***The Age of the Jews, No. 3

DS4A***

We are studying the age of the Jews. This is the time which goes from the call of Abram (later renamed Abraham by God) in Ur of the Chaldees to leave his country and go to a land that God had promised him, along with other specific promises. It goes until the death of Christ on the cross, plus the tribulation period. We've been looking at phase one of the age of the Jews which is the period of the Jewish patriarchs; or, as it is often called, the period of promise. Phase one deals with the promises which were made to Abram which are contained in that Abrahamic Covenant which we find in Genesis 12:1-3. In this covenant, the land of Palestine was promised to Abram and his descendants extending from the Euphrates to the Nile. This land was theirs forever. He was promised a seed so that he would become a great nation, and that he would exist as a nation forever. Also, he was promised great spiritual and material blessings which he and his descendants would also possess forever. This covenant, we pointed out, was unconditional. That means that there are no "ifs" about it. It is entirely dependent upon God for its fulfillment, and not upon the Jewish people.

Consequent to this promise, Abram left Ur of the Chaldees under the leadership of his father Terah who was still living, and thus was playing the role as head of the family, and they went as far as Heron. There they stayed until the father died (Genesis 11:31). Then Abram went on with the rest of the family to the Promised Land. While he was there he matured spiritually. His greatest concern was for an heir to fulfill the promises that God had made to him, particularly concerning his seed and being a great nation. He came up with a solution with his wife Sarai that resulted in the birth of Ishmael. So a problem was begun which the Jews live with to this day (the Arabs). However, Abram's worry was put to rest by God with a special vision in the form of promises, doctrines, and prophecies, in which he was to place his faith. In other words, he was to practice faith rest which was the measure of spirituality in the Old Testament time.

**Abraham**

Finally, when Abraham was 100 years old and his wife was 90 years old, the son of promise, Isaac, was born. How far had Abram progressed now? It was hard for him to send Ishmael away. He had become very attached to that boy. He kept pointing to Ishmael and asking God, "Lord, are you going to fulfill your promise to Ishmael?" God had to keep saying, "No, not through Ishmael." How far had Abram progressed? Well, the test came when Abraham was directed to take his son Isaac and to sacrifice him upon that altar.

There was one thing that is very significant that is said about Abraham as a father in Genesis 18:19 which tells us something about how he reared his firstborn eldest son. In Genesis 18:19, God is speaking concerning Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him." Many a father has restrained the hand of blessing upon his children because he did not fulfill his duties as a father to his children. He listened to a nagging wife who was off base and perhaps restraining the father's discipline on the children.

I could relate some case histories where I stood on the scene and watched some little kid who was so far out of line that it was going to take a good swift kick to ever get him back in the picture. The father would proceed to exercise discipline, and I've seen mothers who would speak up and say, "Oh, now Daddy, he's just a little boy." Well, I'm sad to say that those same little boys are big rats today. They are now big rats. I have cringed when I have seen women do that to their husbands. I don't even care if your husband is out of line. I don't care if he is perhaps overzealous in his discipline. You talk to him privately. However, you don't let anything undermine his authority in the eyes of those children.

Obviously Abraham exercise authority over Isaac. He was the source of value to this child because here this boy is a youth. Remember that when they walked up on Mount Moriah to perform the sacrifice, this kid was 16 years old. He could have beat up on his father like nobody's business. Remember that his father built the altar; put him on the altar; and, tied him up. Now this 16-year-old could have said, "Well, Dad, I've gone far enough, and a joke's a joke, and fun is fun, but that's all." He later saw the knife raised over his head, and he saw that knife heading down to plunge into his heart.

Abraham had developed a fantastic spiritual maturity structure. In the past, on one occasion, he had run as a scared rabbit to Egypt to get something to eat, and he hazarded the life and the virtue of his wife. On another occasion, he was willing to listen to his nagging wife and finally give in to her when he knew she was wrong. He brought grief upon himself and the world to this day. This very good man was now ready to sacrifice his own son, and this son was willing to let the father do it.

