



[3]SAPLING

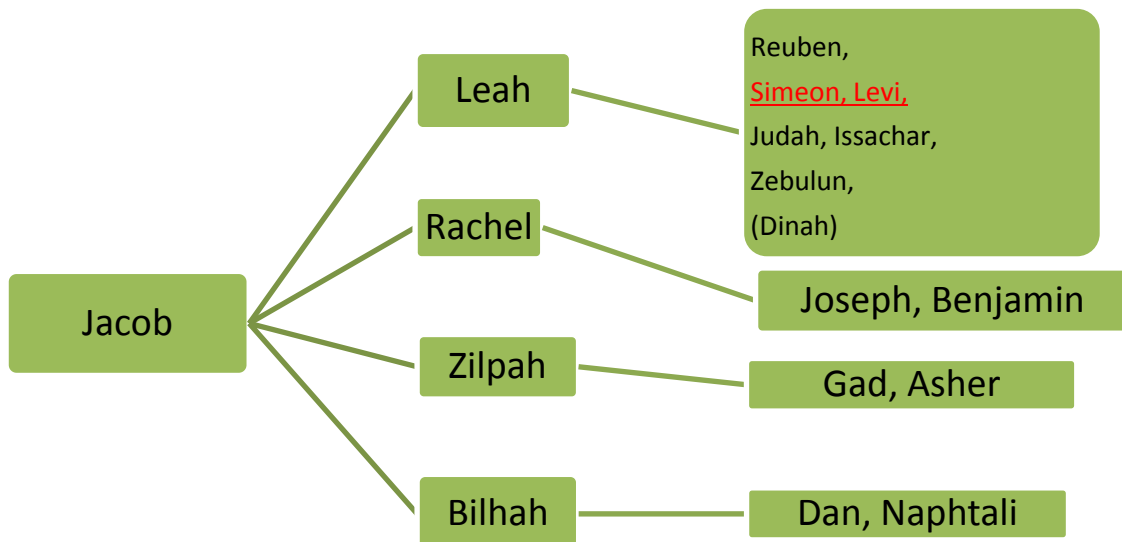
I have a dream

Sermon – Melville Junction

Dean Donaldson – 23 May 2010



- Last week we learnt a few lessons from the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob)
- God is forming a people through which to restore shalom between God and man.
- We see that God has promised 3 things, descendants, land and the blessing of all nations through this family line.
- The way of this covenant is to trust and obey God...
- We looked at inheritance of the land and how it applies to our lives.
- This week I want to look at the nations being blessed through this family line focusing on Joseph and how it applies to us (the church) today.
- Before I get into the story of Joseph, I want to take us on a detour and pick up this story from where we left off last week.
- So we see that Jacob has now got a large family and is returning to the land that God promised them.



- On his way to Bethel (Jacobs' ladder dream) he settles down outside the town of Shechem.
- He buys a field and seems to have been living there for some time now. **(Genesis 34)**
- I am going to paraphrase bits so go home and read the whole story for yourselves.

¹Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ²When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. ³He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife." ⁵Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in. ⁶Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. ⁸But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. ⁹"Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰"Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it." ¹¹Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favour in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me.

- Dinah goes out to hang with the Canaanite women in the town of Shechem, she is raped by the prince.
- This is an offense to her brothers and family, not because of the rape... as it would be today. So we need to get our heads around that to fully understand what is going on here. As wrong as it was, it is not that that the brothers take offence to.
- They are offended because he treats their sister like a prostitute, sleeps with her and then wants to pay for her...
- An uncircumcised man defiling their sister, bringing dishonour to the family.
- But this prince really professes his love for her, he has apologised and is willing to do anything to make it right.
- Here is a story in the bible that can be so difficult to understand because of the nature of the offense but try to bear with me.
- Here is a people (Jacobs family) that have offended God in so many ways but have experienced the grace of God - now they are in a position to return that grace.
- What do they do?
- They say that it is not right for us to intermarry with you unless you get circumcised...
- They allow them to enter the covenant relationship that God made with Abraham and for some strange reason these grown men all agree to it.
- Can you imagine a whole village agreeing to go through something like that just so the prince can marry some foreign woman?
- They offered them the freedom to trade and go freely in the land and were delighted at the prospect of being blessed by the wealth of Jacobs's family.
- Here was the perfect opportunity for a nation of the earth to be blessed through the descendants of Jacob.
- But Simeon & Levi cheated the people of Shechem through the covenant sign of circumcision and when the men were weak on the third day after the circumcision. Simeon and Levi took advantage of the situation and killed every man in the village.

