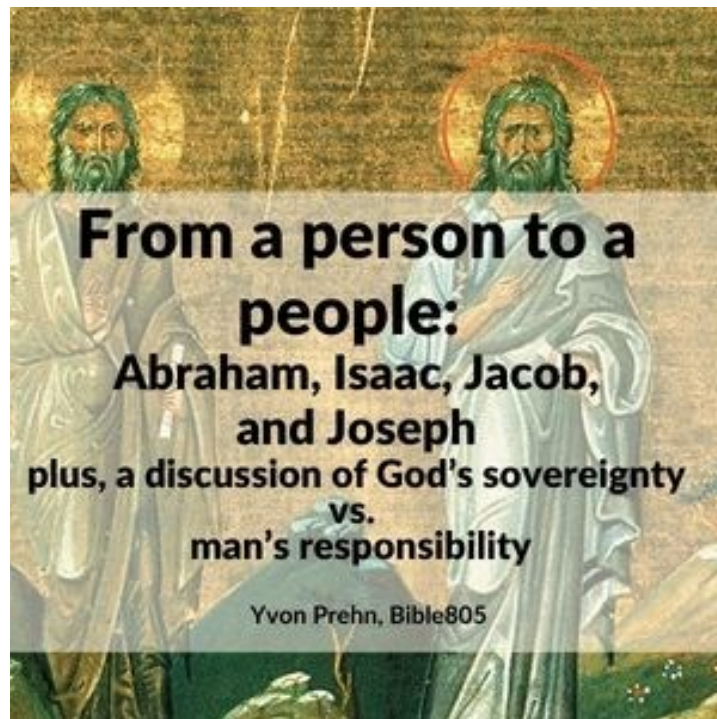


Handouts

Including

Notes, Chart, & Questions

for



How did the Jewish people become a nation?

- *Did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph have any say in being the founding fathers or were they predestined to do all they did?*
- *And what about us? What is God in control of and what are we responsible for?*
- *We'll answer these questions and more in our lesson today.*

From a person to a people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph plus, a discussion of God's sovereignty vs. man's responsibility

Yvon Prehn, Bible805

Your Notes

So much more going on here than first apparent

- These chapters are not just a retelling of a family history or Bible stories that you may have heard growing up—about Joseph and his coat of many colors, Jacob and angels, the family of Jacob moving to Egypt and later becoming enslaved there, the setting for the story of the Exodus in the Bible or the movie, the 10 Commandments, which more people are familiar with.
- We are going to step back and look at the story of how from one man comes a nation of God's chosen people, to whom He would give his Word, and from whom the Messiah would come.
- ***The bigger picture we will also look at is the interplay of the Sovereignty of God, where He is in control of everything, and human free will where we are free to make choices.***
- We'll attempt to understand how our choices fit in with God, sovereignty, or ultimate control, fits in with the choices we make.
- We'll explore if our choices truly free or if our every action is determined like a puppets, and what is our accountability.

Review and Overview

- **First part of Genesis 1-11**
- **Four major EVENTS that involved all of humanity**
- Creation, Fall, Flood, Confusion of language at Babel
- **Second part of Genesis 12-50**
- **Four major PERSONS that narrow the focus from an individual to a nation**
- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

1 more intro comment:

God's focus on Israel doesn't mean forgetting the rest of humanity

- The remainder of the OT focuses on the nation of Israel, which we will see formed in this lesson.
- To emphasize, that does not mean God does not care about or is not working in the rest of the world.
- We saw how Job, who was not a Jew, was commended for his faith in God; later in Genesis we have the story of Melchizedek who was called "priest of the most-high God" blessing Abraham after his battle to rescue Lot.
- Who was he? We have no idea, though he is talked about in Hebrews 7 as a picture of the coming Jesus as high priest.
- There will be additional stories throughout the OT about those outside the Jewish faith who come to know the true God or who already know Him.
- What we are told aside, Romans 1 in the New Testament reiterates that all people innately know about God and are accountable to him.
- But to tell the Biblical story clearly to the world, God chose one people and how they humanly began is what we will focus on in this lesson.

