

Lesson 6 Genesis 37 – 50

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. *What do you think of the story of Tamar? What was her motivation? (Laws common to the time obliged a brother to marry a widow of his deceased brother if the brother died without an heir. This obligation fell upon the father-in-law after the brother-in-law if he died or was unable to carry out his duty. This is called the levirate law).*
2. *Why did Joseph's brothers hate him? How does this story show God's hand in human affairs, even the worst of human affairs? (The descriptive details of the story are identical to what archaeologists and historians have discovered about Egyptian life of the 1700's B.C.)*
3. *Why does Jacob reverse his hands in blessing Joseph's children? Why does he later bypass his three eldest sons Reuben, Simeon, Levi in his final blessing? Which two receive the richest blessings? And how do these blessings relate to Jesus?*
4. *By the end of Genesis we have a groundwork for a) understanding the context of the whole Bible, b) understanding our Christian faith. Think over these stories; which gave you the most insight into your relationship with God?*

Psalm 105:1-22 and prayer.

It is important to describe how powerful the word was to the Hebrew. The word went out as a force in the blessing or the curse. These were not just words that went into the wind, or made the ear drum vibrate; these were words that must accomplish the job they were sent for. They did what they stated. So these ancient blessings said over one's children were very important. By these words the future of the one blessed or cursed was encapsulated. When Isaac had blessed Jacob the blessing could not be revoked or given to Esau after the deception was discovered. The words achieve the thing for which they were sent. So in the 49th chapter the blessings that Israel made over his sons would be effective. These men were to be the heads of tribes, the tribes together would be the People of God in a special way, and each

would have his portion of the Holy Land of promise, each would contribute in small ways or large to the future of the people and to Salvation History.

Patriarchal governance was part of God's order and shaped the People. Yet God countermanded more than once the assumption that the first born son inherited headship. Orderly progression of headship from father to first born son was necessary, but final choice of persons to lead His people remained God's prerogative. Often God's choice reminds us of Jesus teaching the first will be last and the last first. The great patriarch Israel, after whom they were all named, blessed them in the order of their birth, but he did not grant the greatest blessings and the rule to the eldest. This would have been the usual pattern the one expected. But God had overruled that custom already in their history. It was not Esau, the eldest, but Jacob who was the chosen one. Now Reuben lost his prerogatives because he had taken to bed one of his father's concubines, and Simeon or Levi were not eligible to take his place because of the violence they had perpetrated against Shechem after the rape of Dinah. Rather, the choice fell upon the fourth son, Judah. He would hold the scepter over his brothers; he would rule until "he comes to whom it belongs" a hint of the Messiah even here (which shows up in the RSV but not the New American). Joseph also receives a rich blessing. He does not receive it in his own name but in the names of his two children Manasseh and Ephraim who carry it forward. These tribes with Judah are to be the most important tribes during and after the conquest of the Holy Land. Reuben will prove unstable and finally disappear as a tribe, Levi will become the priestly class, no longer a tribe to be counted; Simeon will be absorbed by Judah (see the notes in the RSV for more amplification of this prophecy). Before Israel's death, Joseph brings his two sons to his father for the final blessing. He assumes that the elder will receive the inheritance blessing, so he places him on Jacob's right hand, but again the richer blessing prophetic of the dominance of the tribe of Ephraim in the history to come, goes to the younger. Joseph loses his name as a tribe as his sons take his place. In a way Joseph is put on a higher plane as Savior of the people - his work is finished.

Ephraim and Manasseh's mother is a Hamite (an Egyptian). Why does God, who has protected His people from Hamite blood,

sending the patriarchs back to the original blood line and cutting off Hamite influence allow this? It is the lineage of the Messiah that must be protected from Ham. Judah is the important father of the continuing lineage toward the Messiah.

Following is a list of the ways in which Joseph as savior was a prefigurement of Jesus, the Saviour to come. The New Testament readings are very instructive. It is a list that the class may contribute to.

