

CHRIST: The Israel of God

Read Genesis 27-36 & Matthew 2.14-15 (w/Exodus 4.22-23); Romans 2.28-29; 9.6-8; Galatians 6.14-16

‘CHRIST IN GENESIS’: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS & SETTING THE CONTEXT

1/ I have told you from the beginning of this survey/summary study in Genesis that it has never been our intention to give any sort of detailed commentary on any lesson or section of Genesis we have studied. We have allotted ourselves fifteen weeks/lessons to give this survey of fifty chapters. So we have narrowed our focus down to **CHRIST IN GENESIS** – that is, pointing out and highlighting the most prominent [what we have called] [CHRIST-markers](#) as we have gone through the Book. AND, there have far more numerous and detailed CHRIST-markers than we have given attention to in those we have highlighted.

2/ CHRIST has been marked from the beginning to the end of Genesis by either: [1] **PRESENCE** of CHRIST; [2] **PURPOSE OF GOD** in CHRIST; [3] **PICTURES/Types** of CHRIST (or as we have called them: ‘Pre-enactments’); [4] **PROMISES/PROPHECIES** of CHRIST; [5] **‘PININGS’** for CHRIST (wistful and wishful ‘longing’ for a Redeemer to come [**Genesis 3.16; Luke 2.25, 38**]...chiefly from the failures of man to fulfill their hopes) .

3/ In order to catch us up from the beginning to where we are in this lesson, let’s just reiterate God’s original purpose and design for His creation: when God created the heavens and the earth, He purposed that the whole creation would be His Kingdom under His rule. He created Adam [and Eve] to populate [‘be plentiful, multiply, fill’] the earth with their offspring – all who would be taught to live according to God’s will, in obedience to His covenant with them, and to serve Him in all they did for His Glory. Of course, Adam was to reign as ‘king’ over God’s Kingdom under his sovereign rule, but, of course, he sinned and failed in that first and comprehensive commandment, and from that sin, all the corruption, misery, brokenness, sorrow, sickness, and eventual death have come upon us. Immediately after their sin, God promised a Redeemer would come from ‘the seed of the woman’ [**Genesis 3.16**], and that ‘seed of the woman’ is CHRIST. Thus began the scheme and history of redemption that is traced through the Scriptures, and especially the Old Testament, in what we call the *historical-redemptive progression* of CHRIST’s coming into the world. CHRIST would fulfill it all [**Matthew 5.17; Romans 15.8-13**] and redeem, not only God’s elect people, but indeed the whole creation [**Ephesians 1.7-10; Colossians 1.13-14**] – bringing in the New Creation. Now, in order for God to bring the incarnate CHRIST into the world, He must have a human lineage, ancestry, or family, to perpetuate that birth-lineage. So, from Adam, to Seth, to Noah, and then to Abraham, God committed and preserved His covenant promises to CHRIST in this covenant human ancestry – which would come to be called ‘**Israel**.’

4/ Which brings us now to the ‘Jacob story’ in the Book of Genesis – because Jacob is the third member of the patriarchal covenant family triumvirate ‘Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ AND, God will rename Jacob as ‘Israel’ [**Genesis 32.27-28 & 35.9-12**] when He re-affirmed His covenant nation Israel as the keepers of His covenant promises to be fulfilled in CHRIST.

5/ So, as I have already said, we have three lessons now to complete the rest of the CHRIST IN GENESIS story. So, we’re going to have to some even more serious summing up of the rest of the Book than we have in the lessons leading up to this one. THIS lesson alone is going to cover ten chapters [**chs 27-36**]. The next two lessons will cover the remainder of Genesis with the ‘Joseph-story’ narratives, since Joseph was the appointed ‘savior’ of the nation of Israel after they went to Egypt to escape the famine in Canaan [**ch 50.20**] – which Yahweh had also foretold [**ch 15.13-14**].

6/ So now you will understand why we’re going to cover the expansive amounts of text in these three remaining lessons. Here’s how I’m going to do it: I will break up these ten chapters into their narrative divisions, give a few sentences of the events that transpire in each of the divisions, and then point out the CHRIST-markers and connections as they relate to CHRIST and His eventual identity and fulfillment of each of these divisions. Let’s get started now with ‘the story of Jacob’...

