

Genesis (2011) 46

- Today we begin our 103rd lesson in our Genesis study, a study of chapter 46
 - Joseph has summoned his father, Jacob, to leave the land of Canaan and enter Egypt, in keeping with God's promise to Abraham
 - We still have five years of famine remaining
 - And these years of famine will force Jacob's family to live in the land for a time
 - The number 5 in scripture is a number associated with God's grace
 - And certainly the five years spent in Egypt will be grace to Jacob and his family
 - They will live in Goshen, a land that will supply the people of Israel richly even during a period of worldwide famine
 - And five years is just long enough for the people to establish a home in Egypt, one they will not leave for four generations
 - But leaving the land is not easy for Jacob, especially since his last time spent outside the promised land was a difficult time
 - So as we'll see today, the Lord moves in Jacob's heart to reassure him that leaving was the right thing to do
 - Finally, as the family leaves, we'll read through an inventory of the family of Jacob as they leave the land

Gen. 46:1 So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

Gen. 46:2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

Gen. 46:3 He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.

Gen. 46:4 "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

- Once again we notice that Moses is addressing Jacob as Israel, reminding us that Jacob's actions reflect a movement of faith in God's promises

- Israel sets out to bring all he had to Egypt
 - Jacob is departing from a location in central Canaan and headed south
 - And the southern most settlement in Canaan was Beersheba
 - This was the last town you encountered on your way to Egypt
- And as Jacob reaches Beersheba, he hesitates
 - Before he steps outside the land, Jacob wants to know that leaving the land was the right thing to do
 - Jacob initiates the conversation with the Lord through a moment of sacrifice
- This means Jacob took uncut rocks and boulders and piled them up to form an altar
 - Remember that altars are always places of sacrifice
 - Then he would have taken a young goat and slit the throat and drained the blood
 - He likely sanctified the altar with the spilled blood of the sacrifice
 - Then he built a fire on the altar and burned the meat and fat of the goat as a pleasing aroma to the Lord
- A sacrifice is always required before sinful men may commune with the holy, perfect living God
 - The Bible teaches us that our sin is an ever-present barrier to our relationship with the Lord
 - It makes us an enemy of God, and we cannot please Him much less make requests of Him while we stand in a state of enmity with Him
 - But when an innocent takes our our place in receiving God's judgment, the wrath of the Lord is appeased
 - And we can approach the Lord with our worship and petitions
 - Today, we have a never-ending relationship with the Lord because Jesus Christ became an innocent sacrifice in our place for our sin

- God's wrath for our sin was placed on Christ, so that now we can be at peace with God
- And no additional sacrifice is required so we can approach boldly before the Lord at all times
- In Jacob's day, the world was still waiting for Christ's sacrifice
 - So God made temporary atonement available through sacrifices of an innocent animal
 - And here we see Jacob making a temporary sacrifice so that he can approach the Lord with his doubts
- In a way, it's a curious thing how Jacob hesitates to leave Canaan
 - The land is dry, and dead for lack of water in the drought
 - The people are hostile and corrupt
 - His family has been seeking relief
 - And now he's learned that his favorite son is alive and well in Egypt
 - You might think that Jacob would be running to get to Egypt
 - Why is Jacob so hesitant to leave the Promised Land?
 - Remember, this is the land God gave to his grandfather and his father
 - This is the inheritance every Jewish man since Abraham has longed to receive
 - The Lord's promise to provide the Promised Land to Israel has always been THE measure of faith and the ultimate reward for belief and obedience
 - Jacob had worked for nearly 20 years for the opportunity to return to Canaan when he fled Esau
 - So it's only too natural for Jacob to cling to the life he knew, believing he had obtained what God promised
 - For the same reason we may hold on too long or too tight to things God has given us or to a direction in life He's asked us to walk at some point in our past

- A possession, a relationship, a lifestyle, a job, a past time, a church...whatever it is, it's something the Lord gave and we gladly received
- But now the time to let go has come, and we face a new test of obedience
- Sometimes, we disobey the Lord by rejecting the opportunities and blessings He brings to us because we prefer to do our own thing
 - Or like Jacob, we've grown comfortable with the plan
 - And we think we understand where it's all going
- But sometimes, we disobey the Lord by not letting go of something He's tell us to leave behind, or when we won't change direction in our life when He calls to something new
 - Some of the greatest tragedies in Scripture and in life come from failing to let go of the things God has given us
 - Saul wouldn't recognize that his time as Israel's king was to end – so his pride brought him down
 - Jonah got to spend some quality time with a large fish because he wouldn't turn when God gave him direction to preach good news to his hated enemies
 - And here we see the Lord asking Jacob to give up his presence in the land because it suited the Lord's purposes
- God's pattern in scripture routinely works this way, giving and taking away, to test us and reveal our hearts, while serving His eternal purposes
 - Can there be a better example than Job?
 - God gave him everything a man might want
 - Wealth, family, health, reputation, power
 - Then in a moment, the Lord permitted Satan to take it all away
 - Job had praised the Lord when he had everything, so the test was would Job see God differently when it was all gone?
 - And after Job passed the test, he got it all back again
 - In the end, this is a question of following God

