

SESSION 3: PATRIARCHAL HISTORY (GENESIS 12-50)

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Genesis chapters 12, 14—19, 21—22, 25:19—26:5, 27:1-46, 28:10-22, 29:31—30:24, 35:1-15, 37:1-36, 49:1-27, 50:15-21.

Summary of the Video: Module 1, Episode 3

In this video, we dive into the main storyline of Scripture. If the first eleven chapters give us a framework for how to view everyone and everything, Genesis 12 focuses our attention on God's plan of redemption that comes through one man's family. Remember that we're doing Biblical Theology; we're studying one portion of Scripture (Genesis) to see what it tells us about God, the Gospel, God's people, salvation, our purpose, and much else.

This video primarily addresses Abraham, the first "Patriarch" (father). Christianity (and Judaism from which it comes) is a "family" religion; Abraham has been considered the first father of the family. We begin with the story of Abraham leaving his homeland (Ur/Babylonia/Modern Iraq) and travelling toward the land God promises to him (modern Israel). The story is the story of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18; 26:2-4; 28:10-22).

The covenant (a treaty or contract) God made with Abraham begins in Genesis 12 and provides a central storyline for the entirety of Scripture.

It's nearly impossible to overestimate how important this section of Scripture (Genesis 12-22) is for all of us. Genesis 12 is the third major turning point of Scripture. After God creates (Genesis 1) and humanity falls into sin (Genesis 3) God begins the reversal of the curse by bringing blessing through Abraham (Genesis 12). Major truths spring from this covenant. The fact that Jesus will bless all nations on earth begins to be revealed in Abraham's covenant (Genesis 12). Our theology of justification by faith comes from Abraham's covenant (Gen 15). Circumcision as the covenant sign is first given for Abraham's covenant (Gen 17). Woven within the giving of the covenant are five encounters between patriarchs and God. In this way of telling the story, God makes absolutely certain that he will in fact bring this blessing to all nations through Abraham's family.

Perhaps you've never heard of Melchizedek or considered that he might be important. But the story from Genesis 14 recurs in Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7 because much about Jesus can be discovered from this obscure tale of nine kings in battle. Discussing Melchizedek allows a first window into the topic of "types" and "shadows" of Jesus in the Old Testament (OT). In addition to prophecies of the Messiah, the OT includes various people and situations that seem to tell us a little about what Jesus would eventually be like. Melchizedek is a prominent example of a "type" of Christ.

Additionally, this video tackles three other important subjects: apologetics, Jacob and Joseph.

Apologetics is the study of how to defend our faith. Many questions arise as people read Genesis' account of rape, destruction, lying, intrigue, murder, polygamy, and other grievous acts. How do Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit and follow the pure Son of God process the disgustingly sinful activity of their predecessors? How do we explain this activity to those who don't believe? We will learn how narrative works; that is, instead of condemning the sin outright, the author assumes we'll notice how terrible most of it is, includes some hints to point out the disaster, and only occasionally explicitly tells us how awful the action was. We should not conclude that a patriarch (or any other character for that matter) is the "hero" of the story who "saves the day." Rather, God remains the only hero, and a richer lesson about humanity is being taught through these stories.

Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, is Abraham's grandson and the father of the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. In a sense, he is the source of the nation of Israel. To understand his relationship with Abraham's family, we look at a family tree.

Since about one-third of Genesis is comprised of Joseph's story, the video digs into it a bit. The main question we ask here is, "What do you think is the point of this story?" Why did the author of Genesis include this story and give it such prominence? The video subtly challenges our tendency to look for "personal application" (e.g. I want to be like Joseph and run from sin). Instead, Andrew Wilson invites us to consider how this story contributes to the overall fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (and the world) by continuing to bless his descendants.

Terms You'll Need to Know:

Patriarch—fathers; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and sometimes including sons of Jacob (the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel).

Levant—the land area to the east of the Mediterranean Sea (Israel, Syria, Iraq, etc.).

Taken—A movie starring Liam Neeson in which a man's daughter is kidnapped; the father hunts down the kidnapers to save his daughter.

Yerushalem—Jerusalem.

Levitical—having to do with the Levites or priestly tribe of Israel.

Apologetics—defense of the faith; responding to questions and challenges posed against Christianity.