To help us understand the connection between God's sovereignty and human free will in the lives of these characters (and ours)

- We need to understand all the stories in the Bible (and all of human history) have TWO plot lines:
- They have the same destination; different paths to get there—

- LINE #1: God's plan – ultimately salvation for all the earth, a renewed heaven and earth and God once again walking with His people as it was in Eden.

-
- Line #2: Human lives that carried out and are part His plan.



How they work together

(credit to Rick Warren for this analogy, the overall big picture, details mine, I don't want to blame him for my conclusions)

- God's overall plan is like an ocean liner—the direction is certain; the route is set.
- The Captain is in charge.
- It's his ship, HIS word is law.
- **But within the ship the passengers given quite a bit of freedom.**
- Individual actions do not affect the final outcome—that is determined by the captain—but

Individual decisions greatly affect the traveler's time on the ship

- There is a crew with assigned tasks and if they don't do them, things don't go well.
- Also, each passenger responsible for his or her actions, his or her attitude and based on that, what they get or don't get out of the trip.
- There is individual freedom whether they are a helpful part of the crew or pleasant passenger, a dead weight, a bore or someone thrown in the brig.
- They can't change the destination of the ship, but their actions greatly affect their experience of the journey, and often the experience of those around them.
- And they may get removed from the ship before it reaches the final port if they aren't acknowledging the Captain as the one running the ship.

Not a perfect analogy, but useful

- God will work out his plan of salvation for the world—that's the destination of ocean liner **Earth**.
- To work with him in doing that, he chose a people, Israel in OT, (carried on by the church in the NT) you might say as His crew with these responsibilities:
- **Entrusted with his Word**
 - Spoken by his prophets, verified by signs and prophecies, recorded and passed down faithfully. To be believed and lived.
- **Model his Worship**
 - Which we will see formed in our next section of the Bible, Exodus-Deuteronomy.
- **To be his Witness**
 - When they followed orders which He clearly spelled out, they were blessed, when they didn't, they were disciplined. . . .
 - Which is the plot line of the rest of the Old Testament.
- **Watch for how the plot lines of both intertwine as we go through the Old Testament—there are a lot of crazy detours and corrections, storms and times of calm, but ultimately, no matter how much Israel messed up, they kept God's Word and worshipping Him and "when the time is right" the prophesied Savior will come into the world.**

Where our story happens

- Abraham now settled in the land of Canaan.
- Never forget the importance of true history taking place in identifiable geography.
- You can visit today all the places we will talk about.
- There is a reason our Bibles have MAPs—because it contains true history in real

places—The writings of many other religions do not.

The characters who formed God's chosen people

- The Founding Fathers of the Jewish people, are often described in summary as “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”
- Joseph is also a key person as he was responsible for bring Jacob's family to Egypt to save the nation from starvation.
- And provide them with an isolated area where they could grow into a nation.
- It all started with Abraham and so let's do a quick review of his life before continuing.

Review of Abraham's life

- God calls him out of Ur, then Haran, promises to give him the land and a heritage and says, in Gen. 17: “My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you.”
- Sarah is important also in God's plan—we see God's intervention on the behalf of women throughout the Bible.
- He and Sarah, lost faith, got impatient and had a son with Hagar and the result of Ishmael remains a problem throughout history.
- Finally, Isaac is born to Sarah; Ishmael sent away. Abraham tested and passes the ultimate test to sacrifice his son.
- Sarah dies, Abraham remarries and has many other sons, who he sends away with gifts.

Genesis now shifts to a focus on Isaac

- Abraham sends his servant to get a wife for his son back to his family near Haran.
- Servant asks for God's help; Rebekah appears and offers to water his camels.
- The servant asks that she return with him, her father and brothers see his wealth and she agrees to go.
- The brother here is Laban, her son Jacob's future father-in-law.

Application regarding Rebekah

- From a shepherdess with nothing special in her life, she leaves her home to become the wife of a very wealthy man, who would love her greatly.
- And she will become the mother of a great nation.
- It all starting with her kindness to a stranger.
- **Application: Always do your best even in the “little” things because you never know who might be watching or what it might lead to.**
- At the last judgement (Matt. 25) remember those commended by Jesus for something so simple as, *“I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink.”*
- Little things are seldom “little” or “simple” to the one receiving them, and Jesus promises an eternal reward for those who do them and says it is like doing it for Him.

