



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

Lesson Two: The Patriarchs: Election and Promise

Genesis 12-27

Q. What is the Old Testament?

A. *The Old Testament consists of books written by the people of the Old Covenant, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to show God at work in nature and history.*

-Book of Common Prayer

Chiasm- The crossing of elements. Chiasm is a common structure of Old Testament Biblical stories where they follow a symmetrical pattern.

A B C D C' B' A'

The center piece of the story is often the turning point of the narrative leading to a resolution of an initial conflict or problem.

INTRODUCTION

The Main Point: the revelation of God's special, (redemptive or restorative) grace in the form of covenant promises.

Special grace is not new, what *is* new is the covenantal aspect.

Key Points:

- Humanity is renewed through Abraham and his seed.
- The promises of God to Abraham are graciously and freely given.
- Other nations, kings and lands are included in God's plan.
- God teaches faith through trials and testing.
- The family unit is the means by which God's promises and covenants are transmitted.
- God teaches hope in Abraham and Isaac in patient waiting.
- God's promises and covenant converge in Jesus Christ "the hope of the nations."

Promise in an Alienated World

The Toledot Formula "This is the account of..."

- ◇ Abraham to Egypt (5 accounts)
- ◇ Terah (Abraham) -- Ishmael -- Isaac -- Esau -- Jacob

Length

- Ishmael and Esau's are no more than genealogies
- Bulk of material is dedicated to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
- Focus is on heirs to the covenant and promises

Symmetry

PATRIARCHAL ACCOUNTS IN GENESIS

A Terah/Abraham	(11:27-25:11)
B Ishmael	(25:12-18)
C Isaac	(25:19-35:29)
B' Esau	(36:1-38:1)
A' Jacob	(37:2-50:26)



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

STRUCTURE OF THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE

- A. Promises stated (Genesis 12:1-9)
- B. In Egypt with Sarah (Seed) (12:10-20)
 - C. Lot and the land (to Sodom) (Chap. 13)
 - D. Abraham and the nations (14)
 - E. The covenant - initiation (15)
 - F. Hagar & Ishmael (16)
 - E.' The covenant confirmation (17)
 - D.' Abraham and the nations (18)
 - C.' Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah (19)
- B.' In Gerar with Sarah (Seed) (20)
- A.' Promise of son fulfilled (21)

Abraham and Jacob

Abraham

- recipient of the 1st promises, the covenant, the initial testing's
- represents *all of the faithful*

Jacob

- receives confirmed promises, covenant, and patriarchal blessing
- father of the twelve tribes
- represents *all of Israel*

Crises of the Patriarchs

- The calling of God and the challenge of faith
- Patriarchs become the "heroes of faith"
- Promises and personal struggles, anguish and testing of the patriarchs.
- Faith=>trusting in the promises of God

"And Abraham believed the LORD and he counted it to him as righteousness."

--Genesis 15:6



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

The Promises to the Patriarchs

“The scarlet thread that runs through the subsequent history of the patriarchs.” --W. Zimmerli

(For the beginning of the thread see Genesis 3:15)

Four Promises (Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 22:17-18, 26:3-4, 28:13-15)

1. Seed, or offspring
 2. Land, namely, the land of Canaan
 3. Blessing to the patriarchs; presence of God, protection, guidance
 4. Blessing to the nations
- The promises are reconfirmed to each patriarch

Themes: Continuities and Discontinuities

Continuities

1. Four Promises
2. Aliens in the land of promise (Canaan)
 - Wandering among people there
 - Built altars, pitched tents, heard the word of the Lord.
3. Family life problems
 - Wives barrenness before the birth of the promised “seed”. [Ex. Sarah (11:30; 15:2-3; 16:1) Rebekah (25:21) Rachel and Leah (29:31; 30:9; 17)]
 - foreign kings taking their wives [Sarah and Pharaoh (12:10-20) Rebekah and Abimelech (26:1-11)]
 - Intense rivalry between sons:
 - Ishmael and Isaac (21:8-21)
 - Jacob and Esau (25:22-26; 29-34; 27:1-45)
 - Joseph and 11 brothers (37:4; 11, 18)
4. Other crises:
 - severe drought and famine (12:10; 26:1; 41:46-42:2)
 - ownership of wells
 - tensions with foreign tribes
 - hatred, jealousy, bitterness, war, acts of hostility (34:25-26; 30)



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

Discontinuities

- ◇ Abraham and Jacob are active characters vs. Isaac as a passive character:
 1. Ishmael's ridiculing (21:8-10)
 2. in nearly being sacrificed (22)
 3. in struggle between his sons (25:22-34)
 4. choice of a wife
 5. in blessing of Jacob and Esau (chapter 27)
 - **Everything simply happens to Isaac!**

- ◇ Jacob knows what he wants from life and struggles to obtain it:
 1. the birth right and blessing (25:29-34; 27:1-29)
 2. his wives Rachel (29:16-30)
 3. Laban's flocks (30:25-43)
 4. blessing from "man" (32:22-32)
 - **Jacob wrestles with God and men!**

Purpose of the Patriarch Stories for Israel

- Abraham and Jacob experience a world in alienation; anguish, pain, evil, and death.
- They were tested, and they persevered.
- In the tension they developed faith, hope, and love.
- The patriarchs model to Israel the "way of faith" in this world vs. the world to come; they reveal the Kingdom of God in tension with the Kingdom of Evil.