I / ch 27 | Jacob receives the patriarchal covenant blessing from Isaac

1/ The record of Jacob's birth is in **ch 25.19-26**. Jacob has been a trickster from his birth. Although he and Esau are twins, and Esau was the first-born to come from the womb, Jacob followed Esau **'with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob'** [i.e. 'heel-grabber']. To take someone 'by the heel' has the significance of 'tripping from behind,' to be deceitful, to cheat, to take advantage of. Jacob lived up to his name throughout his life. However, Jacob is also an example of God's sovereign election – Yahweh chose Jacob to be the heir of the covenant and His historical human Messianic patriarch to carry the lineage from which CHRIST will come in the fullness of time [see **ch 25.23 & Romans 9.10-13**].

2/ Jacob had already manipulated Esau out of his 'birthright' by taking advantage of Esau's physical appetite [**ch 25.29-34 & Hebrews 12.15-17**], though Esau is also revealing his disdain for any spiritual values. Now Jacob and his mother, Rebekah, connive together against Isaac to secure the covenant blessing for Jacob. Esau receives his own lesser blessing, though it is not the covenant heir and promise blessing. Esau hates Jacob for his deceitful plotting against him and resolves to kill him at an opportune time. Rebekah counsels Jacob to flee for his life and go to her home town and family – Laban, her brother, in Haran [**we met Laban in ch 24**].

II / ch 28 | Jacob is sent [and goes] to Laban in Haran

1/ Isaac recognizes Yahweh's covenant purpose and choice of Jacob, so he sends him to Haran [Paddan-aram]. Jacob leaves Canaan. [Esau again disregards Yahweh's covenant values and intermarries among the daughters of Ishmael – see also **chs 26.34-35 & 27.46**].

2/ **vv 10-18** / We do need to give at least a more prominent mention to Jacob's dream he had on his way to Haran – because in this dream Yahweh appears to Jacob for the purpose of re-affirming His covenant Presence and covenant promises that He is now conferring on Jacob to keep. In this 'Covenant encounter,' Yahweh reiterates all the promises He has been giving first to Abraham and then to Isaac [**chs 12, 15, 17, 26**]. Jacob commits to keeping his covenant responsibilities. He has a lot more yet to learn, but the covenant connection between Yahweh and Jacob has now been confirmed.

III / ch 29.1-30 | Jacob marries Leah – then Rachel

Jacob arrives at Laban's in Haran, and after he had been there a month, Laban offered him offered him wages to stay on as a hired hand. Jacob asked Laban for Rachel in marriage as his wages and agreed to serve Laban for seven years to have her. Laban agreed, but at the end of the seven years, he secretly sneaked Leah, Rachel's older sister, into the 'honeymoon suite tent' under the cover of the darkness. Jacob discovered the 'bait and switch' in the morning and protested, infuriated. Laban then offered Rachel, his first choice [and Yahweh's covenant choice], for another seven years of service. Jacob gladly fulfilled those seven years also.

IV / chs 29.31 – 30.24 | Jacob fathers eleven sons [the tribes of Israel] – the 12th will come later

We now come to the births of what will become 'the twelve tribes of Israel.' Eleven sons [and other daughters] were born to Jacob over the course of the next few years. Those sons are named after the significances and circumstances of their births. Both Leah and Rachel had 'handmaids/personal servants,' and among the four of these wives/concubines, the sons are born: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Joseph. Only Joseph was born to Jacob's beloved Rachel, although there were sons born 'in Rachel's name' to her handmaid, Bilhah. Joseph will become Jacob's favorite son ... and will become the subject of the concluding narratives of Genesis [**chs 37-50**]. There were only eleven sons of the twelve born in this account because the 12th, Benjamin, will be born to Rebekah later on [**ch 35.16-20**]. See also **ch 35.22b-26** for a recounting of Jacob's twelve sons.

