

--Joseph interpreted their dreams and shortly thereafter the interpretation proved to be true when the baker was found guilty and executed and the butler was found innocent and returned to the king's court.

--soon thereafter the king of Egypt was greatly perplexed by a dream and it became known to him through the butler that Joseph had the gift of interpreting dreams!

--Pharaoh then summoned Joseph and Joseph interpreted his dreams...

--his interpretation was that there would be 7 years of plentiful harvest followed by 7 years of famine and that Pharaoh should appoint a commissioner to oversee preparation for the famine.

--then all the pieces of the puzzle of God's providence in Joseph's life fit together to form a picture that was beyond Joseph's wildest dreams!

--Genesis 41:37-45: "So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."

--so Joseph went from being a slave to the second most powerful person in the world!

--when the famine arrived Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain that Joseph was in charge of...

--his father thought he was dead and his brothers thought he was as good as dead, but to their total shock he turns out to be the second most powerful person in the world!

--Joseph could have had his brothers thrown into prison but instead he embraced them with love and showed them mercy.

--in Genesis 45:3-11 we read of Joseph revealing himself to his brothers... "Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. 4 And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9 "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine."

--when his sons returned to Canaan and told him about Joseph, Jacob decided to take his entire family to Egypt...

--on his way Jacob passed through Beersheba where God appeared to him the first time on his way to Haran to find his wife. God appeared to him there again... Genesis 46:1-7: "Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am." 3 So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. 4 I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes." 5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. 7 His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt."

--not only did God use Joseph to provide cultural protection for Israel but also physical protection and sustenance during the famine which could have been lethal to Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan.

--THE LIFE OF JOSEPH AND A PICTURE OF OUR FUTURE IN CHRIST

--the path of following Christ often leads to persecution and a life that is not highly esteemed by the world... much like Joseph's life as a slave and in prison. But when Christ returns to the earth for His 1000 year reign on earth we will reign over all the nations of the world with Him in our glorified bodies! (Revelation 20:4-6)

--many Christians who are persecuted and in prison in hostile countries will experience the radical contrast of having authority over nations when reigning with Christ!

--Revelation 20:4-6: "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. **And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** 5 But the rest of the dead [*those who are not saved*] did not live again until the thousand years were finished [*at which time the "second resurrection" will occur to bring the unsaved to the final judgment and the "second death"*]. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, **but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.**"

--during the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth we will be part of His administration... we will be in our glorified bodies governing over people in natural bodies that descended from those who survived the Great Tribulation. In a way the movie Superman (pardon the analogy if you don't like Superman) is an analogy of what it will be like... In the movie, Superman helped the world in a supernatural body...and we will be helping the world in supernatural bodies...with perfect understanding and perfect love...maybe traveling "faster than a speeding bullet"!