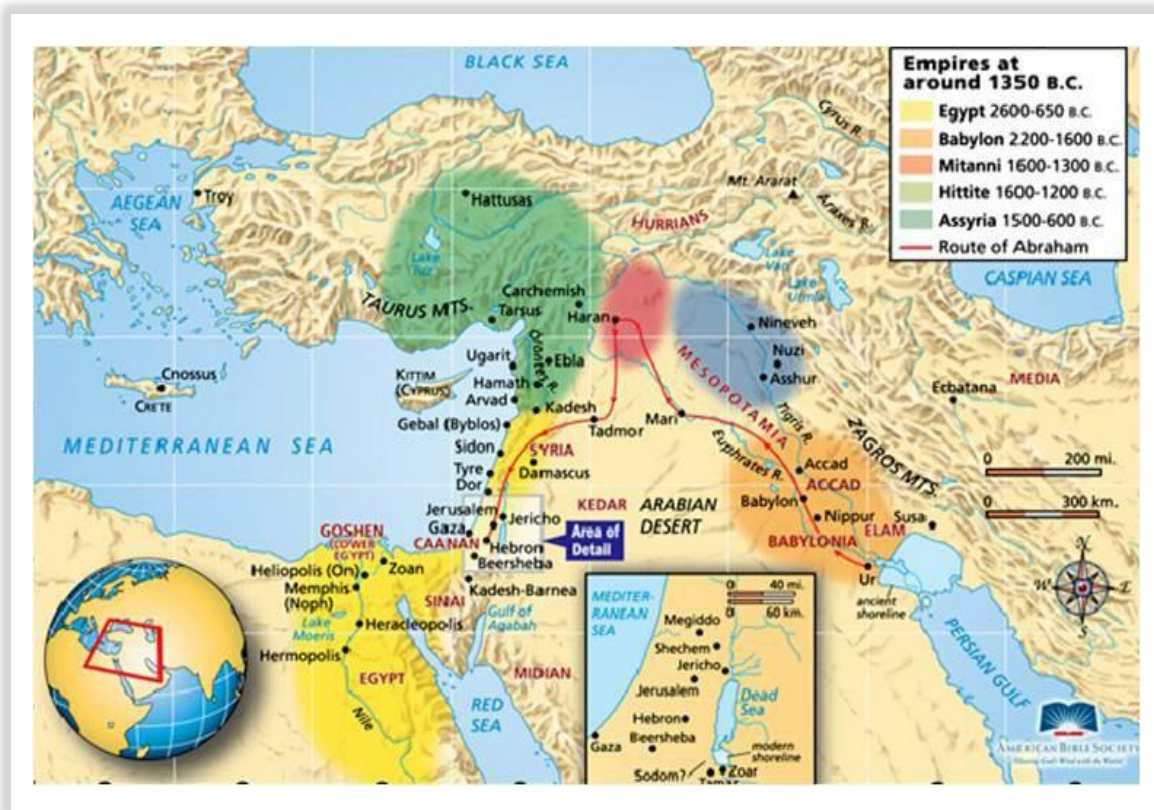
Watch Video

Watch Module 1, Episode 3 (1hr 2 mins).

