

Jacob's Life in Canaan: Genesis 34:1-36:43

In chapter 34 we come to a major milestone in the redemption of mankind. God has faithfully brought Jacob back to the God promised to Abraham and Isaac and He promised Jacob that he would inherit; God, by grace, continues His covenant He made with Abraham.

Having escaped from under the control of his unscrupulous Uncle Laban, and having made peace with his brother, Esau, Jacob arrived and settled his family in the promised land, hoping for rest and peace.

Although in the land of promise, and the will of God, not everything goes smoothly for Jacob and his family. His daughter by Leah, Dinah, is raped by Shechem, the son of the king, Hamor the Hivite. Upon hearing of this incident, Jacob waited until his sons return to address the issue; the brothers were livid upon hearing of Dinah's defilement.

Shechem pleaded with his father to arrange for him to marry Dinah. Dinah's brothers "*spoke deceitfully*" with the men regarding the marriage of their sister. Telling them men they would only agree to the marriage if all the men of the city were circumcised. The men agreed and spoke to the men of their city to convince them to follow through with the procedure so that they could intermarry and "*their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours*"

Before the men of the city had healed from being circumcised, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, attacked the city, killed all the men of the city, and took their sister back. Their actions were reprehensible to Jacob. ***Genesis 49:5-7***

Shechem had sinned against Dinah but he was attempting to atone for his sin and was willing to pay whatever price he needed to pay to make it right. The brothers not only murdered the innocent (there is no indication the men of the city concurred with Shechem's actions) but exacted their vengeance under the cloak of piety, under the guise of a holy sacrament, they deceived the people to break their covenant, blaspheming God among the heathens.

In chapter 35 we see the continued growth of Jacob as a man of God. Due to the actions of two of his sons, Jacob feared for his life and the life of his family. At the command of the Lord, Jacob moved his family to Bethel. Before leaving, Jacob confronted the idolatry of his family; confiscating all their idols and jewelry associated with idolatry. ***Genesis 18:17-19***

As Jacob traveled, God protected Jacob by sending His terror upon all the peoples of the surrounding cities regarding Jacob (Genesis 35:5). Upon Jacob's arrival in Bethel, God appeared to Jacob and again repeated the promises of the covenant He had made with Abraham, to bless and multiply Jacob. Additionally, the LORD restates that Jacob's name is now Israel. ***Genesis 32:28, 35:10***

Chronological Study

Chapter 35 ends with the death of Rachael, Jacob's beloved wife, in the birth of their final son, Benjamin. In verses 23 through 26, we are given the names of the sons of Jacob:

Genesis 35:23-26

Sons of Leah:	(1) Reuben, (2) Simeon, (3) Levi and (4) Judah and (9) Issachar and (10) Zebulun
Sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid:	(5) Dan and (6) Naphtali
Sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid:	(7) Gad and (8) Asher
Sons of Rachel:	(11) Joseph and (12) Benjamin

The chapter ends with the death of Isaac, leaving Jacob as the patriarch of the holy line to Christ.

Genesis 36:1-36:43

Chapter 36 gives the history and lineage of Jacob's older brother, Esau. Again, we see the Lord follows the same pattern when addressing the line or family of promise and the rejected line; God deals with the rejected line first. Chapter 36 details Esau's family history and then, beginning in the next chapter, for us, God will move with the progenerate of the line of promise, Joseph, who will be the focus of the remainder of the Book of Genesis.

Joseph: 37:1 – 50:26

Trouble in Jacob's Home: Genesis 37:1-38:30

Genesis 37:1-3

In chapter 37 we will see how the chickens have come to roost in Jacob's life. Jacob, who had been deceitful and "crafty," has trained his sons well; they have picked up some of the traits of their father. Jacob had picked up a trait from his parent, from which he did not learn, which was favoritism. Jacob overtly favored Joseph; his brothers despised Joseph for the favoritism his father showed to Jacob.

Chapter 37 is a record of how Joseph's brothers reacted to his favored position: *they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms* (verse 4); *his brothers were jealous of him* (verse 11); *they plotted against him to put him to death* (verse 18); *they took him and threw him into the pit and sat down to eat a meal* (verses 24 & 25); *sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver* (verse 28); the deceived the father into thinking, Joseph had been destroyed by a wild animal: *"Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"* (verse 33).

