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# GENESIS

PART III: Genesis 20-50

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# Setting the Scene

Genesis began in a garden, where humanity enjoyed the blessing of every good thing from their perfectly loving creator God. When humanity thought they could be better off without God, sin entered the world, and spread like a disease leaving death and destruction in its wake as humanity spiralled out of control.

However God promised a rescuer. In Genesis 12 God made promises to bless Abraham, with the purpose of bringing blessing to the whole world through his family. God will restore humanity to the goodness of the garden—this is God's rescue plan, and this is the family his rescuer will come from. The whole second half of Genesis is about this one family.

Genesis is the story of the star-maker, the promise-giver, the one who can turn darkness to light, can turn chaos to beauty, can turn barrenness to a great nation, and can turn rebellious sinners into those who are righteous in his sight.

Genesis **sets the scene**, for Jesus.

## The basic narrative structure of Genesis

Genesis 1-11: The Beginnings of the Cosmos

Genesis 12-50: The Beginnings of God's People

    Genesis 12-25: Abraham

    Genesis 25-36: Isaac

    Genesis 27-50: Jacob

## Genesis 20-22

What has stood out to you about the Genesis story so far?

Genesis began in a garden, where humanity enjoyed the blessing of every good thing from their perfectly loving creator God. When humanity thought they could be better off without God, sin entered the world, and spread like a disease leaving death and destruction in its wake as humanity spiralled out of control. However God promised a rescuer. In Genesis 12 God made promises to bless Abraham, with the purpose of bringing blessing to the whole world through his family. God will restore humanity to the goodness of the garden—this is God's rescue plan, and this is the family his rescuer will come from. The whole second half of Genesis is about this one family.

### Read Genesis 20

Do you get a sense of déjà vu from this chapter (compare this with Genesis 12.10-20)? What makes Abraham's mistake even more foolish this time around (remember Genesis 17.15-16)?

How would you evaluate Abimelech's actions?

In this chapter Abraham's sin is spectacular. His excuses and blame-shifting in verses 10-13 are particularly reminiscent of Adam in Genesis chapter 3. Despite this, how does God bless both Abraham and Abimelech? What does this teach us about God?

### Read Genesis 21

What lessons does Abraham learn in Genesis 20.17-18 and Genesis 21.1-7?

What do we learn about God's character from verses 8-21? How is this a comfort?

### Read Genesis 22

What does God tell Abraham to do? Why does he tell him to do it (Genesis 22.1, 12, 18)?

What is the tension in Isaac's question and his dad's reply?

How do you think Abraham and Isaac felt about God's provision of a ram for the sacrifice? How do you think God felt about providing it?

How has Abraham's trust in God developed over these three chapters?

### **Think it over**

Read Hebrews 11.1-3, and 17-19. How does Hebrews help us see the relevance of this story to us?

How might we reconcile God appearing to command something that threatens his promises (Genesis 22.2) with God repeating his promises (Genesis 22.15-18)?

Compare Genesis 22.2 with John 3.16 and Romans 8.32. In what ways is God in this chapter showing us a picture of himself?

Genesis 22 is about one thing: **resurrection**. It is about God's ability to bring life from death. On Mount Moriah (see 2nd Chronicles 3.1), 2,000 years later, God did what he didn't let Abraham do—he gave his one and only Son, whom he dearly loved, as a sacrifice for sin. He did it so as to defeat death and bring life in its place. How does God's provision of his son as the sacrificial lamb make you feel?

### **Prayer ideas**

Praise God for keeping his promise to bring blessing to the world through Abraham's offspring.

Thank God for providing for us his one and only Son, as the sacrificial lamb who takes our sin on himself to set us free from death.

Pray that we would appreciate Jesus' death in our place, and the blessing that brings.



## Genesis 23.1-25.18

As a child did you mark your height on the wall each year, so as to look back and see how much you had grown? This year at BPC our intention has been to grow in living life for Jesus (our Growth Spurts have been a big part of this). As you look back over the year, do you see growth?