V / ch 30.25 – 31.55 | Jacob becomes prosperous – then leaves to return to Canaan

1/ After Joseph's birth, Jacob believes it is time for him to return to Canaan and begin fulfilling Yahweh's covenant purposes in the land He had promised them. He asks Laban if he can go back home. Laban asks Jacob what he wants for his 'severance' wages. Jacob asks Laban if he can have all the flocks of sheep

and goats that are imperfectly marked in some way: **‘speckled, spotted, black.’** Laban is glad to oblige this request. Laban separates all the imperfect stock and tells his sons to take them far away from Jacob. But then, by the sovereign hand of Yahweh, and through another deceitful manipulation of their breeding, lo and behold, all the offspring of the best and strongest of ‘Laban’s’ flocks – which would be given to Jacob – turned out to be **‘speckled, spotted, and black!’** **‘So the feebler would be Laban’s, and the stronger Jacob’s. Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys’** under Yahweh’s covenant blessing.

2/ There was such resentment from Laban and his sons, Jacob had to secretly ‘get out of Haran.’ **“And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee’ [ch 31.20].** Laban didn’t discover him missing for three days. He and his sons chased after Jacob and his clan. But Yahweh appeared to Laban in a dream [ch 31.24] and forbade him to harm Jacob in any way. They made a covenant between themselves in Mizpah that neither of them would make any kind of encroachment or aggression against the other. Yahweh was keeping His covenant word of promise: **“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” [ch 28.15].**

VI / chs 32-33 | Jacob prepares – and then meets – Esau...wrestles with God in the meantime

1/ Jacob and Esau haven’t seen or encountered each other for the past twenty years [ch 31.38, 41]. At that time, Esau had vowed he would kill Jacob, his brother [ch 27.41-45]. But now, Jacob sends messengers to Esau in Edom appealing for reconciliation and favor. The messengers return to report to Jacob that they have delivered his message to Esau, **“...and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.”** Of course, Jacob is terrified and panicked. This is when he realizes he has come to the end of himself, his own devious wit and resources. He needs Yahweh’s help! He is cast upon Yahweh’s covenant protection. He divides up his family and clan into camps so that if Esau attacks one, the other can escape.

2/ He then prays this memorable prayer in ch 32.9-12. We would do well to learn this prayer well and pray it often. That same night is when he wrestles with Yahweh [ch 32.24-29] and said, **“I will not let you go unless you bless me!”** Yahweh consents and blesses him: **“...for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”** Not that Jacob ‘beat’ Yahweh or ‘got the best of Him’ – Yahweh wasn’t crying ‘Uncle!’ – but Jacob **prevailed** in the sense that he finally surrendered, broken from trusting in himself...now he was confessing that all his blessing must come from the source of all blessing – from Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness. This ‘wrestling match with Yahweh’ is repeated in **Hosea 12.2-6** to call the then-faithless Judah [and us!] to return to this same covenant faithfulness and devotion to Yahweh.

3/ It is here also that Yahweh re-names Jacob as ‘Israel’: **“And He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ Then He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel...’”** This momentous historical event will be repeated again in ch 35.9-15.

4/ It is at this point that we have a most prominent and distinguished CHRIST-marker: because in the New Testament, CHRIST not only fulfilled all the promises made to Israel [Romans 15.8], but CHRIST Himself is now the New Israel in Himself. Think about this *historical-redemptive progression*: [1] Israel was Yahweh’s re-name of the patriarchal father of the twelve tribes of Israel; [2] Israel became the name of the covenant nation, although Paul makes it clear in Romans 2.28-29 and 9.6-8 that only those Israelites whose personal faith was in Yahweh were the true ‘Israel.’ So ‘Israel’ is made up of believing Israelites; [3] and in Exodus 4.22-23, Yahweh declared that Israel was His firstborn son ... in **Hosea 11.1**, Yahweh declares His love for Israel as his son and reminds them of His covenant relationship with Him: **“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my Son.”** And when CHRIST was born, Joseph and Mary had to flee to Egypt to escape Herod’s murderous search for the Child. After Herod died, and they returned to Nazareth, Matthew specifically says: **“This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Our of Egypt I called my Son’” [Matthew 2.13-15].** [4] So CHRIST and His believers who are IN CHRIST are now called **“the Israel of God” [Galatians 6.16].** CHRIST and His covenant believing people are now the **“chosen race...holy nation”** of Israel!