Key to this chapter is the hard, cold, and calloused heart of those frothed with jealousy. They could through their brother in the pit and sit down to eat. Although they would not let the cries of Joseph interrupt their eating, the appearance of a band of Ishmaelites was enough for them to stop eating and sell Joseph for about two shekels of silver each. **James 3:14-16, 4:1-3**

Chronological Study

Although we see Reuben intervene to save Joseph from being murdered by his brothers, we also see the weakness of Reuben in not being willing or able to stop the entire event from happening. The chapter ends with Joseph being sold by the Ishmaelites *in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.*

Genesis 38:1-30

Chapter 38 is the record of two of Judah's sons sinning to the extent that the Bible says, The LORD took their lives. The narrative continues with how Judah, having lost two of his sons, refuses to give his third son to his daughter-in-law, Tamar, to marry. When Tamar learned that Judah had withheld his third son from marrying her, she disguised herself as a prostitute whom Judah hired, on credit, and produced twins with her. Judah's sin was revealed when upon learning of Tamar's pregnancy, he wanted her to be burned, she confronted him with his sin, which he acknowledged. The significance of this story is that one of the twins born to Tamara, Perez, is an ancestor of King David, and the Lord Jesus Christ. ***Genesis 38:7, 8:10; 1 John 5:16-17***

Joseph is Exalted: Genesis 39:1-41:57

Chapters 39 through the end of 41 deal with the early life of Joseph in Egypt; we will see types or pictures of the earthly ministry of Christ in the life of Joseph. God protected and blessed Joseph to the point that even his master could see the hand of God and the character of Joseph and made him the master of his entire household. ***Genesis 39:2-3***

Genesis 39:2-3: The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

With blessings come testings; Potiphar's wife lusted after Joseph and continually tried to seduce him. Joseph stood strong against the temptations and allurements of the seductress in the fear of the LORD, saying (Genesis 39:9): "*How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?*" She was not about to be rejected; she composed a lie accusing Joseph of attempting to rape her. However, standing strong in the fear of the LORD does not always guarantee a favorable outcome. Joseph, falsely accused out of envy, like Christ, ended up in prison. Remember, your enemy has no scruples. If you are suffering unjustly, know that the Father of Glory is permitting it for His purposes, which you may or may not ever fully understand. ***Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:13***

Joseph was neither happy in being a slave nor being put in prison, especially unjustly, and yet, he remained faithful. Like his grandfather, Abraham, Joseph continued living for God although not knowing the specifics of His plan nor His timing. God continued to bless Joseph in his situation. ***Romans 4:20-21; 1 Peter 2:19-23***

Chronological Study

In God's providence, Joseph found himself in the right place at the right time and was ready to interpret the dreams of two of Pharaoh's staff members when they were sent to prison. Although the chief butler forgot about Joseph as soon as he was released, two years later, when Pharaoh had an uninterpretable dream, the butler suddenly remembered Joseph and informed Pharaoh.

Ephesians 1:11

When summoned before Pharaoh to interpret the dream, Joseph humbly ascribed glory to God. He clarified to Pharaoh that he, on his own, could not interpret dreams, but through God, the interpretation would be given. The dream foretold a forthcoming seven-year famine in the land of Egypt (and Canaan), preceded by seven years of plentiful harvests. God utilized Pharaoh's dream to elevate Joseph to the position of Prime Minister of Egypt, orchestrate the reunion of Joseph with his family, and safeguard the lineage of promise leading to the Messiah.

Jacob's Family Saved: Genesis 42:1-50:26

Joseph was 17 years old when he arrived in Egypt (Genesis 37:2); Joseph was thirty years old (Genesis 41:46) when he was released from prison. Joseph encounters his brothers in Chapter 42, it had been twenty years since they had sinned against him. He immediately recognized them; they did not recognize him.

Chapter 42 is a chapter about testing for both Joseph and his brothers. It illustrates Joseph's character, emphasizing his readiness to forgive. Joseph questioned the hearts of his brothers concerning their sins against him and their attitude towards his father and younger brother; he put them to the test, accusing them of being spies.

