

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 3b

[Read Acts 7:1-8]

God called Abraham into a covenant relationship with Him. He promised that He would build out of Abraham and his descendants a great nation, and that through this nation, He would bring a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3).

I. GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE – THE PATRIARCHS

The Old Testament from this point on deals with God's working with a select group of people in order to eventually bring about His plan of redemption for mankind.

1. Abraham begat Isaac, the son of the promise.
2. Isaac begat Esau & Jacob.

Jacob is a deceiver, yet God saw something in him.

Romans 9:13 (NKJV)

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

- a. Jacob convinces his brother to sell him his birthright. [Read Gen 25:29-34]
- b. Jacob tricks his father into giving him the blessing. [Read Genesis 27:18-23]

When Jacob flees the wrath of his brother, he has a special encounter with God at a place called Bethel. God offers the same covenant to Jacob that He had made with his father and grandfather.

[Read Genesis 28:10-22]

Jacob, however, is still self-willed and flees to Haran (the place God had called Abraham out of). He struggles for 21 years and is cheated by his father-in-law, Laban. (Genesis chapters 29-31) Jacob reaps what he has sown.

God calls Jacob to return to Bethel:

Genesis 31:13 (NKJV)

13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.'"

3. Jacob's name is changed to Israel. [Read Genesis 32:24-28]
4. Jacobs has twelve sons, who would become the twelve tribes of Israel.

Reuben	Zebulun	Asher
Simeon	Issachar	Naphtali
Levi	Dan	Joseph
Judah	Gad	Benjamin

II. JOSEPH – THE FAVORED SON: [Read Genesis 37:1-5]

Joseph is the oldest son of Rachel. He was his father's favorite. Joseph dreamed dreams that he did not understand, but they pointed to his future. His brothers hated him because of his father's favor and his dreams.

1. Joseph's Struggle:
 - a. Betrayed and sold by his brothers (Genesis 37:17-20 & 26-28)
 - b. Enslaved in Egypt (Genesis 39:1-5)
 - c. Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-14)
 - d. Imprisoned in the dungeon (Genesis 39:20-23)
 - e. Forgotten by the king's butler (Genesis 40:21-22)
2. Joseph's Advantage:
 - a. The Lord was with Joseph.
 - b. God's presence is not always indicated by the ease of our life.
 - c. Joseph lived his life *Coram Deo* – before the face of God.
 - d. He was a man of integrity.

III. JOSEPH IS A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS:

Joseph could have thwarted the purpose of God in his life by:

1. Allowing himself to become bitter.
2. Seeking to avenge himself when he had the power.

Instead, he becomes a beautiful Old Testament picture of Christ's forgiveness.

IV. KEY PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH: [Read Genesis 45:1-8]

1. Forgiveness is a decision made in faith.
2. Forgiveness is a recognition that alone God has the right to avenge our enemies (Genesis 50:19).
3. Forgiveness does not mean the pain goes away. V.2: "he wept aloud..."
4. Forgiveness is not forgetting. V.4: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt..."
5. Forgiveness is not always immediate reconciliation. Forgiveness takes one; reconciliation takes two. In Genesis chapters 42-44, Joseph is evaluating whether or not his brothers are ready to reconcile.

V. JOSEPH SAVES HIS FAMILY

God uses Joseph to save his family from the famine and to bring them into Egypt so they can grow into the nation that God planned for them. [Read Genesis 47:11-12 & 27]