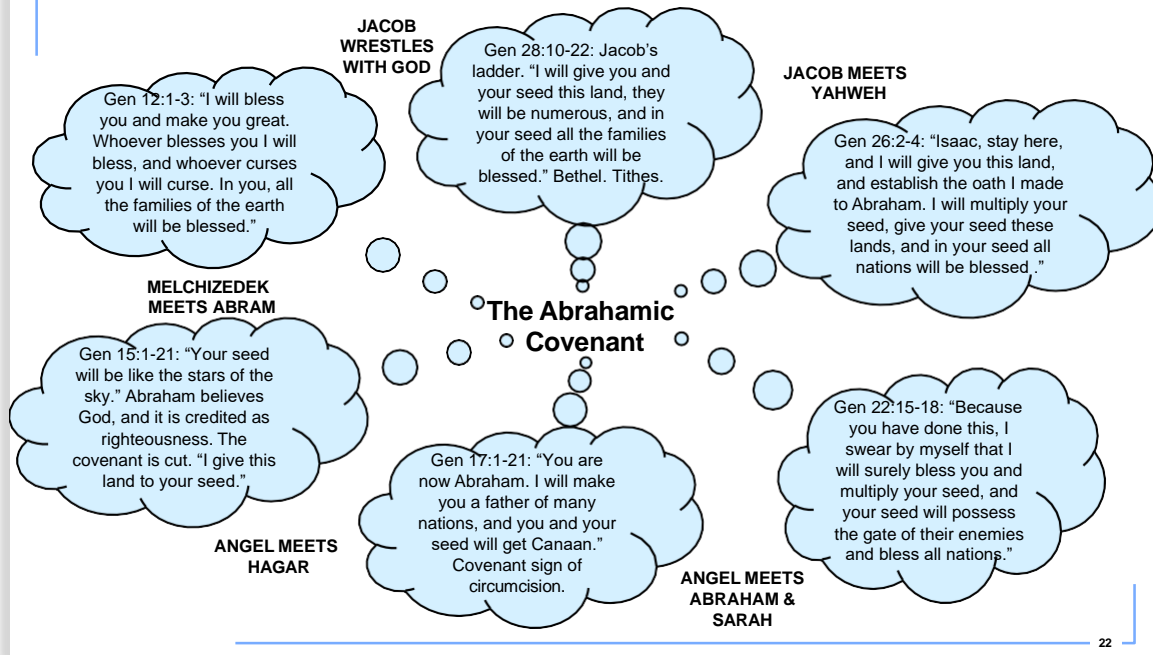
Pentateuch

- I. Overview of the Pentateuch
- II. Primeval History (Gen 1-11)
- III. Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50)
- IV. Exodus Narrative (Ex 1-15)
- V. Wilderness Narrative (Ex 16-19, 24, 32-34; Num 11-25; Deut 1-4)
- VI. Laws, Lists & Land at Sinai (Ex 20-23, 25-31, 35-40; Lev 1-27; Num 1-10, 26-36; Deut 5-28)
- VII. The Punchline of the Pentateuch (Deut 29-34)

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The Abrahamic Covenant



The Battle of the Kings (Gen 14)

Amraphel king of Shinar
 Arioch king of Ellasar
 Chedorlaomer king of Elam
 Tidal king of Goiim

vs.

Bera king of Sodom
 Birsha king of Gomorrah
 Shinab king of Admah
 Shemeber king of Zeboiim
 The king of Bela (that is, Zoar)

The four kings win, and take Lot captive

Abram, with 318 men, pursues the four kings to Hobab, north of Damascus, and recaptures Lot, the possessions, the women and the people

Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of God Most High, appears out of thin air, blesses Abram, receives a tithe from him, and brings out bread and wine (!)

The king of Sodom offers Abram the possessions, but Abram refuses, on the grounds that no man will make him rich