This speaks something fantastically marvelous about father and son. Abraham had done the job. He had taken the trouble to decide the routines of the life that Isaac would live. That's what you fathers sometimes don't do. You don't take the trouble to decide the routines that your children will engage in. One of the reasons we don't have some of these kids out attending youth club meetings is because parents do not tell them, "This is club meeting night, and there is no place you are going to be the face of the earth except right in club meeting." Any other organization or activity we have around here in which your children are engaged, when they're not on deck when they are supposed to be there, I know it's not their fault. We may get on the phone and try to encourage them to be out, but I know who's responsible. It is you fathers who are not acting in your responsible place to say to that kid, "This is where you're going to be. No ands, ifs, or buts."

Isaac had his life patterned by a father who was in touch with God's divine viewpoint. Abraham could have been selfish and muddled through: "Too much trouble. I'm too busy. I don't want to fight my wife. The kid screams. We let him do what he wants to do." Instead, Abraham performed his job, and the result was that his son responded at the moment when his very life was going to be taken. This boy was a joy to Abraham. However, the question was, did he love this boy more than the God who had given him this boy? That was the point. Did he love him more than the giver?

Do you have some material thing you enjoy? I know some of you do. I have seen many people who have certain things that have come into your life that you enjoy having. I've also seen you take it out on God because he was nice enough to give you that thing that you enjoy. Now you're no longer able to have time or interest to be here in Bible study and to be here in the worship that comes through the learning of the Word of God. Why? Because you have some toy with which God has blessed you, and you're out there enjoying your toy on the weekend. You have loved your material possession more than you loved the giver.

Now that's the point of this story about Abraham. This man is the father of this dispensation. He is the first one who's in charge of this dispensation. At this point, on Mount Moriah, he demonstrated, "I love this boy. He's a beautiful 16-year-old. He is a tremendously responsive boy. He is spiritually discerning. He's my helper; he's my friend; and, I love him dearly, and I'm going to kill him because God has told me to do it. I love God more than I love this boy." Abraham had made some progress--a lot more than a lot of parents today. There was no question of what he was to do.

Well, Abraham did have something in mind. His trust in God was so great. Hebrews 11:17-19 will tell you what Abraham was thinking at the time. Abraham thought, "I'm going to kill this boy on this altar." He expected to kill him. Then he expected to step back and see the boy come back to life. Abraham said, "I don't care if I do kill him. I have finally understood that God said that I'm going to have the promise through this son. If I kill him on this altar, God is going to raise him back to life. It makes no difference." He finally learned to believe God. That's what he had in mind. Meanwhile, Isaac had learned Ephesians 6:1: "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right."

Well, God stopped the sacrifice as you know. He provided a ram (Genesis 22:10-13). Isaac became the second patriarch. Sarah died at 127 years old (Genesis 23:1-2). Abraham remarried. He married a wife named Keturah (Genesis 25:1). Her children became the Midianites (Genesis 25:2-4). Remember that Moses found refuge among these Midianites, and married one of them name Zipporah (Exodus 2:15-20).

**Isaac**

Isaac was about 37 years old when Abraham decided that it was time for him to get married. He had been out to school. He had been out to all the universities. His father really wanted him to have a good education. He's 37 years old now. Finally, Isaac comes to his dad and says, "Daddy, I'm 37 years old. I'd like to get married." So finally, Abraham, who thoroughly enjoy him said, "Okay, I'll look into it." The first thing Abraham knew was that he was not going to give his boy one of these unbelieving Canaanite women no matter how slick and cute they were. Instead, he sent his trusted servant back to the family (to the household) of his brother Nahor, who in the meantime had become a believer (Genesis 24:1-10). That servant found Rebekah who was Isaac's right woman. He brought her to Canaan, and when Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah. It was love at first sight (Genesis 24:63-67).

