

***"The Attack on the Heir and His Family Continues -
Joseph, Chosen of Almighty God but A Slave for God's Glory"***

Review:

So far in our fellowship around this great theme, "The Long War Against God", we have seen God working miraculously in Abraham's life -- and then in Isaac's, as well. And then, in our last fellowships, we have considered Abraham's and Sarah's grandson Jacob and how through deception Jacob had demonstrated his parents birth-naming wisdom, for his name literally means "supplanter", or, even, "thief".

But God had much more in store for Jacob that what his "birth nature" and name might reveal. How did he learn of the working of Almighty God?

Firstly, he learned as an "indentured servant" in his uncle Laban's household.

We saw in our fellowship last time how, after 20 years under his uncle's control, the Lord God brings great success to Jacob with several wives, many children, and eleven sons including much wealth. At the divinely appointed time, we saw in chapter 31 how God then appeared to Jacob in a dream and renewed his pledge to him which he had made to him at the beginning of his journey.

Jacob learned well at this point that God remembered his offering 20 years before at Bethel and that he was personally committed to his life and well being, just as he had promised. So he leaves Haran for the Promised Land under the cover of darkness. Laban intends to harm him but God interferes with Laban's desires by appearing to him in a dream and forbids him to harm Jacob in any way. So instead they mutually agree to a pact of non-aggression.

What follows is one of the most amazing historical accounts in the Bible of Almighty God meeting with a sinner, in this case the angel of the Lord confronting Jacob. The account here demands careful attention and reveals the critical turning point in Jacob's life as he "wrestles" nearly until daybreak with a "man" who is in fact the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son of God himself.

What have we learned?

- ***Jacob's name means struggler, supplanter or even thief (25:22) while Israel means that not Jacob but rather the Lord God is the one who rules, who is sovereign.***
- ***But here Jacob is also called a "prince". This word is also used similarly in other places of actual worldly princes, commanding officers, military officers in general, slave owners and herdsmen among other uses. It simply means the one in charge. Through his natural strength Jacob was indeed a "prince".***
 - ***Jacob had contended for Esau's birthright and in that case he succeeded (25:29-34). The same was true regarding Esau's blessing and also while dwelling with Laban. So it seems that as long as he was engaged in conflict with men he succeeded.***
- ***But at this point in this revealed history Almighty God himself has now changed Jacob's name to Israel signifying not only the truth of the sovereignty of God, but rather, Jacob's full acceptance of that truth. For his new name, Israel, means "God rules" or "God commands". Through this encounter, Jacob realizes that he has been wrestling with God himself. Consequently he is humbled for life and for the sake of his testimony and names that place Peniel, or, "the face of God", for, as we see in verse 30: "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."***

In this God was most gracious towards Jacob. It was in recognition of his continuing work in him, that he was now called Israel -- and, in addition, he was marked with a crippling limp as well, signifying that in God's sight, he was the beneficiary of God's direct empowering and securing of the promise of the Seed of the Woman.

- ***Jacob now goes forth with his family and all his possessions and encounters his brother Esau -- with his staff in hand. And the brothers do not enter into conflict but instead agree to live in peace and so they do.***
- ***After departing from one another,***

Gen. 33:1-4

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

- ***We read that Jacob then continues on his journey and shortly stops and purchases some property. What he does with that land is significant:***

Gen. 33:18-20

18 “And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city.

19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.

20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.”

