

Text: Genesis 46

Title: "The God of Jacob's descendants"

Time: 9/6/09 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: We had the opportunity of enjoying the hospitality of the Payettes over Labor Day weekend, and in the course of our conversation, I learned that Bonnie used to work for a company that did genealogical research for people. Perhaps that kind of thing sounds interesting to you. For me, it sound interesting as long as we are talking about the Hobi family. Genealogical research loses some of its charm for me when it goes beyond my own family.

We have a lot of genealogies in the Bible. It may be that genealogies are not your favorite thing to read in the Scripture. I had a seminary professor who shared with us that Scripture's genealogies actually saved his faith during a very trying time of his life, because they demonstrated to him that the truth of Scripture is indelibly rooted in historical fact. Few of us, however, have experienced an epiphany while reading a genealogy. We barely get passed the experience of frustration over the difficulty of pronouncing Hebrew names.

Have you ever asked yourself the theological question, "Why the emphasis on genealogies?" I have, and I believe that there are at least two reasons. (1) Whereas the saving gospel message of Christ in the New Testament takes the form of the proclamation of historical events (the crucifixion and resurrection), the gospel message of Christ in the Old Testament takes the form of the preservation of a seed-promise, a covenant about a descendant. Genealogies help remind us that the theme of the Old Testament is centered on a coming descendant of Eve, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David. Ultimately, this Descendant is Jehovah God in human flesh.

(2) The second reason for genealogies I see is the simple fact that children are very important to God. We welcomed Ezra James this week. That is a huge deal to the God of heaven (Ps. 127). Bible genealogies make clear that our God needs to be the God of our genealogy; He needs to be the God of our descendants. Genesis 46 is all about making the point that the God of Jacob was going to be the God of Jacob's descendants. Let's notice four things this morning about the God of Jacob's descendants.

I. The God of Jacob's descendants was the God Jacob knew personally (vv. 1-4).

Illustration: Children are designed to learn by imitation. I can remember as a kid seeing a commercial on TV about the dangers of smoking. The commercial had a father and his young son, and it showed that after the father lit up a cigarette the son took one up too. The point of the commercial was that kids look up to their parents – sons like to imitate their dads.

Application: The God Jacob knew was able to identify himself to Jacob as “the God of your father.” I'm so glad this morning that my God is the God of my father. I desire with all my heart that the Lord should be able to say to my sons and daughter, “I am God, the God of your father.” I hope that when God says that to my kids, they will know right away who it is that is talking to them because they have seen my relationship with Him first. If the God of the Bible is going to be the God of our descendants, our descendants need to see from our example that we know Him personally. I want us to see three things that Jacob knew about God, which he must have hoped to pass on to his children as they stop in Beersheba on the way to Joseph and Egypt.

A. Jacob knew God was worthy of his worship (v. 1, “offer sacrifices to the God of his father”). We need to teach our descendants that God is worthy of our worship. Jacob happened

to have a lot going on that day. Everything was all packed up, and they had a long journey ahead of them. It does not seem as though stopping in Beersheba and going through all the trouble of slaughtering and sacrificing animals helped move things forward much. Still, Jacob stopped because he understood the priority of worshipping the God he knew to be so very worthy of that worship.

How often to your kids see you pray? Can they point to that worn out Bible you have all marked up with things the Lord has shown you as you have worshipped Him? What about your commitment to the corporate worship of your church family? Now you understand that I do not believe that Sunday is the Biblical Sabbath covered by the Ten Commandments. The Scripture is clear, however, that Sunday for the New Testament church is the Lord's Day. It is the corporate worship day of the saints of God.

What do we teach our kids when we fail to put these worshipping opportunities ahead of recreation or money making? We teach them that worshipping God is not as important as these other things. You see, church attendance is never about goals related to the size we want the crowd to be. It is always about the heart that caused Jacob to stop in Beersheba on his way to Egypt. Do you have enough of that heart and that desire? Jacob knew that God was worthy of his worship.

B. Jacob knew that God reveals Himself reliably (vv. 2-3; God spoke to Israel in "visions of the night"). We need to encourage our descendants to love and trust God's revelation. This is what Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him, as the apostle Paul points out in 2 Tim. 3:14-17: "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired

by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

What are you doing to encourage your descendants to love and trust God’s revelation? As your pastor, I would love to see our Sunday School classes bursting at the seams with children who have come to learn and become convinced of the truthfulness of God’s Word. Satan is doing all he can in this day and age to undermine their faith in God’s revelation. We could go on for hours describing his attack on the faith of our kids. What are we doing to bolster and encourage that faith?

C. Jacob knew this God’s reassuring presence (vv. 3-4). We need to encourage our descendants to walk with God without fear. Humanly speaking, there are a lot of reasons to fear as you think of the future our kids are going to face if the Lord tarries. They are growing up with a generation raised on the internet. They are growing up in a paganized society that cannot remember a distant Christian heritage and that is preparing itself to persecute and oppress any who can. They are growing up in the face of increasing momentum for the spirit of antichrist—lying wonders and global centralization. They are growing up under the weight of worldwide catastrophic financial debt. They are growing up in a dangerous world of radicalized Islam armed with weapons of mass destruction.