One of the nice things about Rebekah was that she was a spiritually discerning woman. She had enough spiritual maturity when she got married. That's one reason she could recognize Isaac immediately as her right man. However, she also respected the spiritual heritage that Isaac had. She deeply entered into a respect for the heritage that her husband had spiritually. That was a smart woman. Immediately, it was a fantastic marriage. It was a marriage that was smooth and was bathed in love because the wife knew her place with her husband, and she knew enough to respect the heritage that she had come into with that man. The line of succession was now established with the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

Now the second patriarch is on the scene. In a short time, the first patriarch Abraham will be dead. Nineteen years went by before there were any children, and happily they did not seek a human viewpoint solution as their father Abraham had. Finally, twins were born. The twin boys were to continue the line of promise (Genesis 25:24-26). The first child was born reddish and hairy, so they called him Esau which means "hairy." Jacob was the name of the second child because when he was born, he was hanging on to his brother's heel, and they called him "supplanter" because this boy was destined to be the one through whom the promise was to flow--not the eldest son Esau. So the promise to Abraham was passed on to Isaac in Genesis 26:24. He became very prosperous, all by the grace of God, just as it is with you and me today.

**Jacob**

The third patriarch, which we want to take up now, was Jacob. Jacob was the unlikely choice if there ever was one. The Jews still refer to their origins and to their God as "the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." These are the three big names in the Jewish history and in the Jewish faith. Before Jacob and Esau were born, the mother noticed that there were some strange things occurring within the womb in the fact that literally the babies, yet unborn, were fighting. They were struggling and wrestling with one another (Genesis 25:22). When the children were born, the little tiny fat hand of Jacob grasped the heel of his older brother Esau in the moment of the process of birth. This was symbolic of the aggression which was to characterize Jacob toward his brother Esau who was, because he was the older brother, to be the heir of the promise.

In other words, the line was going to go: Abraham, Isaac, and Esau. That on every account was the way it was to go (Genesis 25:26). Because of the struggles within the womb; because of Jacob being born grasping his brothers heal; and, because of what God had already revealed, his mother Rebekah went to God and said, "How come I'm experiencing this." He told her, "What is happening is that within your womb are two nations. These two sons will both produce great nations, except there will be an inversion, and the one who is born first (the eldest) will not be the child of promise, but it will be the second one who will supplant him. Consequently, the second child was named Jacob which means "supplanter."

In other words, he was a chiseler and a crook from the very first breath he took. He was constantly lying and cheating and conniving how to get ahead without any regard for other people. Yet, this man, here in the patriarchal period of this dispensation was the man upon whom God had settled to be the heir of the Abrahamic promises. In time, the grace of God indeed did its marvelous work for Jacob, chiseler and crook that he was, as it has done it for us, and one day Jacob was absolutely overwhelmed by the grace of God upon him which you can read in Genesis 32:10. Well, these least twin boys were the answer to Isaac's prayer (Genesis 25:21). God had explained to Isaac and Rebekah the situation concerning these sons, and what would come in the future. However, certainly at the moment, they were delighted to have both of them.

Why should the younger son supplant the older? Well, the basic answer is that the sovereignty of God so decided. This was a command decision. Romans 9:11-13 indicates to us that this was the elective choice of almighty God. The Bible says that God hated Esau, but He loved Jacob. You have to understand that the word "hated" there means "preferred." God preferred Jacob, and he did not prefer Esau. As to why He did it, we can't go beyond the sovereign choice and decision of God. God was not unfair nor was he unrighteous, however, in this act of election (Romans 9:14).

**Esau**

When we look at these two brothers, Esau was in many ways of superior character to that of his brother Jacob. We never have Esau accused of lying and cheating. We find that Esau was very devoted to his father Isaac, and so he tried to please him (Genesis 25:28, Genesis 27:31, 38, Genesis 28:8-9). Even when Esau went to select a wife, he was looking in the realm of some of the girls that his father did not approve. When he found that his father did not approve, he cut them out, and he moved in a different direction that his father did approve as to where he should find a wife. Esau was easygoing, apparently, so consequently, it was easy for Jacob to take advantage of him and to cheat him out of his birthright and his blessing on that occasion when he was hungry in the field (Genesis 25:30-33, Genesis 27:35-36).