- ***“Elelohe-Israel” means in the Hebrew “God, the God of Israel”! This is in full recognition, of course, of Israel having taken the God of his fathers as his own God.***
 - ***Israel’s (not Jacob’s) God is here now boldly testified. Note well the total shift here from the God of his father and grandfather to his own God. And note well also how the foundation of Jacob’s (now called Israel) testimony is on the unconditional promises regarding the Seed of the Woman as given in Gen. 3:15 and repeated and expanded many times later.***
- ***We spent most of our time in our last fellowship continuing the theme of how Jacob’s (now renamed Israel) blessing was now assured (Gen. 48, 49, and Heb. 11) due to the promise of Gen. 3:15 regarding the Seed of the Woman. Specifically, we looked at the end of Jacob’s life and his testimony as revealed there in his final words of blessing to Joseph and to his other sons:***
- ***Gen. 48:15-16:***

15 “And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”
 - ***Gen. 49:24-26***

24 “But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:
26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”

- ***Jacob, now Israel, has come to know, and to testify boldly, that the God of his father and grandfather, the God with whom he had an uncertain relationship for so long, was indeed his God, and that that very God was the one who had cared so tenderly for him all of his life, providing for his every need and "redeeming him from all evil."***
- ***And, then finally, at the very end of this chapter here, Jacob in his last words testifies as to his resurrection faith by requiring of his sons that his bones will be taken back to the Land of Promise and buried properly there in the ancestral burial plot of the cave of Machpelah, in Mamre, which is Hebron.***
- ***The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is not silent either on Jacob's personal testimony of faith in Almighty God:***
 - ***Heb. 11:21*** “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”
- ***Thus Jacob's staff became the symbol of his humiliation -- AND HIS PERSONAL FAITH boldly proclaiming his beginnings as a shepard with nothing more to show for his walk with the Lord and ending with an injury that signifies his "personal walk" with the Lord.***

For nearly 50 years I have found these verses so meaningful and encouraging.

Are they for you as well? We know well what Abraham "found" as he trusted the Lord of glory. The same was true, of course, of Isaac. And now we see how Jacob renamed Israel by Almighty God was humbled often under that same mighty hand and how in the course of his life God had revealed himself to him in ways that he could not ignore.

Now, as you might expect, God is not finished with Jacob's son Joseph yet and neither is Satan. His attacks continue after Jacob has died and now from Genesis chapter 37 to the end of the book the focus is primarily on Joseph. Since Jacob has given prophecy concerning the sons of Jacob, Satan now has even more confirmation that the Seed of the Woman promise (and all of the promises dependent on that original promise) will be fulfilled through this specific family.

That Joseph has been singled out was surely also taken note of, and it is no wonder that Joseph's brothers will now be used by the Enemy against him.

Our Outline Today (Gen. 37 - 50) covers the end of Jacob's life and the period that leads to the end of Joseph's life as well. Let's see how the Long War Against God proceeds as Satan works to destroy this family and thereby to cancel the unconditional promises concerning the Seed of the Woman as well:

I. The Story of Joseph - A Slave for God's Glory: The Beginning

[READ] Gen. 37:1-11

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

- ***How did Jacob treat Joseph differently than his brethren? Gifts were given and the effects were profound. The coat of many colors was very distinctive and would have set Joseph apart from his brothers.***

- ***How did Joseph distinguish himself relative to his brethren? His dreams were significant in many ways and were in fact prophetic as***

all could see. His brothers responded in a common way through jealousy. But his father responded a "little" differently -- he "kept" or "secured" the words spoken in his heart!

- *Satan, as the father of lies and of even murder (see John 8:44), had much opportunity presented to him through all of this and he clearly took advantage of the circumstances. And the consequences were dramatic and made a significant entry in the story of "The Long War Against God". Joseph's brothers leave him in a pit covered with blood and he is found by Midianite traders who sell him to a caravan of Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver. He is taken to Egypt and then sold as a slave. Jacob thinks he has been killed by a wild animal as his coat of many colors was found covered with blood:*

Gen. 37:35 "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

[Your thoughts?]

This inspired account continues now in Potiphar's household as the stage is now set for Satan's completed victory:

II. The Story of Joseph - A Slave for God's Glory: In Potiphar's House Firstly and then in Prison

[READ] Gen. 39:1-6

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous 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 that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured."