- They use the promise of God – as bait to butcher an entire village.
- They loot the village, take all the possessions which included the women and children.
- Is this a righteous act of God, are their actions justified?
- What has changed, we (the church) are the people of God.
- God wants the nations of the world to be blessed through his church but there are some horrific stories out there.
- The Spanish Inquisition – They would torture a non believer to confess that Jesus Christ is lord and then kill that person under the belief that it was better to be saved for eternity.
- When I was in Rwanda, I visited the genocide museum. There are 2 stories about priests who invited people into the church for safety, when the churches were full the priest locked the doors and had everybody inside massacred. 5000 in one church and 10,000 people in the other.
- We have been entrusted with something so special to God, we are to make God known to the nations around us.
- **1 John 4** says that through our love of one another we make God known because God is love...
- We run a course here at Melville Junction called Ch-ese, this aims at sharing the gospel with non believers in an open non-threatening environment.
- We ask these people up front what they don't like about the church – (this session is called **stinky cheese** we serve **Gorgonzola** on that night);
 - Hypocrisy
 - ill treatment of people
 - lack of relevance
 - nothing real there etc
 - The church does more harm than good.
- The thing that worries me the most about those comments is that these **people see God in this way because that is how they see His people.**
- **Us**
- **Have you ever taken time to think about that?**
- The **way you live** affects the way people **see God.**
- In this story, Levi **and Simeon's lust for revenge** ended up completely undoing what God's purposes are for this family.
- **Jacob is angry with his sons** and says that they have made Jacob **a stench to the Canaanites.**
- Do the **things we do** - the way **we treat people** bring a **stench** to the church?
- To the bride of Jesus.
- The thing that is worth noting is that nowhere in this passage is **the name of God mentioned.**
- **It is the people of God acting outside of God.**

- **The story of Joseph**
- Joseph has a dream that his brothers and parents would bow down to him one day.
- The brothers don't like it and plot to kill him.
- Instead of killing him they sell him as a slave...he goes to Egypt and becomes Potiphars slave. Potiphar is the captain of the guard.
- Joseph excels because of Gods favour; he gets put in charge of Potiphars whole house hold.
- Potiphars wife tries to seduce Joseph – Joseph refuses because his master has entrusted him with everything except his wife. (similar to Adam)
- She accuses him and he gets sent to prison.
- In prison he excels because God shows him kindness and is put in charge of all those in the prison.
- One day 2 servants of the Pharaoh are placed in the prison, they have dreams that nobody can interpret and Joseph says **don't interpretations belong to God...**
- Joseph interprets the dreams correctly...and 2 years later when pharaoh has a dream which no one can interpret the **cup bearer remembers Joseph...**
- Let's pick up the story in **Genesis 41:15-17**

¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶ "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." ¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, ¹⁸ when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹ After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹ But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

- Joseph gets the interpretation and is put in charge of the whole of Egypt to help them prepare for the seven years of drought that are coming after the seven years of abundance.
- They store away so much food that they cannot keep record of all of it...but then the famine hits and all the known world comes to Egypt for food including Josephs brothers from the promised land.
- Joseph's brothers are forced to settle in Egypt because of the drought – they are brought out of the land of the promise to come and bow down to their brother.
- It's an interesting story, after everything that has been done to Joseph he forgives his brothers and they live in harmony with each other.
- The entire known world has been saved through one man; all nations of the earth are blessed through the line of Abraham.
- What can we learn from the character of Joseph in these stories?

- Joseph and his dream (17yrs) – impulsive, gloating about being superior...
- Joseph and Potiphars wife – honouring his master.
- Giving God the credit...
- Forgiving his brothers...
- At the end of Genesis, Jacob blesses his sons...
- The land of their inheritance is divided up to the various brothers...the tribes of Israel.
- All of them get a piece of the land except Simeon and Levi because of their violence – they get cursed and don't share in the division of the land.
- If we put these 2 stories next to each other we see a pattern:
- Levi and Simeon take the **position of self righteousness – the higher moral ground** and base it on the **legality around being the people of God**. Their actions exclude God and bring death and destruction...(hypocrites)
- Joseph is **humble**, he **defers to God with his lips** and **his actions bring life and healing**...the whole world is blessed because of him.
- We can learn from this, less **talking about the moral high ground...our position in God and more doing the things of God and giving him the credit**.
- Let me end with quite a common example...the **abortion/free choice debate**.
- As a follower of Jesus do we: a) demonstrate against abortion...and maybe shoot those responsible for performing abortions.
- Or do we: b) make a way possible for woman to choose life...by opening our homes, paying medical bills, education, places of safety etc.
- **I am going to leave us hanging there**...think about it because these two options can spill over into every aspect of our lives.
- Pray