It seems that Esau was a very sensitive man, and consequently, he was very naturally deeply hurt by the deception that his mother and his brother had played on him which resulted in the loss of his position as number one heir in the family (Genesis 27:37-38). However, ultimately again, the character of Esau seems to be reflected in the fact that he forgave Jacob (Genesis 27:41, Genesis 33:4). God in his sovereignty has chosen according to His own divine decree. What He chose was not the person that, seemingly from human viewpoint, was more commendable, but the one that would have been the most unlikely chose if the choice were up to you and me.

The character of Jacob was reflected very early. Of course, as with most of us, what we do as children and as young people is the sort of thing that we will do when we are adults. That's why it is very important for parents to understand that when they see undesirable things in their children, they should exercise the judgment to weed those things out with whatever is necessary to weed them out. They need to call a halt to it and to put the skids on it. Unfortunately, unless parents are instructed in the Word of God and are responsive to the Word of God, they're often too oblivious to the very things that they see right under their noses that are taking place in their children when they're little, which should be red flag signals that this child is moving into a realm of adulthood where this is going to hurt his life.

Many of us have been around certain kids long enough through their early youth into their teenage years and out into their college years, and we can see the progression from what we once saw in them as little children. We can see the fruits that have been born of certain qualities now that they are adults. They are multiplied over, and they are many more times disastrous than when they were little and they could have easily been dealt with.

Apparently, Jacob did not get this kind of weeding out of problems in his life. Part of the reason was that it seems that Rebekah and Isaac, for some reason, strayed and drifted off from the Word of God sufficiently to create a family rift. Isaac favored Esau, and the mother Rebekah favored Jacob. So the parents were in conflict, and this is bound to cause trouble with the relationship of the children. This certainly contributed to Jacob's natural tendency of deception and trickery. In Genesis 27:6-17, we have the whole story of how his mother helped him to deceive his father. If you lead your children in deceiving one of the parents, you're going to find that they learn the lesson fast. It won't be too much trouble for them to proceed to be deceivers on their own.

So something had gone astray with Rebekah that she should now be willing to take her son and say, "Now son, I'm going to tell you how we're going to deceive the old man so that you can get the blessing because I like you better than I like Esau. You understand what the birthright means, don't you, Jacob. It means, first of all, you get to be the head of the family. You will be the next patriarch. That puts your name out there on the outside of the tent. Secondly, it means that you will be the priest in the family. You will be the one through whom God deals with all the rest of the family. Thirdly, it means that you get a double portion of the inheritance. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Jacob?" Jacob says, "Yeah, I'd like that." So they sat down and they made a conspiracy. This was right up Jacob's alley. The old chiseler knew how to learn his lessons fast.

Well, the consequence of this was that Esau hated Jacob, and Jacob, consequently, had to flee for his life. Isaac, of course, was grief-stricken over the deception that his beloved Rebekah had pulled off on him. He was grief-stricken over the loss of the birthright, which he could now not rescind, having given it to Jacob--the loss of the birthright to the son he favored, Esau. Jacob, in order to save his life, had to come all the way back to Heron so that he could live with his relatives--with his uncle Laban.

It was poetic justice that the mother who favored Jacob so much and made so much of him, and helped him pull off this conspiracy, never saw him again when he walked out the tent door. That was the last time she ever saw him this side of heaven. Genesis 27:41-43 tell us how she sent him off. Verse 44 says, "You just stay away for a few days, Jacob, until things cool off here." She thought the boy was just going to have to stay away for a while. However, by this time, Esau had had enough of it, and the turmoil within the family was so great that Jacob became a fugitive.

The first night as he was hustling off to Heron to escape from Esau, he met the Lord in a vision (Genesis 28:10-22). In this vision, God confirmed for Jacob the Abrahamic promise. He had transferred it from Abraham to Isaac. Now it was transferred from Isaac to Jacob. Furthermore, he received a personal promise in Genesis 28:15 of how God would take care of him through everything. So he spent 20 years at Heron with his uncle Laban who was also a crook--only a better crook than Jacob. Uncle Laban was a bane to Jacob's life for all the while he was there.