### **Read Genesis 23**

What is the problem in this chapter (verses 3-4)?

What is the solution in this chapter (verses 10-11, 17-18)?

Why is this moment particularly significant in the story of Genesis (remember Genesis 12.1 and 13.14)?

### **Read Genesis 24**

Why do you think Abraham is so insistent that a suitable wife is found for Isaac?

Why do you think Abraham is so insistent that Isaac is not to be taken back to Abraham's home country?

What do you think of Rebekah? Is she the sort of person who will fit well in God's plans of promised blessing?

Chapter 24 ends with Isaac and Rebekah settling into what seems to be a rather blissful marriage. What other marriage in Genesis is most like this one?

**Read Genesis 25.1-18**

In what ways do we see God at work here?

**Read Romans 8.28-29**

How has God been at work in your life recently, for your good and for his purpose, by conforming you to the image of his Son?

**Think it over**

These chapters are quite different to everything we've read so far in Genesis. These are stories of old age, death, courting, marriages, families, and doing business. In some parts God is not mentioned. There is very little reflection on God's plans. Yet God is very obviously present and active! What are some of the ways God is working the everyday life of Abraham's family to achieve his purposes? Does God still do this today?

How are the events of these chapters leading the bible story slowly closer to Jesus?

God has made very specific promises to us through Jesus. He has promised that we will be made more and more like Jesus as we follow Jesus together. In everyday life – in our workplaces, classes, friendships, homes, families – how might God be at work to achieve his plans for us?

**Prayer ideas**

Praise God for keeping his sovereignty over our lives.

Thank God for his interest in working out his purposes in our lives.

Pray that we would be reminded that in all things – good and bad – God promises to work in those things to make us more like Jesus.

## Genesis 25.19-28.9

Can you think of examples of family life at it's best? What about family life at it's worst?

### **Read Genesis 25.19-34**

What is the problem and what is its solution in verses 19-21?

How does Isaac compare to his father Abraham in this situation (remember Genesis 16.1-6)?

Read Genesis 26.1-11 and compare the story with Genesis 12.10-20. How does Isaac compare to his father Abraham?

What is Rebekah's pregnancy like, and what does this foreshadow about the future?

What does the story of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob tell us about how these two boys think about God's promises?

### **Read Genesis 27**

Make a list of all the moments of deception and dysfunction in this chapter.

How do Rebekah's words at the end of this section (Genesis 27.46) mirror her words at the beginning (Genesis 25.22)? Why has it turned out like this?

Remembering that this is God's family, through whom he will send his promised rescuer (cf. Genesis 3.15 and 12.3), what do you think of

- Esau
- Jacob
- Rebekah
- Isaac?

### **Think it over**

Read Hebrews 12.16, and then Hebrews 12.1-3 for context. What lesson does the author of Hebrews want us to learn from Esau?

Read Romans 9.6-16. What does Paul want us to know about God after reading the story of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob?

The world is full of people and families like Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob. Often **we** are driven by the same sinful desires they were driven by! In what ways is it a comfort to know that God – in his wonderful grace – can use even our moments of weakness and sin to bring about his good purposes?

How are we challenged to live differently, when we know that we are the family of God, chosen to be his children and to be made new and made righteous in Christ?

### **Prayer ideas**

Praise God for keeping his power over sin.

Thank God for rescuing you, not because of anything good or bad you have done, but because Christ Jesus has washed you clean and made you new.

Pray that we would be made new as God works in us by his Spirit.

As next week's section is quite long it will be helpful to read Genesis 28.10-36.43 in advance.



## Genesis 28.10-36.43

Have you ever had a friend, and not having seen them for a few years (or decades!), been shocked at how much they have changed?

### Read Genesis 29.1-30

Why does Jacob travel to Haran to find a wife (remember Genesis 27.41-44, 28.1)?

