

Chapter 14

Genesis 32-50

The Story so Far

God's response to the rebellion at Babel was to choose a man called Abraham. God graciously promised him three things: a land, a people, and a blessing. God was re-establishing His Kingdom through the family of Abraham – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. God tested His own Kingdom promises by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham obeyed God, but just before he was about to kill Isaac, God provided a substitute sacrifice in order to keep His Kingdom promises. God's promises to Abraham involved his children living in a foreign land as slaves for 400 years.

Objectives

- To show how Abraham's children end up in Egypt
- To see God's control of every circumstance

Connections

- God's promise of a Kingdom is connected to spending some time in Egypt as slaves

Summary

People make decisions because they want to, but God is so in control that even their decisions are part of God's plan.

A God who is Always in Control

A land, a people, and a blessing

Only part of God's contract has been fulfilled. God promised Abraham a land, a people and a blessing. So far we have only really seen the start of one of these promises. God gave Abraham a son called Isaac but we have still to see the numerous descendants from many nations. We also have still to see Abraham's descendants receive the land of Canaan. And finally we have still to see all the nations be blessed through Abraham.

The rest of the Bible is the completion of God's promises of a land, a people, and a blessing. The rest of Genesis focuses on the family line of Abraham and God's promise of the land.

God's promise of a land (Genesis 15:13-16)

God promises Abraham a land that his people will live in. But God also first tells Abraham that his people will be slaves for 400 years in another land. But how will the family of Abraham get to a foreign land where they will become slaves?

God's promise of a people (Genesis 25:21-26)

Isaac grows up and marries a woman called Rebekah. Isaac has twin boys. The first-born is called Esau – he is a bad person. The second son born is called Jacob – he is **very** bad. His name means “twister / deceiver”. Yet in the end God chooses Jacob and not Esau to be the next person in the family line of Abraham. Remember, it is from the family line of Abraham that the Rescuer-Ruler will come. Again, God's grace is at work. God chooses Jacob, not because of who he is, or what he does, but because of His grace. Another part of the Bible explains this very clearly for us:

“Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by Him who calls – she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For He says to Moses,

*‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’
(Romans 9:11-15).*

God chooses people not by who they are or what they do, but because of His grace.

The 12 tribes of Israel (Genesis 32:28; 35:22d-26)

God changes Jacob’s name to “Israel”. Israel becomes the name of the nation of people that God had promised Abraham. This is the Jewish nation today in the Middle East where all the fighting is. Jacob has 12 sons and their families become known as the “12 tribes of Israel”. The next person in the family tree of the Rescuer-Ruler is called Judah. However, the rest of the book of Genesis is not about Judah but about a son of Jacob’s called Joseph. It is through Joseph that God works out His plan of Abraham’s children becoming slaves in another land for 400 years.

Joseph’s journey to Egypt (Genesis 37:23-28)

Joseph’s brothers do not like him because he is Jacob’s favourite son. So the brothers decide one day to sell him as a slave to Egypt, but they go home and tell Israel (Jacob) that a wild animal has killed him. For many years Joseph lives in Egypt, and because God looks after him, he becomes the governor of the land of Egypt. He is second in command to Pharaoh the king.

The famine

(Genesis 41:25-27; 42:1-7; 45:3-7; 46:1-4, 26-27)

God then sends a famine to the lands of Egypt and Canaan. God gives the king of Egypt a dream in which He warns him about the coming famine. Joseph interprets the dream and tells Pharaoh to prepare for the famine. There are seven years of good crop and then a seven-year famine. During the seven-year famine Jacob sends Joseph’s brothers down to Egypt to get food. It is through their visit to Egypt that Joseph recognises them and after some time reveals his identity to them. Then Jacob and all his family go to live with Joseph in Egypt. This is how Abraham’s descendants move from Canaan to the land of Egypt. God’s plan is being accomplished.

God is working out His purposes (Genesis 45:5; 50:20)

The story of Joseph is about God the King remaining completely in control whilst human beings try to ruin His plans. Whilst people rebel against God's plans, God uses their bad decisions to bring about the rescue of people. God is a gracious God who is in control the whole time. He gets His way. His purposes are always accomplished even though people try to change His plans.

These two verses in Genesis highlight the lesson that God is in control despite people's bad decisions to ruin His plans. Who sends Joseph to Egypt? These verses give us two answers – Joseph's brothers send him, and God sends him. Joseph's brothers make a decision because they want to, but God is so in control that their decisions are already a part of God's plan to bring Joseph to Egypt.

The big picture

In the small picture God takes Joseph to Egypt to save many lives because of a famine. But in the big picture He guides Joseph to Egypt so as to fulfil His promise to Abraham. And therefore, God's purpose for His people in Egypt must have something to do with His Kingdom – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. But for now God's people are outside of His place...

People make decisions because they want to, but God is so in control that even their decisions are part of God's plan.