The first shady deal that Laban pulled off was when Jacob fell in love with Rachel. Rachel was probably his right woman. He went big for Rachel, and he said, "I'd like to marry Rachel." Uncle Laban said, "If you work for me for seven years, you can marry her." Jacob said, "Good deal. I not only love, but I like her. I'll take her." So they proceeded with their wedding ceremony. As was their custom, the bride was covered entirely with a veil, and they went through the ceremony. Then Jacob discovers to his horror that he has not married Rachel, but he has married Leah the older daughter because Uncle Laban had slipped in the other girl. When he lifted the veil, he expected to see the face of Rachel and being able to say, "Heaven is good." Instead, he lifted the veil and said, "Good heavens." The disaster hit him like a ton of bricks.

So he went to Laban and said, "That's a dirty trick you pulled. Laban said, "Well, you know how it is in this part of the country. That's the custom. We never marry off the younger girl before the older girl is married. You wanted to marry a girl, and you got the girl." So Jacob said, "I still want to marry Rachel." Laban said, "How long will you work?" Jacob said, "Another seven years." Laban said, "Wait a week, and we'll have another wedding." One week later, Jacob goes through the whole thing again. This time it was with the right bride. However, now he's got his right woman and his wrong woman living under one roof. That, of course, is going to prove quite a ball within itself.

This wasn't the only time that Laban outfoxed Jacob. He outfoxed him financially ten times, the Bible tells us (Genesis 31:7). Yet, through all these 20 years, God blessed Jacob. He became a man of great wealth. He ended up with four wives, eleven sons, and one daughter. However, the time finally came, at the end of 20 years, when God signaled to Jacob that he should now return back to Canaan. The conflict with his Uncle Laban caused him to decide to exit secretly. So off he went as a fugitive again in Genesis 31:20-21. When Laban discovered it, he rushed out after them because Jacob was his golden goose. Laban had been prospered also because Jacob was around. He wasn't too happy to see his golden goose run off with all those golden eggs, and he tried to stop him (Genesis 31:22-24, 55). They finally settled the fact, largely because the Lord spoke to Laban, and the Lord said, "Lay off, Laban. Let Jacob go."

So Jacob is now worried about facing Esau. It has been 20 years. Their mother is dead. Things have changed, and he's going back home. He wonders how he's going to approach this brother, so he sends an advanced party to announce his return (Genesis 32:3, 5). The messenger comes back and says, "Your brother Esau is coming out to meet you." Jacob says, "He is?" The messenger replies, "Yeah, with 400 soldiers." Jacob just about flips over. So he decides that what he better do is follow a tactical maneuver of dividing his party in two. He split them in two so that if one was hit, the other could escape, because he wasn't sure exactly what his brother was going to do and why he was coming out with that kind of a force.

However, Jacob had advanced enough in his spiritual life that he went back to the doctrine that God had revealed to him. In Genesis 32:9, he claims the promise of God--that God was going to take care of him. So Jacob cast himself on the Lord (Genesis 32:10-12). He made the decision to send out a series of gifts to his approaching brother Esau, and then he went to sleep (Genesis 32:13-15). That night, the Lord Jesus Christ comes on the scene, and Jacob spends the night physically in struggle with the pre-incarnate Christ in the human form in which he appeared (Genesis 32:24, 30). At daybreak, before he would let Christ go, Jacob demanded a blessing of Him, for he recognized that this was the angel of the Lord--the pre-incarnate Christ in the Old Testament (Genesis 32:26). It was really an act of divine viewpoint.

At that point his name was changed from Jacob (the chiseler, the cheat, and the supplanter) to Israel which means "he who strives with God." He was declared henceforth to be a prince of God (Genesis 32:28). That was quite a fantastic declaration--that this one who had been such a conniving cheat should now be declared a prince of God. So you see the grace of God worked in the Old Testament too. In the process of this combat of the wrestling, the Lord Jesus Christ touched one of the thigh muscles of Jacob and shortened it so that henceforth, for the rest of his life, Jacob walked with a limp (Genesis 32:25, 31-32). Since that day, the Jews have been called by the new name Israel, and their country today is called by this name Israel. It all happened that night, the night while he was waiting for the approach of his brother Esau in their meeting after 20 years.