Under the crucible of Joseph's testing, the transformation in the hearts of his brothers was revealed; the brothers expressed genuine concern for Jacob's welfare. This stands in stark contrast to their earlier callousness when they falsely informed Jacob of Joseph's death. Unlike with Joseph, the brothers did not demonstrate any animosity towards his younger brother, Benjamin. Moreover, the brothers openly acknowledge their past sin against Joseph and the hardness of their hearts when they sold him.

Upon returning to their home, the brothers, without Simeon, told Jacob of their ordeal and Joseph's insistence that to return to Egypt to buy grain, he would have to see Benjamin. Jacob said he would never let Benjamin leave him and go down to Egypt. In Genesis 42:36, Jacob says, "*You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.*" The older brothers were responsible for caring for their younger brother Joseph and he died and on their most recent trip to Egypt, Jacob had lost another son, Simeon, who had been left in Egypt as a prisoner of Joseph. Might he have been the instigator of wanting to kill Joseph and eventually selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites?

The impulsivity of Reuben, who resisted the mistreatment of Joseph, is seen in his offering to have his two sons killed if they took Benjamin to Egypt and did not return. Fearful of losing Benjamin, Jacob refuses to allow him to travel to Egypt to buy grain. So, the family waits.

Genesis 43

The famine in Egypt and Canaan continues in chapter 43; Jacob's family is out of food and must return to Egypt to buy more grain. There is a catch this time, however, the boys will not return to Egypt unless Benjamin goes with them. As the family debates whether they are going to Egypt to buy food, Judah's character is seen. Unlike Reuben, who offered his sons as a pledge to Jacob if something happened to Benjamin, Judah offers himself. In Genesis 43:9, Saying, "...*you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.*"

Finally, Jacob relents; the need is too great. If they do not go for food, they will all die. Jacob tells the older brothers to take Benjamin and demonstrates his faith acknowledging that if he is to lose Benjamin, it is the will of God, saying, "...*And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved*" (Genesis 43:14). Jacob sends them back with gifts for Joseph in addition to the money they previously took and Joseph had put back in their grain sacks.

The men return to Egypt and appear before Joseph again, this time with Benjamin. Joseph plays it cool but is overtaken with emotions at the sight of his younger brother. Joseph arranges to have the brothers eat with him. When taken to the home of Joseph, the concern of the men over the money returned to their sacks is seen in their conviction that they are being taken to Joseph's house to be abducted as slaves and their livestock stolen. When seated to eat, Joseph had the men seated in order of their birth, which befuddles the brothers.

Genesis 44

After the meal, and having seen his brother, Benjamin, Joseph arranges a final test of the brothers. He sends the men back to Canaan with food, and their money again and puts a silver cup of his in the bag of Benjamin, so that he might accuse Benjamin of stealing his cup.

After the men leave, Joseph sends his servants after them. When they overtake the brothers, they accuse them of stealing Joseph's cup, which they deny emphatically. We are not told who, but when accused in their denial, they hastily and thoughtlessly offer that with whomever the cup is found, should be put to death and all the others would become the slaves of Joseph. Joseph's servant says, no only the one who took the cup will become a slave, the rest could return to Canaan. The cup was found with Benjamin. The brothers would not abandon Benjamin; they returned to Joseph. Judah pleaded for the life of Benjamin and Jacob, acknowledging that if something befell Benjamin, Jacob would die; the brothers universally concurred.

Genesis 45

Joseph could no longer withhold himself; he was overtaken with emotions and sent all the Egyptians away, wept loudly, and made himself known to his brother. The brothers were shocked; they were speechless. Think of their emotions in the moment. One, they are relieved that Benjamin will not be harmed but immediately their guilt and the power of Joseph flooded their minds. In verse 5, Joseph tells his brothers, “*do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*” Joseph understood how God worked through his life, telling the brothers that “*it was not you who sent me here, but God*” (Genesis 45:8). He told the brothers that there were five more years of famine before them and insisted that they go to Canaan and bring Jacob and all their families to Egypt.

