

Lesson 3 – The Patriarchs

Text: Genesis 12-50

Significant Figures and People: God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the 12 sons of Jacob

Key Passages:

- Genesis 12 – God made several important promises to Abraham, a particularly righteous man.
- Genesis 26 – God repeated the promises to Isaac, Abraham’s son.
- Genesis 28 – God repeated the promises to Jacob, Isaac’s son.
- Genesis 32 – God changed Jacob’s name to Israel after he wrestled with a divine being.

Transition from the Patriarchs:

At the end of chapter 11, there is another list of generations. This list follows the lineage of Shem, one of Noah’s sons, until a man named Abram. From that point, the Bible is primarily focused on him and his family.

The Patriarchs (Genesis 12-50):

The time period of the Patriarchs is especially critical to the Bible story. It is during this time period that God makes special promises to the fathers (patriarchs) of His chosen people, Israel. These events are particularly important to the rest of the Old Testament, as the historical records of the Old Testament are focused on Israel, God’s nation.

Abraham, a particularly righteous man, was commanded by God to leave his family and country and go to another place which God promised to show him. God also made him several promises (that he would make Abraham a great nation, that he would be given the land of Canaan, and that through him, all families of the earth would be blessed). Abraham was a very obedient and faithful man, though he was not without his shortcomings. When Abraham was 100 years old, God blessed him and his wife, Sarah, with a son named Isaac.

One of the most significant events in Abraham’s life was when God tested Abraham’s faith by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham made all the proper preparations and journeyed for three days with Isaac to do just as God had commanded him. Just when Abraham was about to kill Isaac, however, God stopped him and allowed him to sacrifice a ram instead. After Sarah died, Isaac married Rebekah, his second cousin. He and Rebekah had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. God repeated the promises that he had made to Abraham to Isaac as well.

Esau was Isaac’s favorite son, while Jacob was Rebekah’s favorite. Before he died, Isaac planned to bless Esau, but, with Rebekah’s help, Jacob deceived his father and stole the blessing from Esau. To escape Esau’s wrath, Jacob ran away and lived with his uncle, Laban, where he eventually married his two daughters, Leah (because Laban deceived him) and Rachel. Jacob also was given the promises from God which Abraham and Isaac had received. One night, Jacob wrestled with a divine being (perhaps an angel, or a manifestation of God), which concluded when God gave Jacob a new name, Israel.

Jacob had twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. Joseph was the older of Rachel’s two sons and Jacob’s favorite. Jealousy drove the other sons to sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt. God helped Joseph to become second-in-command in Egypt and save all the nations around Egypt from a famine. He also saved his family and brought them all to Egypt. This gave them the chance for the family to separate themselves from the nations around them and to become their own nation. Despite what they had done to him, Joseph did not hold a grudge against his brothers or take vengeance against them.

Transition to the Exodus from Egypt:

The end of Genesis describes the events surrounding Jacob’s and Joseph’s deaths. The beginning of Exodus talks about a new pharaoh who did not know Joseph. All of the good that Joseph had accomplished in Egypt was forgotten. The new pharaoh felt threatened by the growing nation and went to drastic measures to make sure that his great empire was not in any danger from this unknown people, the Israelites.

Overview of Significant Events in the Patriarchs Time Period:

- God gave Abraham several significant promises (Genesis 12; 15; 17).
 - The land of Canaan
 - Great nation
 - Through Abraham, all of the families of the earth would be blessed
- Abraham met the king of Salem, Melchizedek (Genesis 14).
- God instituted the covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17).
- The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their great sin (Genesis 18-19).
- Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22).
- God gave the promises to Isaac (Genesis 26).
- Rebekah helped Jacob deceive Isaac and steal the blessing from Esau (Genesis 27).
- God gave the promises to Jacob (Genesis 28).
- Laban deceived Jacob by giving him Leah as a wife instead of Rachel, whom he loved (Genesis 29).
- Jacob's name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with a divine being (Genesis 32).
- Jacob's other sons sold Joseph into slavery (Genesis 37).
- Joseph was taken down to Egypt where he served in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39).
- Joseph prophesied that there would be a famine in the land; he helped Egypt to prepare (Genesis 41).
- Joseph brought his family down to Egypt so that they could survive the famine (Genesis 47).
- Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were blessed by Jacob (Genesis 48).

The 12 Sons of Jacob (Israel):

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