Well, Jacob finally met Esau, and as you know, Esau welcomed him with both tears and affection (Genesis 33:4). It was certainly a classic example of Romans 8:28 of all things working together for good. So the Covenant of Promise was restated to Jacob under his new name Israel in Genesis 35:11-13. God thereby indicated that He had a plan for Jacob's life. He eventually had twelve sons. They became the next patriarchs--the twelve patriarchs. They were moving toward the heading up of the nation. The nation was now to be separated into twelve tribes. They were still a small number of people, but they were now well on their way to becoming the mighty nation that God had promised they would be--like the stars up in the sky.

Well, Jacob had a wife problem. He has his right women Rachel and his wrong woman Leah living under the same roof. In the ancient world, a woman's place of honor and esteem was measured in terms of the number of children that she bore her husband. For a woman to be barren was quite a disgrace. It was viewed as being under the judgment and disfavor of God. So here these two women are. Who was going to bear the first son so that that mother's son would become the heir of promise? That mother's son would be added to the notable names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Well, because of Leah's grief and because of the mean way in which she was treated by her sister Rachel, God elected to give Leah the first son. The first son born to Jacob was Reuben. Thus Leah, the ugly duckling (the unwanted wife) advanced to a position of honor above her sister Rachel. Leah hoped in this way to win the love of Jacob as having borne him the first son--the son who would be heir to the promise (Genesis 29:31-32). Leah followed with three more sons, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (Genesis 29:30-35). Then she bore no more children. In the meantime, Rachel remained barren. She was green with envy and nagging, nagging, nagging Jacob about this problem about her barrenness. Finally, he turned to her and said, "Why do you nag me? Am I God that I can solve this problem for you (Genesis 30:1-2)?" Consequently, the competition really heated up in that house. If you want to have some competition, this is the way to do it--to have the right woman and the wrong woman living under the same roof. So Rachel said, "I've got an idea. I will surpass my sister by getting my husband another wife. This seemed to be the custom in the old days--to get more wives for your husband to solve the problems. That's what Sarah did with Abraham.

So Rachel had a handmaid, and she gave this personal maid to Jacob as a wife. The idea was that Jacob would have children by this personal maid which would accrue to Rachel's credit. Well, when Leah saw that, she gave Jacob her handmaid. Here's poor Jacob, and he has four women in one house under one roof, and he's caught in the middle. Well, over seven years there were a total of ten sons and one daughter born (Genesis 30:3-21). These eleven children were born through Leah, through Bilhah, and through Zilpah. However, there is Rachel--still barren.

**Joseph**

However, finally, Genesis 30:22-24 tell us that Rachel bore her first child, the famous son Joseph. Because it was Rachel's son, Jacob also very naturally found that he favored Joseph among all of his sons. Joseph was about 7 years old when they left Heron to go back to the Promised Land. The favor of Jacob toward Joseph was evident to everybody (Genesis 33:2, Genesis 37:3). This showed by the fact that he gave Joseph the position of chief shepherd. The chief shepherd had a certain robe (or a tunic) with long flowing sleeves on it which was sort of a uniform that marked a position of honor. When Joseph came out to the field with his beautiful coat that his father had given him--a badge of authority--that was the living end relative to the rest of the brothers. Their envy, hatred, and bitterness finally led them to plotting against Joseph and his life (Genesis 37:4-5).

God's viewpoint on doctrine came to Joseph in two dreams. He was told that God's plan for him was to rule over his brothers. When he told his brothers that, they hated him worse than ever. Then he had another dream that indicated he was not only to become ruler over his brothers, but over his father and his mother. Then even his daddy Jacob rebuked him for that one. Finally, the hatred of the brothers mounted to such a degree that, as you know, they took him and sold him into slavery to a caravan which was on its way to Egypt (Genesis 37:26-27). In God's Providence and in God's sovereignty, this caravan was brought on the scene just at the right time. All of this was unfolding in spite of the evil of the brothers. All of this was unfolding--the plan that God had for the dispensation of the Jews.