Jacob was going to Egypt, and that was a little scary too. God says, “Don’t be afraid—I am with you; I will make you a great nation; I will bring you up again.” Because of the evil day our children will face, they need to know the strength of the words, “Don’t be afraid; I am with you.” They will need to live courageously without fear. Are we showing them how that is done? Are we demonstrating the courage He can give?

II. The God of Jacob’s descendants was the God of Jacob’s generations (vv. 1, 3, 5-7, 8-27).

Illustration: The news media has made much in recent days of the fact that this year was the 40th anniversary of Woodstock. You may have noticed that we failed to put anything on our church calendar commemorating this event in American History. Woodstock was a place for children to go to celebrate the way they had thrown off the God of their fathers. I majored in History in college, and the text we used for the general American History course I took was written by two Stanford University professors. They described this period of our nation's history in the following way:

"Fast-passed changes everywhere shook the pillars of tradition in the anxious post-war age. The family, once a haven of refuge from the cruel world, was suffering heavy blows. By the 1970s divorces annually totaled half the number of marriages. Seven times more children were affected by divorce than at the turn of the century, and kids who commuted between separated parents were becoming commonplace. The child-rearing function of the family dwindled as youngsters spent more time with 'parent-substitutes' at day-care centers and schools, or with television, the new 'electronic babysitter.' Estimates were that the average child at age sixteen had watched up to 15,000 hours of TV, more time than was spent with parents or teachers.

"Whatever the cause, a newly negative attitude toward all kinds of authority seemed to pervade post-war American society. Not only the family, but other traditional institutions like the schools and the churches seemed to be losing their ability to define values and shape behavior. No matter what the topic, conventional wisdom or inherited ideas came under fire. 'Trust no one over thirty' was a popular sneer in the 1960s" [Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1979), 941-942]. Do you think your kids are learning that in history class at Stanford anymore?

Application: The God of Jacob's descendants was the God of Jacob's father. As God's people, we need to reject the notion of the generation gap. Young people are supposed to be very close to grandparents and parents, not segregated away from former generations. We should not hear about how older folks simply cannot tolerate certain age groups of children in the church. Nor should we hear about kids who disrespect the elderly. The pagan culture around us celebrates the 40th anniversary of this kind of thing. It should not exist among us.

III. The God of Jacob's descendants was the God who called new leaders for the next generation (vv. 28, 31-34).

Illustration: One of the joys of getting older is that you have lived long enough to see God raise up new leaders. Grace Church of Mentor is lead by a couple of pastors named Tim and Kent, my little brother and his best friend. It rejoices the heart to see them in action. I had the privilege of preaching the charge to my brother at his ordination to Christian ministry and was so overwhelmed with emotion at the wonder of it all that I could barely make it through. I did not preach a charge; I kind of balled and blubbered my way through one.

Application: Do we have a vision for developing new leaders for the next generation? Remember that Joseph saw God's purpose as that of keeping a remnant alive, one that would eventually lead to the promised descendant of Abraham (Gen. 45:7). He comes through the line of Judah and Perez. Our text emphasizes Perez's importance to the descendants of Jacob in v. 12. Only he and Beriah (v. 17) have their sons mentioned. For the significance of Perez, see the end of the book of Ruth.

Developing new leaders involves patience with their mistakes. Judah had a leading role in dividing Jacob and Joseph; and God transformed him and gave him the leading role in bringing them together again.

The leaders of a generation used of God must be concerned that God's people are kept distinct from the culture of the world around them. The move to Egypt was a move away from Canaan to a place in which Israel would be isolated enough to become a great nation rather than an amalgamated addition to a pagan world. Remember that shepherds were an abomination to Egyptians (vv. 31-34). Our fundamentalist forefathers understood the importance of being distinct from the world as the people of God in order to do a great work, and future leaders need to embrace those convictions and carry them forward for generations to come.

IV. The God of Jacob's descendants was the God who prepared Jacob to die (vv. 29-30).

Application: These are some of the most touching verses in all of the Bible. Two pictures are painted for us in the reunion of Jacob and Joseph. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see some reunions by the grace of God like this in our own church family? We are praying for some of these. Reunion is a theme that pictures for us a wonderful work of God. Notice these pictures.

A. In Jacob's renewed joy at the sight of Joseph, we have a picture of the joy of God the Father when a lost son is returned to Him (Gen. 45:28, Israel says: "It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die"; Luke 15:24, the father of the prodigal says: "for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."). God rejoices when He is reunited with those who have wandered far away from Him. We are spiritually dead in our sins, and God rejoices when we come to life again in fellowship with Him through the salvation provided by the blood of Christ.

B. In Jacob's readiness to die now that he had seen that Joseph was alive, we have a picture of the blessed assurance with which the believer can face death knowing that Jesus Christ still lives. Jacob says, "Now let me die, since I have seen your

face, that you are still alive.” I can say that to Christ: “Now let me die, since I by faith have accepted the fact that you are still alive. You died for me. You arose victorious over my enemy death. I shall rise too. Now let me die.” Are you ready to die because you have seen that Christ is your risen Savior? If not, look on Him that way today.

Conclusion: Who shall be the God of our descendants? What must change about us in order to answer that question in a way the glorifies the God of heaven and raises up a generation of Christ-loving servants for the challenges of a new evil day?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*