1. He was glorified by the Father. John 8:54ff His mother, brothers and father bow to him.
2. He was beloved of the Father - the favored son, and sent to his brothers. Matthew 3:17,12:18,17:5; Luke 20:13.
3. He comes with truth and is rejected, scorned and betrayed by his brothers. Acts 7:51, John 11:45-53. He is sent to Egypt because of an evil plot. Matthew 2:13, Matthew 27:18
4. A faithful servant, he is falsely accused, tried, sentenced and put in prison. From a place of rejection he becomes Judge and Saviour.
5. His brothers thought they had done away with him, but they hadn't; he went on to save them all. Acts 2:23-32 f. His eldest brother tried to save him but wasn't strong enough to carry through. Mark 14:29
6. Two were punished with him, one was saved, one condemned. Luke 23:39ff.
7. He was tempted, but did not sin. Hebrews 4:15 He was chaste.
8. The sin of those he loved is indescribable; their guilt great.
9. He deals graciously with those who would kill him. Romans 5:8
10. He brings them to conscious repentance, punishes them to convict them of sin, and then forgives them. Luke 22:62 Acts 2:38 He chastens those whom he loves. Hebrew 12:6
11. The first time his brothers (the Israelites) do not recognize him, the second time he will tell them who he is. Matthew 24:30
12. He forgives them and weeps with those who rejected him. Luke 23:34, John 11:35
13. The salvation of the brothers is complete. Acts 4:12
14. They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. Acts 3:17-19
15. God permitted it with the welfare of the murderers in mind.
16. He was sold for thirty (twenty) pieces of silver. Matthew 26:15

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17. He was a shepherd and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. John 10:11-15, Matthew 27:18

18. He was stripped of his raiment and came out of the place of death alive. Matthew 27:27

19. He was exalted on high and given a Gentile bride (the Church) Revelation 21:8, Acts 13:46, Phil 2:9

20. He recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him.

John 1:10-11. He makes himself known when they thought he was dead. Luke 24:13-35

21. He was despised as the lowest of men, a prisoner and a commoner. Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 26:67, Mark 10:34

22. A blessing cup (a diviner's cup for Joseph) was used to bring them back to him and ties them to him. Luke 22:20, I Cor 10:16, 11:25

23. Dreams took their place in his story. Matthew 27:19

24. Joseph and Jesus had two names, one given at birth, the other at their "exaltation to the throne."

25. He came into public ministry at 30 when all were blessed by the rule of his kingdom. He gave bread to the hungry and spread this bread to all the earth.

26. He demands what is dearest, but gives it back again. Luke 9:23-24

These prefigurements will see fulfillment. God, in the story of Joseph, is establishing a principle that will see fulfillment in time to come. Since the Fall, God uses sin for His own purpose, which is to bring salvation. God permits man to sin in order that He may work out His own sovereign will and plan. The Hebrews have been given an ingrained understanding since Abraham that they are instruments in a great historical plan of salvation - they are a chosen people. Therefore all that happens to them comes from God's hands. There is great awareness of this in this last story of the great patriarchs of the faith.

Tamar adds new understanding to woman's meaning. In the story of Tamar another facet is added to the understanding of woman in the Old Testament. The first three sons of Jacob were unworthy of heading the family of tribes. Judah was the chosen man but he had married a Canaanite woman. God would not according to His early guidance of His People work through mixed progeny. She was not the woman chosen by God to be the mother of the Israelites. Instead of this

Canaanite, God had chosen one of the Israelites, Tamar, a woman whom Judah had wedded to his son Er. But Er was wicked and the Lord slew him. Then came Onan who by levirate law (a cultural “law” which though it predated the Law of Moses became part of the that law’s code) was to impregnate Tamar and raise up a son for his dead brother. He reneged on his responsibilities to her and to God. And the Hebrews who knew that he died for this disobedience, said directly, “The Lord slew him.”

All Hebrew women wanted nothing more than to be fruitful for God They knew the ancient promise that woman’s seed would bring the promised salvation from evil, and they wanted more than anything to be part of the heritage When Judah hesitated to give her his youngest son thus denying her rightful fruitfulness Tamar would not let this obstacle stand in her way. Devising a plan, she tricked Judah into becoming the father of her children. She dressed up as a cult prostitute of the Canaanite religion and seduced him; another set of twins was conceived.

The woman is resourceful. An impossible obstacle to bringing on the promised line another kind of barrenness is overcome This time it is by the resourcefulness of the woman and her desire to be fruitful. God blesses that- she is the woman and Judah is the man even though from our view of morality this is wholly unacceptable, Still we must remember that this is before the Mosaic Law. God has not revealed His moral law, and St Paul teaches that God overlooked such things until a time was ready to teach them. He uses the situation as He finds it for His own purposes. He will teach later what is appropriate behavior of purity among the people of God. For now He is establishing first things the most basic things He is forming a people to whom the later Law will be a master; but first, there is a foundation to be laid.