Upon hearing all that was happening with Joseph, Pharaoh insisted that Joseph send for his family and bring them to Egypt, providing wagons to transport the women and children and supplies. As they departed, Joseph, evidently still not convinced of their maturity and ability to forgive themselves, told them, “*Do not quarrel on the journey.*” When they arrived in Canaan, Jacob was stunned by their news; upon hearing the words from Joseph and seeing all he had sent, *the spirit of their father Jacob revived*. The news that his son was alive was all Jacob needed; he did not concern himself with the details of the culpability of his sons, all that mattered to him was his “*son was dead and is alive again*” (Luke 15:24).

Genesis 46 & 47

Jacob travels to Egypt with his family; seventy people in all. We again have a list of the sons of Jacob by their respective mothers; six by Leah, two by Zilpah (Leah’s servant), two by Rachel, and two by Bilhah (Rachel’s servant).

Joseph went to Goshen when the family arrived in the land of Goshen. Seeing Joseph, Jacob exclaimed that he was ready to die – his life was fulfilled. Joseph told Pharaoh of his family’s arrival. **Genesis 46:30**

Joseph introduced five of his brothers and his father to Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked the men about their occupation; they told him they were shepherds, as instructed by Joseph, which the Egyptians found loathsome. At this point, Jacob is one hundred and thirty years old. Once Joseph’s family is settled in the land, the narrative picks up with Joseph’s managing of the grain and building Pharaoh’s wealth. The Egyptians bought food from Pharaoh until they ran out of money, then they bought food trading their livestock and finally their land. Once the land was acquired by Pharaoh, Joseph rented the land back to the people for a fee of twenty percent of the harvest, which the people agreed to.

Chronological Study

Genesis 48

In chapter 48, Jacob claims Joseph's sons, Manasseh, and Ephraim, as his, giving Joseph's family a double blessing. When Joseph presented his sons to Jacob to be blessed, Jacob first blessed Joseph and repeated the promises of God. Then when Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, he switched his hands on the boys and blessed the younger, Ephraim, with the greater blessing, stating the younger brother would be greater than the older. Then Israel made Joseph take an oath that he would return his body to Canaan to be buried when he died.

Genesis 49

Chapter 49 is the prophetic message of Jacob to his twelve sons and the identification of the family through whom the Lord Jesus would come.

Reuben had it all, he would have been the one but he disqualified himself by his instability and impulsivity as seen in his sin with Jacob's concubine.

Simeon and Levi likewise are disqualified for their fierce anger and violence, which are condemned.

The blessing of Abraham would flow through the line of Judah; he is brave, determined, and purposeful.

Zebulun is told that when they return to the land, he will *dwell at the seashore...toward Sidon*.

Issachar who desired a simple life, and loved rest and quiet would capitulate to their enemies and surrender; they would prefer shame and slavery to courageous action.

Dan would be a leading tribe in the Nation, Dan, unlike Issachar, would fight for freedom. Jacob prophesies that Dan would be a serpent to the people; they would lead the people astray. A golden calf was set up in Dan after the division of the Nation and the people were led into pagan worship, from which they never recovered.

Gad was to be a strong and brave people, who would withstand and overcome the continuous attacks of the marauding bands of desert enemies.

Asher, pictured as a fertile field, would prosper, and become rich, which they did.

Naphtali is likened to a wild, swift, and gracious animal; they would be a people who would live in and love the forested mountains and would give godly counsel (Judges 5: Barak).

Jacob gave his highest praise to Joseph and predicted that his children would be the dominant tribes in Israel in terms of size; they would become the most numerous. For his success, he could also expect bitter jealousy and hostility from those around them. To survive, they would need to follow the example of the patriarch, Joseph, and lean on God.

Chronological Study

Jacob's final message is to his youngest, Benjamin, who is characterized as a fierce and dangerous wolf. The later descendants of Benjamin (e.g., Saul and Jonathan) were famous for their bowmen and their slingers and demonstrated their warlike powers.

At the end of the chapter, Jacob dies.

Genesis 50

Chapter 50 deals with the burial of Jacob and the concern the brothers have that Joseph may have been withholding vengeance until their father died. This disheartened Joseph greatly. Joseph told his brother it was not for him to judge them – that was God's prerogative.

The chapter and book end with the death of Joseph and he, like his fathers, makes his descendants promise to take his bones back to Canaan when they return as a Nation.