See if you can fill in this table comparing Isaac's trip to Haran to find a wife compared to Jacob's

<u>Genesis 24</u>	<u>Genesis 29.1-30</u>
Isaac remains safe in the Promised Land as a trusted servant goes to find him a wife.	Jacob travels by himself, partly to escape his angry brother.
The servant prayerfully asks God to show him who may be a suitable wife for Isaac.	
Rebekah's good character is highlighted.	
Laban goes out to meet the servant, who offers Laban gifts.	
Rebekah is treated with respect and dignity.	
God's actions are referred to 18 times.	

Read Genesis 31.36-42. How has Laban been used to bring Jacob back to God?

### Read Genesis 29.31-30.24

God does three things in this section. What are they?

In between the things God does, what do Leah, Rachel, and Jacob do?

### Read Genesis 32.1-12

How is the rift between Esau and Jacob used to bring Jacob back to God?

What do you think of Jacob's prayer? What good things does Jacob now understand about God?

Read Genesis 33.1-4. How does God answer Jacob's prayer?

### **Read Genesis 35**

What does Jacob do in verses 1-4? What does this tell us about Jacob and his family?

Do verses 9-15 remind you of any previous events in Genesis?

What is the significance of Jacob's new name?

All hope in the search for a rescuer for God's world is now pinned on the descendants of Abraham becoming a great nation. What do we know that makes this chapter an exciting step in that nation materialising?

### **Think it over**

In what sense do these stories impact all of history, and impact our lives thousands of years later?

Jacob starts these chapters clueless and on the run. By the end, he is a prayerful and faithful (albeit still imperfect) recipient of God's history-shaping salvation promises. Can this be true for us too? If so, how?

Leah was the unwanted bride, used as a bargaining chip by her own father. Her bitterness came to define her (29.32-34). Yet her heavenly Father saw (29.31) and listened (30.17) to her in her pain, and from the descendants of her son Judah came God's promised rescuer Jesus. How is God's character here a comfort?

Here God acts with patience and grace, to bless and to rescue and to change people. How has God been doing that in your life?

### **Prayer ideas**

Praise God for his patience and grace.

Thank God for bringing you to him, through Jesus.

Pray that we would trust in and find joy in God's promises to bless us in Jesus.

As next week's section is quite long it will be helpful to read Genesis 37-50 in advance.

## Genesis 37-50

Why do you think God has given us the book of Genesis?

**Read Genesis 37.3-8 and 25-28**

Why do Joseph's brothers hate him?

Which brother saves Joseph's life?

**Read Genesis 39.1-3, 11-14, and 19-23**

Who is with Joseph? How does this help him?

**Read Genesis 41.1-8, 25-40, and 56-57**

Who is with Joseph? How does this help him?

**Read Genesis 42.1-9, 25-28 and 43.1-2, 15-18 and 44.1-16**

What are we told about how Joseph acts?

Are we told anything about how Joseph feels?

**Read Genesis 45.1-11**

How does Joseph understand all the events that have taken place?

Who has ultimately benefited from the anger and cruelty of Joseph's brothers?

**Read Genesis 47.27**

What does this show us about God's plans for his creation (remember Genesis 1.28)?

**Read Genesis 49.8-11**

What does Jacob predict for Judah's future?

Does this prediction come true? Hebrews 7.14 may offer an obvious clue.

**Read Genesis 50.15-21**

How do Joseph's words here act as a summary for the whole book of Genesis?

**Think it over**

In what sense did God do the things in these chapters for **your** benefit?

What have these chapters shown you about God's determination to rescue his people?

What has the book of Genesis shown you about God's determination to crush Satan, defeat sin, rescue his people, restore his creation, and bring his blessing?

Having looked back at how it all began, what's the one thing worth living for now?

**Prayer ideas**

Praise God for his determination to show his goodness and blessing to his creation and to humanity.

Thank God for Jesus, through whom we are saved from sin and death.

Pray that we would live all of life for Jesus, the world's rescuer promised from the very beginning.