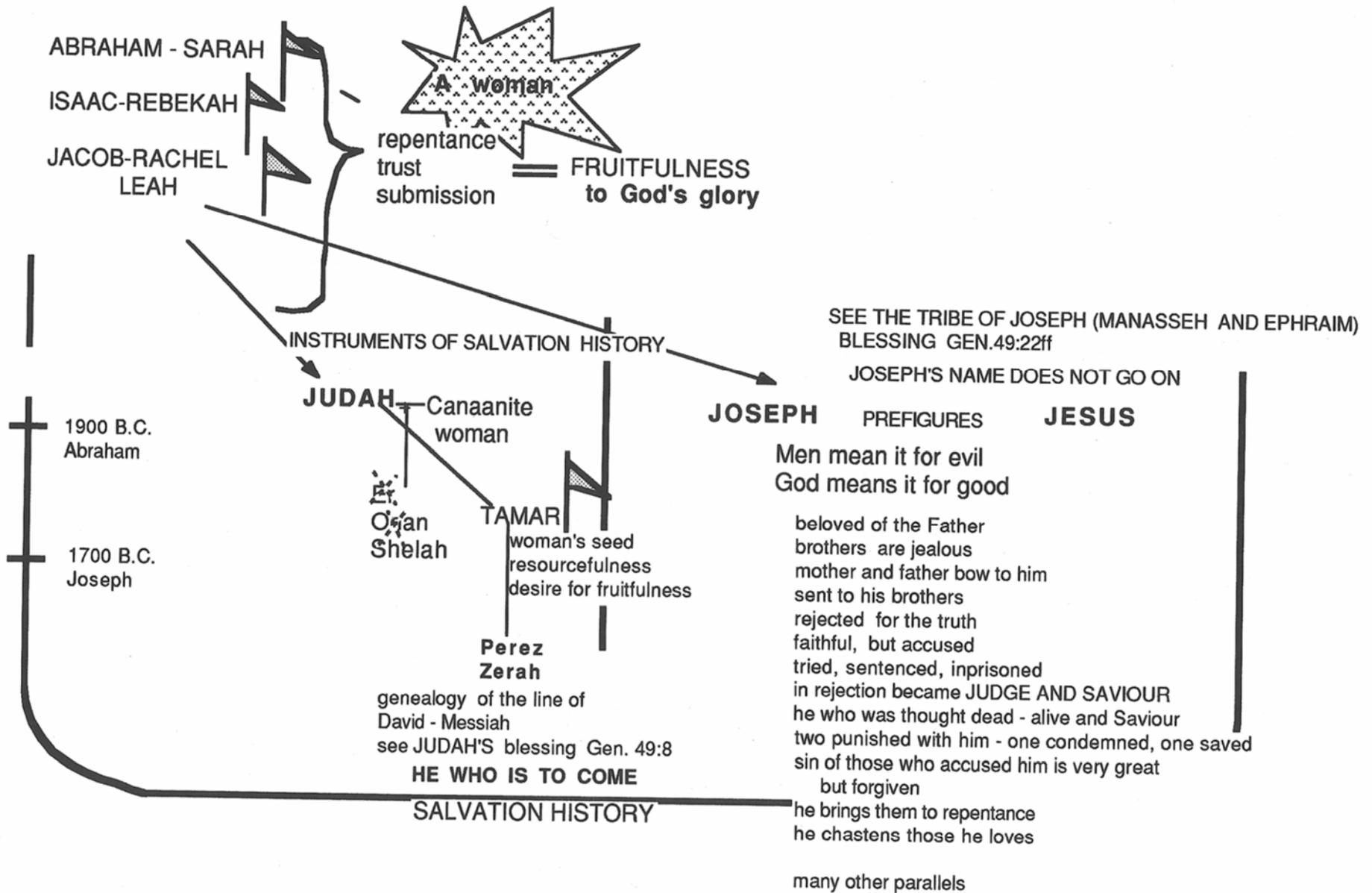
Fruitfulness begins with the physical. Jesus says, “you will know them by their fruits ‘ In the Old Testament this truth is born out in the physical Jesus adds to it the spiritual fruit of love (Galatians 5 22ff) Jesus will come not to destroy these Old Testament teachings but to fulfill them. God first teaches the basic principles. He will heighten and

deepen these elementary things with continuum to those in the Spirit He is teaching man and woman the eternal truth which He created them to embody. In order to restore the perfect plan lost in Eden, He begins with a woman.