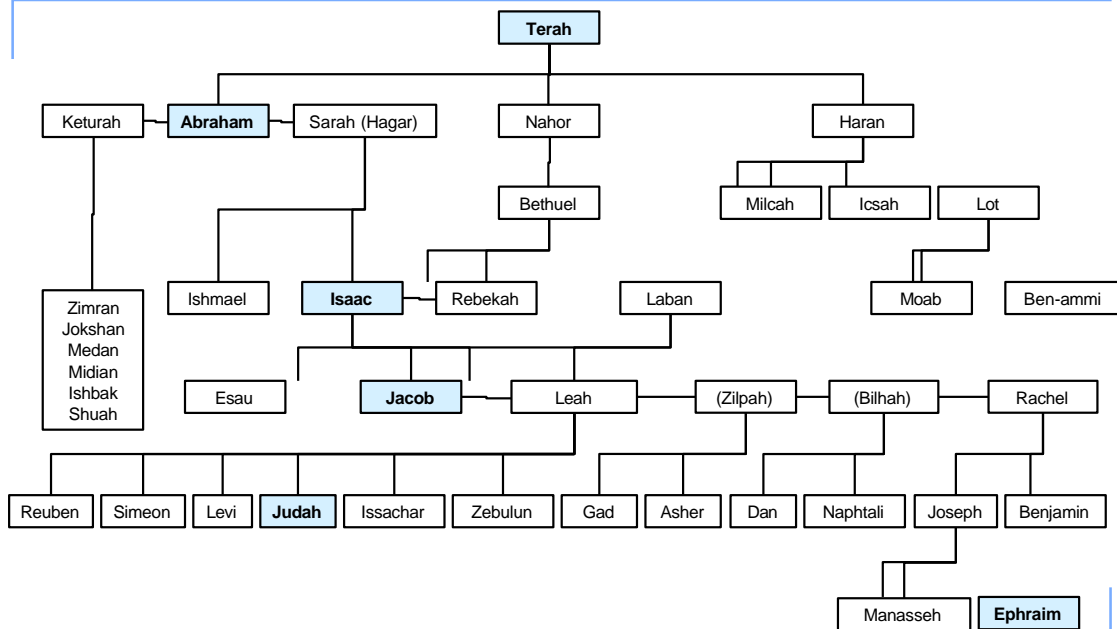


Apologetics Interlude

- According to some books, online videos, and a number of angry atheists out there, the patriarchal narratives indicate that Yahweh approves of a whole bunch of appalling evils, and therefore is not worthy of worshipping
 - Deceit (12:10-20; 27:1-40; 29:23-28; 31:26-35)
 - Incest (19:30-38; 20:12; 38:13-26)
 - Slavery (16:1)
 - Rape (19:1-9)
 - Destruction of Cities, including women and children (19:24-29)
 - Child sacrifice (22:1-14)
 - Polygamy (16:3; 29:16-30)
- How do we handle passages like these? The narrative frequently does not pass judgment on the sinful actions – and indeed many of the major characters in the story are guilty of several of them
 - It is important to realise that the patriarchs are not cast as heroes
 - Narrative often passes judgment implicitly, just by telling the story. Does the BBC approve of genocide when it reports it? Or imagine *Schindler's List* concluded with the line, "by the way, anti-Semitism is evil"
 - The purpose of narrating stories of evil, often, is not to approve of them, but to ensure that they never happen again
 - And in several of the above cases, the narrative makes it glaringly obvious that God is angry (through the negative consequences that follow, direct judgment of e.g. Sodom, blinding the assailants, etc)
 - The slight curveball is the call for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac – but this truly is the exception that proves the rule, in that God of course provides a substitute
 - We will consider the difficult commands God gives about slavery, polygamy and destruction later on

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The Patriarchal Family Tree



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The Joseph Story

- What is the Joseph story intended to show us?
 - The importance of vision?
 - Perseverance through trials leading to vindication?
 - The chosen child of God, sold for the price of a slave, and then exalted after suffering to be seated at the right hand of the Power?
 - The sovereignty of God, who works all things for good?
 - No matter how long a man has been away, he never forgets his family?
- Within the context of the Abrahamic covenant, and the Exodus story which follows, what would you suggest?
 - “I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you” → where is this in the Joseph story?
 - “In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed” → where is this in the Joseph story?
 - “I give you this land. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies” → where is this in the Joseph story?
 - “I will multiply your seed as the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore” → where is this in the Joseph story?

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Jacob’s Blessing (Genesis 49:3-27) – “What will happen in the latter days”

“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch! Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Sidon. Issachar is a strong donkey, crouching between the sheepfolds. He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant, so he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant at forced labor. Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that his rider falls backward. I wait for your salvation, O LORD. Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels. Asher’s food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies. Naphtali is a doe let loose that bears beautiful fawns.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil.”

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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. The covenant with Abraham provides the foundation for the rest of the biblical story. The New Testament constantly refers to this monumental accord. Identify as many aspects of Abraham's covenant as you can. Include comments about the significance of each aspect. (Find and read some of the verses that correspond.)

2. In what ways does God communicate with the patriarchs as he gives the covenant?

3. Andrew Wilson makes two major connections to the New Testament based on Abraham's life (Galatians 3; Hebrews 7). Discuss some of what you learned about Jesus from these connections.

4. What significant questions do non-Christians have about the Bible in your culture? Focus especially on questions that might come from Genesis. How might you respond to those questions in light of what you have heard in the video?

5. What practical implications are there to Andrew’s point that the patriarchs are not “heroes” in the story? How does this help us understand the Bible and the Gospel?

6. How has this video challenged the way that you read Scripture? If you have been in the habit of reading it exclusively for personal application (e.g. “I need to be like Joseph and have faith”), how would this video reshape your approach to reading?

“**Genesis in Biblical Theology**”—Spend a few minutes discussing the following questions.

This is the first point in which we want to pause to do some explicit Biblical Theology. That is, we want to pull together some of the themes we have been seeing in Genesis. In this and subsequent discussions, we will look at four topics: God, Gospel, People, Mission.

1. What does Genesis teach us about **God**? What attributes of God are revealed?
2. What does Genesis teach us about the **Gospel**? What is the problem with the world and humanity? What is God’s solution?
3. What does Genesis teach us about **God’s people**?
4. What does Genesis teach us about **God’s mission**?

Meditation on Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 15:6

Genesis 22:10-14

Genesis 49:8-12

Genesis 50:20

Putting This Session into Practice

God is on mission to spread his blessing “as far as the curse is found.” He promises to overturn it in every tongue, tribe, nation and language. This week let’s pray specifically that God would bless different people groups. You might wish to focus on a frequently overlooked people group who lives near to you.