Plot: Symmetry and Movement

Abraham "the dark night of soul"

Key plot questions:

- Will Sarah be the mother of the promised son or become the wife of Pharaoh?
- Will Lot inherit some of the promised land?
- Will Abraham always live in an antagonistic relationship with the nations?
- When will the covenant blessings come into existence?
- **Will Abraham have trust in God even when things look bleak for the covenant promises?**



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

Jacob “the pilgrimage of faith”

- God is the “God of Bethel” (31:13)
- Conversion of Jacob comes through wrestling with God and men
- At Peniel, Jacob’s name is changed to Israel

Joseph “family ties”

- The main plot theme for Joseph is family strife and reconciliation.
- Genesis 50:20 “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good.”

The God of the Fathers is the God of Promise

Crises and Isolation and Blessing

Israel will be at war with the nations due to the nations’ rebellion against the rule of God.

Ultimately Israel was to be a blessing to the nations. God’s plan involved the redemption and salvation for all the peoples of the world (Genesis 12).

Revelation and Responsiveness

The revelation of God’s Call to a particular people and family was a “calling out” in order to fulfill a divine plan. Abraham was called out of one land and told to go to a land of God’s provision. The test of faith is in the responsiveness to the revelation and calling. Testing, struggle and temptation prove the genuineness of the response of faith.

God’s Election and Promise

- Seed => Jesus the Messiah
- Land => The Church => The New Jerusalem
- Blessing and God’s Presence => The Gift of the Holy Spirit
- Nations => Jews and Gentiles saved.
- Promises and Progressive Fulfillment

The Patriarchs’ Faith and Obedience

The Patriarchs set the plumb-line for faith (trusting in God’s promises). They provide positive and negative examples of how the people of God dwell in an alienated world.



Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done

Matthew 5-7

The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

A Christian's Character (5:3-12)

A Christian's The beatitudes emphasize eight principal marks of Christian Character and conduct, especially in relation to God and to men, and the divine blessing which rests on those who exhibit these marks.

Influence (5:13-16)

The follower of Jesus Christ is called to be markedly different than the prevailing culture. Jesus uses two metaphors: Salt and Light to indicate the influence for good which Christians will exercise in the community—if and only if the exercise the Character and practices taught by him in the Sermon on the Mount.

A Christian's Righteousness (5:17-48)

What is the Christian's attitude toward the Law of God? Did Jesus come to abolish the law? No. But to fulfill it!

The righteousness of a follower of Jesus must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisee! Six illustrations:

1. Murder
2. Adultery
3. Divorce
4. Swearing
5. Revenge
6. Love

"You have heard it said...but I say to you..."

The problem is not the law itself, but rather the bad interpretation of the law and its poor implementation.

A Christian's Piety (6:1-18)

The followers of Jesus are called to manifest a religious devotional life that neither resembles the hypocritical display of the Pharisee nor the mechanical formalism of the pagans. Christian piety is to be sincere and real with an awareness of the Audience of One.



“The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of Jesus teaching, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed.”

—John Stott, Christian Counter-Culture, p. 15.

The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

A Christian's Ambition (6:19-34)

The Christian is to have a different attitude toward material wealth and possessions. Following Jesus changes our attitude in both scarcity and abundance. The follower of Jesus is free from self centered anxiety about food, drink and clothing.

Money is the chief idol. We cannot worship both God and money. The supreme ambition of the Christian is for the kingdom of God and the glory of God.

A Christian's Relationship's (7:1-20)

The Christian life is about relationships: first, our relationship to God and second, our relationship to one another. New relationships are created, old relationships are changed.

We are not to judge our brother, but to serve him. We are to avoid offering the gospel to those who decisively reject it. We are to manifest an intimate prayer life with God as Father. We are to be wary of false prophets who hinder people from finding the narrow gate and the hard way.

A Christian's Commitment (7:21-27)

The bottom line: It is not enough to call Jesus “Lord” or merely to listen to his teaching. If we are to truly be his followers, we must mean what we say and do what we hear. On this commitment hangs our eternal destiny.

It fundamentally comes down to an issue of authority. Just who is in charge in our lives? Jesus? Money? The opinions of Others?

You have to serve someone. The crowds were astonished by the authority with which Jesus taught.