There is an order that leads to fruitfulness. There will be a repetition of this pattern with additions of new facets and a continual deepening of its spiritual significance throughout the Bible. The pattern for fruitfulness in the Old and New Testament is: 1) repentance, 2) belief and trust in God, 3) submission and obedience, 4) fruitfulness and new life, 5) all to God’s glory. Fruitfulness is the goal of life because it glorifies the Father and fulfills the child of God. We find the women of the Old Testament repenting for their lack of fruitfulness, which they regarded as a sign of the disfavor of God. They also were the mourners when death came prematurely to the fruits of their body. These - death and barrenness, they understood to be contrary to God’s blessing. They came from the enemy. So they repent in sorrow, they believe God’s promise when it comes, are physically submissive to the man who is agent for fruitfulness, and out of this repentance, belief, and submission issues their fruit - priest, prophet, and king who will bring the People closer to the reign of God. This pattern alone will bring mankind back into unity with God for an ecstasy of union that was lost in Eden. In order to restore this plan He seeks a woman. Because of its basic relationship to the life of faith, the Church has defended fruitfulness with tenacity, regarding contraception, abortion, euthanasia, and all such with horror. Pope John Paul II has named our times “The Culture of Death.” Jesus prophesies that in the future this carefully taught truth about life and fruitfulness will be lost, and it will mean humanity will be on the brink of destruction. Read his last prophecy in Luke 23:28-30

An audio/visual is available with this lesson

Lesson 6 Genesis 36-52



Lesson 6 Genesis 37 - 50 Synopsis

37. Joseph is a shepherd
he tells on his brothers
Israel loves Joseph best
and makes him a robe
with sleeves
his brothers are jealous
Joseph has dreams
which foretell his authority
over his brothers
they hate him even more
even his father rebukes him
Israel sends him to his brothers
he finds them at Dothan
they plot to kill him
Reuben saves him from death
Judah says to sell him
to Ishmaelite traders
he is sold for 20 shekels of silver
they dip his coat in blood
Israel mourns his death
the traders sell him to Potiphar
38. Judah marries a Canaanite, Shua
who bears Er, Onan, and Shelah
Tamar is married to first two
who are slain by the Lord
Onan for not impregnating Tamar
Tamar is sent home by Judah
to wait for Shelah
too long, she seduces Judah
who thinks her a harlot
her price is a kid
also asks for a pledge
of his signet, cord and staff
his friend is sent with the kid
but cannot find her
Tamar is found to be pregnant
- Judah wants her burned to
death Tamar displays the
pledge items Judah
acknowledges his part and her
right to fruitfulness in her labor
with twins a switch takes place
the first, Zerah, is born last
Perez is named in the lineage
39. Joseph is favored and trusted
in the house of Potiphar
he is made overseer of his house
Joseph is handsome
Potiphar's wife entices him
he refuses to lie with her
she falsely accuses him
Joseph is imprisoned
God's steadfast love is with him
he has the favor of the keeper
the Lord made all he did prosper
40. the butler and baker of Pharaoh
are in prison with Joseph
Joseph interprets their dreams
the butler is restored to his place
"but remember me to Pharaoh"
the baker would be executed all
happened as he foretold but the
butler forgot Joseph
41. Pharaoh dreams
of seven fat and thin cows of
seven plump and thin ears no
magician can interpret the
butler remembers Joseph two
years later Joseph is called
God will interpret the dreams
there will be seven good years
then famine will devour the
land for seven years Pharaoh
will select a man setting him
over the land
- to store grain for the famine
Joseph is given this command his
position is second to Pharaoh he
is given an Egyptian wife he
stores food for seven years he has
two sons
Manasseh and Ephraim
Egypt and all the earth
comes to Joseph
when the famine strikes
42. Israel learns of grain in
Egypt he sends ten sons to
buy grain keeping Benjamin
at home Joseph knows his
brothers when he sees
them they do not know him
he accuses them of spying
the test is to bring to Egypt
their youngest brother he
puts them all in prison one
remains in prison
while the rest are sent home
they relate their guilt to their
old treatment of Joseph he
kept Simeon in prison they
loaded their asses and go at
an inn they find that they
still have their money they
report to Jacob he is
dismayed at the money
Jacob won't let Benjamin go
again they need food Judah
tells Jacob they must take
Benjamin Judah will take the
blame if Benjamin does not
return Jacob says to double
the money and a present of
fruits and nuts when they
arrive in Egypt
- Joseph prepares a feast
and releases Simeon from
prison they give him the
present he inquires about their
father Joseph seeing Benjamin
weeps Egyptians and Hebrews
eat separately
he seats his brothers by age
they drank and were merry
44. the bags are packed with grain
the money put back into them
Joseph's diviner's cup is put
secretly into Benjamin's bag
pursued, they are accused who
has the cup will be a slave it
was found in Benjamin's bag
Joseph demands Benjamin
stay Judah entreats him to be
merciful to Jacob
Judah offers himself as slave
45. Joseph loses control and cries
he makes himself known
to his brothers
do not be distressed, God sent
me before you to preserve life
tell the family to come
you will dwell in Goshen
Pharaoh offers the best
of the land of Egypt
they are given provisions
and a gift is sent to Jacob
"My son is still alive, I will go
and see him before I die,"
46. Jacob offered sacrifices
at Beersheba where God speaks
"do not be afraid
I will take you to Egypt and
there make of you a great nation