- *Joseph has been sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard*

- ***An incident with Potiphar's wife occurs and Joseph is falsely charged with impropriety and is put into prison by Potiphar with Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker being also imprisoned with Joseph soon afterwards.***
- ***Both the chief butler and the chief baker dream strange dreams and Joseph provides interpretations which are proven true.***
- ***Then, when Joseph had been in prison for two years, Pharaoh has a strange dream. He asks all the Egyptian wise men for an interpretation of his dream and no one can interpret it.***
- ***The chief butler who has now been released from prison remembers that Joseph correctly interpreted his dream when he was in the prison with him and recommends Joseph to Pharaoh.***

Now the scene shifts to Pharaoh's house and we see God's hidden purpose behind all of this revealed:

III. The Story of Joseph - A Slave for God's Glory: In Pharaoh's House

Firstly, before the famine begins . . .

[READ] Gen. 41:38-45

38 "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."

- ***Because Joseph correctly interprets Pharaoh's dream, he is put in charge of everything in the kingdom.***
- ***And now a great famine comes upon Egypt and the entire middle east . . .***

[READ] Gen. 41:55-57

55 “And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.”

- ***A great famine has overtaken Egypt and the entire land.***
- ***Only Egypt is prepared for the famine due to Joseph’s wise management of the food supply.***
- ***The storehouses are also opened to the citizens of other nations also experiencing the effects of the famine, including Israel itself . . .***

IV. The Story of Joseph - A Slave for God’s Glory: In Joseph’s House

Chap. 42: “Jacob sends his ten sons to buy grain in Egypt and they are imprisoned by Joseph as if they were spies. They are set at liberty then but on condition that they will return to their land and bring back Benjamin. They show their regret in front of Joseph for their evil towards him and Simeon is bound and kept for a “security” as they are sent back to their father with grain and with their money. But Jacob still refuses to send Benjamin.” Paraphrased from TSK.

Gen. 42:13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

. . .

Gen. 42:21-24

21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

- ***Joseph is overwhelmed with grief and turns away in tears. These are precious tears of healing, expressing his deep and heart felt forgiveness for the sins of his brothers as he now sees so clearly***

how God had planned all of this from the beginning.

Chap. 43: “Jacob finally is persuaded to send Benjamin and when he is presented to Joseph he has prepared for them a feast.” TSK

Chap. 44: Joseph's intent was to profoundly humble his brothers. “The silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack and they are brought before Joseph; Judah's supplication to Joseph in in brokenness of heart.” TSK

Chap. 45: “And, finally, Joseph makes himself known to his brothers, comforts them in God's providence, and sends for his father.” - TSK

[READ] Gen. 45:1-15

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

- ***This is one of the most touching and spiritually profound portions of God's word. The sovereignty of Almighty God is exhibited through the weakness and frailty of sinful men here with such power and grace - the two are mingled so thoroughly, aren't they?***
- ***Surely God blessed Joseph while he was in bondage in Egypt***
 - ***Joseph was key to the implementation of his plan***
 - ***But Satan worked full time in his world of darkness and sin to thwart the plan of God - but he could not be victorious - God will always be the victor***
 - ***And, as we have seen, Satan is always trapped by his own arrogance and pride. Here Jacob's brothers demonstrate that so fully.***
- ***In so many ways God used Joseph and his life to accomplish his purpose and plan as revealed here in these chapters (Gen. 37-45).***
- ***In what ways do you think God is using US to accomplish his purposes today?***
 - ***How has he been using you?***
- ***What blessings has he brought?***
 - ***What trials have accompanied them?***
 - ***What is your response to being in the very center of God's plan and purpose for the ages?***
 - ***Is the scale of God's working today on the level of how God worked in the days of Joseph? Why or why not? What are the differences.***
 - ***How humbled are we regarding the good hand of Almighty God upon each one of us?***
- ***Praise God for his unspeakable gift, the Lord Jesus! Amen. And thanks be to God for the promise of the Seed of the Woman!***