- He is the master, and we are the slaves
 - He leads and we follow, He gives and we receive gladly, and He takes and we praise Him nevertheless
- When we try to hold on to those things that God has determined should be removed from our life, we are replacing His sovereignty with our own
 - And that's not the real tragedy...the real tragedy comes should we succeed
 - Because if we persist in resisting His will, we will only succeed in being distracted by our selfish pursuits, serving ourselves instead of God
 - And we'll be sidelined in God's on-going work around us
- If Jacob were to cling to the Promised Land rather than going to Egypt, he would have been left with a dusty, polluted, corrupt land without God's blessing and provision, and he would die there
 - At least for a moment, Jacob toyed with this idea
 - But in the end, he did something important, something in keeping with "Israel" rather than "Jacob"
- Jacob calls upon the Lord seeking a confirmation for what to do
 - I really like what Jacob does here, and not simply for his willingness to seek confirmation in what to do
 - This thing I like is WHO Jacob asks
 - He goes directly to the Lord and waits for his answer
 - That's not fashionable today, even in the church
 - It's a feature of human experience to be faced with dilemmas and choices that leaves us pondering what should we do, and we often seek advice
 - Of course, we know in the world there are industries devoted to telling people what to do or where to go
 - Psychic hotlines, TV psychologists on talk shows, online advice columns, endless Internet discussion forums, etc.
 - But this trend is also evident in the church

- We have books, radio programs, podcasts, family, friends, home groups, etc.
- And every one of these sources can be (and often is) used by the Lord to guide us
- But none of these can substitute for seeking the Lord's counsel
 - Whether in personal prayer or His word
 - These are the two direct sources of revelation the Church has to guide us, and they must always be in agreement
 - The Lord will never contradict His own word
 - Seek the Lord, wait for His answer, and then do what you sense Him telling you
 - Trust that He is capable of cutting through the noise and bringing you clarity when you need it
- In response to his doubts, the Lord appears to Jacob for the sixth time
 - The answer comes in the night, as a vision we're told
 - Apparently Jacob had camped here and waited for a response from the Lord
 - And when the response came, it was Jacob, Jacob
 - The Lord calls to him with his old name, indicating that Jacob was living in the flesh again, at least for a moment
 - The Lord identifies Himself as the God of Jacob's father, Isaac, who had died ten years earlier
 - Calling Himself the God of Isaac, a man who was dead, proves that these men would one day be resurrected and return to the land
 - Isaac was dead, yet the Lord continues to speak of Isaac as alive and still a follower of the living God
 - As Jesus said to the Pharisees

[Luke 20:37](#) “But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB.

[Luke 20:38](#) “Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him.”

- So even the way the Lord identifies Himself, He’s already working to reassure Jacob that this departure will not be the end of his time in the land
- On the other hand, this will be the last time Jacob sees the promised land this side of Heaven
 - Jacob is going to die in Egypt
 - And this is what the Lord intends
 - The Lord assures Jacob he will become a great nation while in Egypt
 - He will not be assimilated into the Egyptian people, which was Jacob’s primary concern
 - Instead, Israel will prosper and incubate within the land for a season
 - And they will never lose their identity while living in the land
 - But in the end, Jacob will die, and Joseph will close his eyes
 - After that death, Jacob will be entombed in Egypt
 - But he will not remain there
 - The Lord promises Jacob will be brought up out of Egypt
 - This happens in two ways
 - First, in Genesis 50 we learn that after Jacob died, Joseph took his body back to Canaan to bury him in the family tomb
 - Secondly, the Lord is speaking of the future inheritance Jacob receives when he is resurrected and enters the Kingdom
 - Like his fathers before him, Jacob understood that his permanent inheritance was yet to be revealed

- So the Lord is promising Jacob that one day he will live again in the land God gave him
- But he needed to wait for that day
- So having been assured that leaving Egypt was the right thing to do, Jacob continues down into Egypt

Gen. 46:5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

Gen. 46:6 They took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him:

Gen. 46:7 his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

- With that confirmation, Jacob enters into Egypt, and with him comes his entire family we're told
 - What follows next is a partial census of the family of Jacob
 - Not all members of his household are called out specifically
 - Mostly, it's a record of the sons and grandsons of Jacob
 - But a few women are mentioned as well
 - At the end we get the count of all of them
 - Let's read through the list

Gen. 46:8 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

Gen. 46:9 The sons of Reuben: Hanoch and Pallu and Hezron and Carmi.

Gen. 46:10 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

Gen. 46:11 The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Gen. 46:12 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

Gen. 46:13 The sons of Issachar: Tola and Puvvah and Iob and Shimron.