5/ That's why we have chosen to title this lesson 'CHRIST: The Israel of God.'

6/ **ch 33** / Jacob and Esau actually had a most reconciliatory re-meeting: they actually 'kissed and made up' with one another. Esau ended up returning back home to Edom while Jacob journeyed on Shechem in Canaan, where he bought a parcel of land to set up his housekeeping and residence.

VII / ch 34 | Jacob's daughter, Dinah, is defiled by Shechem, a Hivite – her brothers retaliate

1/ This taking up residence 'next door' to Shechem did not turn out well. The Shechemites were, after all, Hivites and Canaanites. Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite prince of the land, took a liking to Jacob's daughter, Dinah. However, Dinah herself also seems to have had a misplaced curiosity for the Canaanite women when she "...went out to see the women of the land." Shechem ended up raping Dinah, though he professed having love for her. Shechem asked his father, Hamor, to "Get me this girl for my wife." Of course, Jacob was devastated – his sons, Dinah's brothers, were enraged. When Hamor came to them to try to negotiate an intermarriage, the sons of Jacob proposed an agreement: if the men of Shechem would agree to their covenant sign of circumcision, they would agree to the intermarriage. This was a ploy because when the men of Shechem agreed to the circumcision, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, then attacked them on the third day after their circumcision "when they were sore" and couldn't fight back. They massacred all the males and plundered their city as vengeance for what they had done to Dinah.

2/ Now Jacob begins to fear that his residency in Canaan is severely jeopardized and compromised. If everyone allies with one another and attack him, he is sorely out-numbered. And, if he is destroyed, so is the covenant promise and the surety of its being fulfilled. Of course, Yahweh will not permit it to fail...

VIII / ch 35 | Jacob is re-named 'Israel' – Rachel gives birth to the 12th son – Isaac dies

1/ God appeared to Jacob again to once again re-affirm and confirm His covenant purposes for Jacob / Israel. God tells Jacob to leave Shechem and return to Bethel where He had first appeared to him when he was fleeing Esau to go to Laban in Haran [see ch 28]. "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." What Yahweh wants to do is take Jacob/Israel back to Bethel as a reminder of His own faithfulness to His covenant promises ... and also to remind Jacob/Israel that he must trust Yahweh to fulfill His promises like his fathers Abraham and Isaac before him.

2/ **vv 9-12** / This is a repetition and reiteration of what Yahweh had promised Jacob back in **ch 28.13-15**. This may be a flashback to that first event, or it may also be another 'Covenant encounter' to make it doubly-sure to Jacob/Israel. Either way, that was the effect. Jacob received and recognized his covenant re-naming and re-committed himself to fulfill his covenant responsibilities.

3/ **vv 16-20** / It is here that Rachel's second son [Jacob's 12th] was born. Rachel died during the delivery, but as she was dying, she named him Ben-oni [son of my sorrow]; but Jacob re-named him Benjamin [son of my right hand]. Thus completes the roster of what would become the twelve tribes of Israel.

4/ **vv 27-29** / What will be added as a kind of footnote is that Isaac dies at the age of 180 years, and Jacob and Esau cooperated to bury him along with Abraham and Sarah in Machpelah [see **ch 49.30-32**].

IX / ch 36 | A brief history ['toledot'] of Esau and the Edomites – just for the record

"These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom)." [As we have explained before](#), this phrase 'these are the generations of' is a *toledot* [pronounced 'tohl-dah']. There are ten of these in Genesis – this is the ninth. They are 'short stories' that are collected together to explain 'what came from' or 'what became of' whoever the subject of the *toledot* is. And since Esau has been introduced into the narrative stream, the narrator is giving the account of what became of his descendants. The 10th *toledot* is coming up in our next lesson [ch 37.2].

"For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule [The Cross of CHRIST], peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" [Galatians 6.15-16]