So here's what the Jews had to do. The Jews had to go from being a small family group to becoming a vast nation. They had to do this someplace on the face of the earth. God knew that if they tried to do this within Canaan, there would be all kinds of problems for this people. One would be the constant temptation to mix their racial line with the Canaanites about them, who were not only heathen, but they were the most loathsome obscene creatures you'll ever find on the face of the earth. It was the Canaanites who practiced the fantastic worship of Baal, for example. This consisted, first of all, of a group orgy in front of a large nude female statue. Then there was a second stage of worship which was the furnace upon which the fat Buddha-like Baal sat which had openings into the furnace into which their children were thrown as human sacrifices because of the sensual exhilaration that they received from hearing the screams. Then the third stage was the phallus for auto-erotism and the self-degradation in the worship of Baal.

God is confronted with this people growing from a small family group into a nation with this sort of thing surrounding them and their children. Both these temptations--the evil that they would pick up, and the intermarriage with these people--posed a major problem. Now how is God going to solve it? He solved it by bringing this caravan which was run, incidentally, by people who were relatives--related to the Jews. He put Joseph in that caravan. He took Joseph to Egypt. As you know, as the story unraveled, he eventually brought all the family--70 souls--into Egypt as the result of Joseph's vision and insight from the revelations of God concerning the famine. So Jacob and all of the family (now with the youngest son Benjamin) were brought to Egypt. For 30 years, they were treated as honored guests in Egypt.

Then, just as God had for foretold to Abraham, the 30-year period came to an end; a new dynasty assumed the throne in Egypt; and, the Jewish people entered the period of slavery for 400 years--four generations. In the meantime, Jacob, after being in Egypt for 17 years had died. Finally Joseph died, but before he did, Joseph took an oath from the family that they would not put his body beneath the ground. He would be buried above ground in a sarcophagus which is just a very ornate box. The casket and the body are placed inside this ornate heavy box, and a heavy lid is put on top. It's an above-ground burial--sort of a vault.

For 400 years, that sarcophagus sat there as a testimony to the faith of Joseph because he said, "When the time comes that God has finished his purpose with us here in Egypt, and you start moving out back to our own land, I want you to take my bones with you. I don't know whether there were literally bones, because a man of the standing that Joseph had would have no doubt been embalmed in the highest fashion of the land, just as the pharaohs were. But whether his body decomposed or not, he referred to himself as his bones. Perhaps this was because he knew that after 400 years, that might be all that was left of him--just his bones.

The Jews suffered fantastic abuse under the whip of the slave masters. All this while, the parents would come and they would take the children by this sarcophagus, and they would say, "Do you see who this is? This is the former prime minister of Egypt. He was one of our own people, Joseph. When we leave, he's here aboveground because we're going to take him with us." Well, of course, as you know, that's exactly what happened.

In time, the slavery was brought to an end, and the nation had now grown from its 70 to two million people. But notice how they grew. They grew over in a segment of Egypt called Goshen. They were literally segregated from the Egyptians. The Egyptians wouldn't sit down and eat with an Israelite. Therefore, they had nothing to do with them. They were just using them as slaves. Consequently, they were segregated from the Egyptians, and they were furthermore segregated from the Canaanites. Consequently, God established the conditions for these people to evolve into a nation free of racial mixture and free of the contaminating spiritual influences of the Canaanites.

I think that it is also significant that it is the will of God that believers are to be segregated from unbelievers. That's a principle that you have in 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17-18. This is widely violated today. We are often told that this is a great honor to God that we pursue an intermingling and an inter-relationship with unbelievers.

**Moses**

Well, the day of national independence finally came for Israel. The Egyptians viewed the Israelites at first with fear. Then they viewed them with envy. Then Satan came into the picture and again attempted, with the whiplash of the overseers, to kill off the Jewish nation. That's why they were slaves. It was Satan's attempt to destroy them so that again Genesis 3:15 could not be fulfilled--the Christ child could not be born. So under Satan's influence, the Pharaoh systematically tried to destroy the Jewish people. They passed the genocide law which was in effect when Moses was born. That law declared that henceforth every male baby was to be killed. That was the issue that faced the parents of Moses when he was born--he who was to be the deliverer of this nation.

So with the birth of Moses, phase one of the dispensation of the Jews came to an end. Phase two was standing by in the wings, and we'll take that up next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971

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