- and I will bring you up again
the genealogies of those
who went to Egypt
seventy persons of Israel came
into the land of Goshen
where they lived away from
the rest of the Egyptians
because they were shepherds
47. Pharaoh meets the brothers
allows them the land of Goshen
Jacob blesses Pharaoh
the famine was so severe
the Egyptians spend
all their money on food
which enriches Pharaoh
then he collects their flocks
then all the land is sold to him
then Egyptians sell themselves
Joseph gives them seed
but a fifth of harvest is Pharaoh's
only the priest's land
did not become Pharaoh's
Israel is fruitful and multiplies
Jacob (Israel) dies at 147
Israel makes Joseph promise
to bury him in Canaan
48. Joseph takes Manasseh and
Ephraim for a blessing
Jacob reiterates the promises over
Ephraim, the youngest and
Manasseh, both are adopted as
equal to Jacob's sons
he blesses with crossed hands
the right hand on Ephraim
then gives Shechem to Joseph
49. the sons come for a last
blessing
Reuben loses his first
place because of immorality
Simeon and Levi lose their place
- because of violence
Judah will be head of the tribes
Zebulun's place is by the sea
Issachar to live in a good land
but will become a slave
Dan will be a judge, and trouble
Gad shall raid and be raided
Asher shall have richness
Naphtali will have dainty fruits
Joseph will be harassed but he
will be unmoved
fruitful, blessed and helped
by Almighty God
he will have blessings of womb
beyond blessing and bounty
Benjamin will be a devourer
Jacob's blessing ended
"bury me at Machpelah"
with Abraham and Sarah
Isaac and Rebekah, Leah
and Jacob dies
50. Joseph has Jacob embalmed
seventy days for mummifying
Pharaoh allows him to go
to bury his father
a great company goes up
wept beyond the Jordan
then buried Jacob at Machpelah
forgives his brothers
you meant it for evil
God meant it for good
a second generation is born
on Joseph's knees
"God will visit you
take my bones with you
when you go back to Canaan"
he is embalmed
and placed in a coffin in Egypt

Lesson 6 Genesis 36 - 50 Outline

I. The Power of the Word

- A. The blessing or curse said over a person or a thing goes forth
- B. It accomplishes what the words say, and cannot be revoked
- C. Israel says words of blessing over his sons (Gen. 49) before his death
 - 1. Judah
 - a. he who will rule the tribes
 - 1) he is the Lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5)
 - 2) the scepter shall not depart from Judah 49:10
 - 3) nor the ruler's staff from between his feet
 - b. David's heritage and Jesus' heritage
 - 1) till he comes to whom it belongs 49:10
(The "Coming One" numerous N.T. References)
 - a) Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again Lord Jesus come in glory
 - b) Matthew 23:39 You will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'
 - c) I Cor 11:26 "as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes"
 - 2) to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples
 - 3) binding the asses colt to the choice vine
 - a) prophecy of triumphal entry Zech.9:9
 - b) Matthew 21:5 has two animals, John 2:14-15 one animal 41
 - 4) his garments washed in red wine
 - a) Rev. 19:11-16 it is the robe dipped in blood
 - b) Isaiah 63 it is the vengeance of God upon those who oppose Him
 - 5) Isaiah 11:1-9 the prophecy of Judah comes to Jesse
 - 2. Joseph, savior to his brothers, receives inheritance not in his own name, but under the names of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh

II. Patriarchal order

- A. At this time it has become cultural; merely a shadowing of Perfection
- B. It is seriously affected by the Fall
 - 1. it suffers from distortion and imperfections
 - 2. but still reflects the establishment of divine order
- C. Countermanded by God as to the primacy of the first-born many times
 - 1. Jacob, not Esau