Gen. 46:14 The sons of Zebulun: Sered and Elon and Jahleel.

Gen. 46:15 These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.

Gen. 46:16 The sons of Gad: Ziphion and Haggi, Shuni and Ezbon, Eri and Arodi and Areli.

[Gen. 46:17](#) The sons of Asher: Imnah and Ishvah and Ishvi and Beriah and their sister Serah. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.

[Gen. 46:18](#) These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons.

[Gen. 46:19](#) The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

[Gen. 46:20](#) Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, bore to him.

[Gen. 46:21](#) The sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher and Ashbel, Gera and Naaman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim and Huppim and Ard.

[Gen. 46:22](#) These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; there were fourteen persons in all.

[Gen. 46:23](#) The sons of Dan: Hushim.

[Gen. 46:24](#) The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel and Guni and Jezer and Shillem.

[Gen. 46:25](#) These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and she bore these to Jacob; there were seven persons in all.

[Gen. 46:26](#) All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all,

[Gen. 46:27](#) and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.

- First, as we consider all these names, remember it's only been 39 years since Jacob left Laban's household with four wives and eleven sons in tow
 - Now just 39 years later we see how large his family has become
 - Clearly, the Lord is blessing Israel even now, moving toward becoming a large nation
 - And in this list we find a few interesting nuggets
 - First, notice that the sons of Judah include mention of the two dead sons, Er and Onan
 - They are not included in the count of Jacob's family, but they are listed here for the record
 - The other two sons of Judah are the twins from Tamar
 - Perez is the son holding the seed promise, which will move to one of his sons
 - Secondly, notice that besides Judah, another son of Jacob took a wife from the Canaanites, Simeon

- This reminds us of why the family needed to leave Canaan for a while
- The temptation to marry into the Canaanite culture was too great
 - So the Lord knew He had to move them into Egypt
 - Until they were strong enough to resist assimilation
 - And when they returned to the land, they would be strong enough to defeat the inhabitants of the land
 - The Shaulites do not appear in the record of scripture, suggesting they fall under curse of Canaan and disappear
- Third, it's interesting that Benjamin has 10 sons, since at this time Benjamin was only 25 years old
 - The likely answer for how he could have so many so quickly was that he took multiple wives like Jacob
 - Just as Jacob fathered many sons in only a few years, so could Benjamin do the same
- Lastly, consider the grand totals given at the end
 - All those who are Jacob's descendants who came from Egypt were 66
 - This description excludes Jacob, all the wives, and those already in Egypt
 - That counts arrives at 66
 - But then we're told the entire household that entered into Egypt was 70 people
 - The extra four are found by including Jacob, Joseph (who was already in Egypt)
 - And it also includes Joseph's two sons
 - Later in Acts 7 we hear Stephen give a count of 75 for Jacob's household in Egypt
 - Stephen's count includes Joseph's five grandsons, which were born after Jacob entered the land
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- What are these specific counts given to us in the story of Jacob and Joseph?
 - Who cares how many entered the land?
 - We have two answers
 - First, when the nation leaves the land in the Exodus, we're told that just the men above the age of 20 add up to over 600,000!
 - In only three generations after they enter, the family will have grown exponentially
 - They become one of the most numerous nations on earth, all while in slavery
 - This count helps us see how small and vulnerable they are as they enter Egypt
 - Under normal circumstances, we would certainly expect them to be assimilated into Egyptian culture
 - Instead they leave as a mighty people
 - There is only one explanation for that outcome...
 - Which leads us to the second reason this count is important
- The number seventy in scripture is a number packed with meaning
 - It comes up over and over again in scripture
 - Each time, the number is intended to communicate a certain meaning
 - It means the Lord's sovereign purpose accomplished through the works of men
 - We can see this meaning evident in many of the examples where the Lord chose seventy of something
 - When Joseph dies, Egypt will mourn for seventy days
 - Moses will be given seventy elders over Israel
 - The Lord selected seventy elders to prophesy in the wilderness

- Seventy years were appointed for Israel to be captive outside the land
- Later when the Hebrew text was translated to Greek, the work was done by seventy leaders of Israel
- And the ruling Sanhedrin counsel of Israel was seventy men
- These numbers are an accurate, literal count - they are not merely symbolic
 - But the Lord determined these events so that they would result in a count of seventy so He could send us a message at the same time
 - God is in control, and this departure of Canaan is His plan at work
 - Just as He is the answer to the question how did Israel grow so much while in Exodus
 - The Lord is sovereignly working to bring about exactly what He purposes and what He promised
- Even in this early stage of the process we see His signature in the number seventy
 - Jacob isn't taking chances with his inheritance
 - He's ensuring it
 - Israel isn't in danger of being swallowed up by Egypt
 - The nation will one day leave with the best that Egypt has to offer
 - God's plan isn't at risk
 - It's going exactly according to plan
- Next week we'll look at Jacob's encounter with Pharaoh and move into chapter 47