- 2. Ephraim, not Manasseh
- 3. Perez, not Zerah

III. The Joseph story

- A God permits man to sin in order to work out His plan
 - 1. moral law is in their hearts, Joseph knows to sleep with Potiphar's wife would be sin against God even before the Law of Moses 39:9
 - 2. man means sin for evil, God means it for good
- B All causality ends in God for the Hebrew
 - 1. God does everything to the Hebrew, even evil
 - a. "What is this God has done to us? 42:28
 - b. God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do 41:25
 - c. do not interpretations belong to God 40:8
 - d. whatever he did, The Lord made it prosper 39:23
 - e. God sent me before you to preserve life 45:5
 - f. God has made me Lord of all Egypt 45:9
 - g. God meant it for good 50:20
 - 2. no further grappling with Satan in O.T.
 - a. why is knowledge of Satan veiled until N.T.?
 - b. people must begin by accepting their own responsibility
 - c. to believe in Satan would have furthered hold of the occult, and fear. ci. Satan is really a minor influence
 - 1) compared with the power of the Almighty God who is revealing Himself
 - 2) there is time for Satan after important things are in place and when Jesus gives the power to overcome him
- . Parallels to the Jesus story (see lesson text)
- . The dreams
 - 1. Joseph's 37:5 ft
 - a. sheaves bowing down to my sheaf
 - b. sun, moon and stars bowing down to me
 - 2. the butler 40:9
 - a. three branches budded into clusters of grapes
 - b. he pressed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup
 - 3. the baker 40:16
 - a. three baskets of baked food on his head
 - b. the birds began eating out of the basket
 - 4. Pharaoh
 - a. the seven fat and lean cows

b. the seven fat and lean ears of grain

IV. Judah and Tamar (This story takes place in Canaan - did Judah ever go to Egypt? Some scholars think not. Or perhaps part of the tribe stayed in Canaan)

A. The sons of Judah

1. all are sons of Shua
 - a. she is a Canaanite and not a chosen woman
 - b. they will not be chosen to continue or to head God's people.
2. the Levirate law
 - a. before the Law of Moses
 - b. provisioned that a widow was to have children by brother (or next of kin) of her deceased husband
 - 1) Ur is married to Tamar, he is killed by God
 - 2) Onan refuses his duty to Tamar, he is killed by God
 - 3) Shelah is too young, Tamar is to wait for him to grow up

B. Tamar's desire for fruitfulness

1. "you will know them by their fruits" fruitfulness is a sign for the Israelite woman
 - a. we assume Tamar is an Israelite woman because she is "chosen"
 - b. Shua is not chosen and it is stated that Shua is a Canaanite
 - c. the earliest foundation, later expanded, was that the woman must be of the people because of the importance to them of the revelation of YHWH, which was not to be contaminated by a infidel mother
2. woman's seed
 - a. Tamar's was neither lust nor a religious (Canaanite) act
 - b. her desire for fruitfulness is foremost
 - c. she is eventually praised by Judah as more righteous than he is 38:26 for standing for her right to bring forth children .
3. law of fruitfulness is laid in O.T., fulfilled in N.T.
 - a. repent
 - b. believe
 - c. surrender (submit)
 - d. bring forth
 - e. all to God's glory
4. the Church's protection of fruitfulness through the ages
 - a. understands progeny to come with the cooperation of man and woman with God
 - b. willingness to bear fruit for God is a primary Christian stance
 - c. therefore, no contraception; certainly no abortion

d. this willingness on the biological level is irrevocably tied to spiritual fruitfulness, unless one renounces the physical entirely for purely spiritual fruitfulness as in vows of celibacy

V. Important Prophecies

A. Prophecy to Abraham of the coming sojourn in Egypt 15:13

1. his descendants would be sojourners and slaves
2. they would be oppressed for four hundred years
3. a judgment would rest on the nation which they serve
4. they will come out of captivity with great possessions

B. Prophecy to Israel 46:3

1. I am the God of your father
2. do not be afraid to go to Egypt
3. there I will make of you a great nation
4. I will go down with you
5. I will bring you up again
6. Joseph's hand will close your eyes

C. Prophecy of Israel to Joseph 48:21

1. God will be with you
2. and He will bring you again to the land of your fathers
3. one mountain slope given to Joseph (is it Shechem?) here will be the seat of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh

Audio-visuals available for this lesson dramatize the places and events of Genesis.