Focus on Isaac

- We know the least about him of the Patriarchs.
- Married when 40, but for 20 years no children.
- To their credit, Isaac and Rebekah did not attempt the solution of Hagar.
- Finally, Rebekah becomes pregnant, “the babies ‘jostled each other’” and when she asked why—
- Gen 25: And the Lord said to her, *“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”*
- **When God says something, he does not change his mind and we need to remember it.**

Though twins they were very Different Children

- Esau-hairy, loved the outdoors, hunting, Father's favorite.

- Jacob, obviously mother’s favorite, liked to cook....
- Esau comes home hungry one day and sells his birthright for some stew.
- Bible says, Esau “despised his birthright.”
- It’s used as an example of a very foolish thing to do because.....

Application

- Some things cannot be undone.
- *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.*
Hebrews 12:15-17 (ESV)
- Forgiveness is always possible; but decisions and actions have consequences.
- Later when Children of Israel refuse at first to go into the Promised Land, they were forgiven, but still had to wander for 40 years.
- God can still use the biggest mistakes of our lives—but we may suffer greatly in spite of His mercy.
- Application always – warn those you love– for yourself – there is always time to stop, think, and pray before you do something impulsive and wrong—both in big and little areas of life.

We have a more encouraging example of how to fight temptation when hungry

- *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”*
Matthew 4:1-4
- And Jesus wasn’t just hungry, he was starving and
“When starving, you can feel your body consuming itself.”
- C.S. Lewis—the limits of temptation only felt by those who resisted to the upmost and most of us give in far too soon.
- **Application: don’t focus on your hunger (whatever it might be) but on God’s Word applied to your situation. Memorize it; think of situations ahead of time. Pray.**

Isaac and God’s Covenant

- God’s personal Promise to Isaac didn’t come until a time of testing when there was a famine in the land and as was typical, he was apparently heading down to Egypt.....
- *Genesis 26: 2-5 God appeared to him and said, “Don’t go down to Egypt; stay where I tell you. Stay here in this land and I’ll be with you and bless you. I’m giving you and your children all these lands, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. I’ll make your descendants as many as the stars in the sky and give them all these lands. All the nations of the Earth will get a blessing for themselves through your descendants. And why? Because Abraham obeyed my summons and kept my charge—my commands, my guidelines, my teachings.”*

⁶So Isaac stayed put in Gerar.

- But then he sinned telling the King in Gerar that Rebekah was his sister and God once again rescued her.

Isaac lives a relatively uneventful life

- Digs a wall, get chased from it, does it again, happens several times until he makes peace.
- Apparently a quiet and thoughtful man.
- Esau marries 2 pagan women; does not go well— “a source of grief”
- Time to bless EsauIsaac asks Esau to bring meat so he can give the blessing

to his first son, **but God told him not to do that because Jacob was to be the preeminent son**

- Jacob with his mother's help steals this blessing in addition to having taken the birthright Esau threw away years earlier.

Before specifics, you need to understand the nature of "blessings/curses" in the Bible

- Most times when the word "blessing" is used in the Bible, it has the idea of happy things, good things, what we call "blessings" coming.
- **But it also has the idea of a prophecy, of something that will come about in the future.**
- Particularly in the passage at the end of Genesis c 49, there is a section titled "Isaac blesses his sons" where it then goes on to say some things we would not consider "blessings," as some seem rather harsh and some quite ordinary. All describe his sons and what they are and what future they will have.
- These "blessings" are more of what some call "insightful prayers," prophecies of that will happen similar to Noah's "blessing" in Gen. 9, more of a prophecy of what would and did happen to the descendants of his sons.
- The "blessing" of Jacob and Esau falls into this category and was foreordained by God at their birth, when God said, "the elder will serve the younger."

Isaac's blessing to Jacob and to Esau

- To Jacob:
- **May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."**

Genesis 27:29 (NIV)

- To Esau:
- **Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above.
You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother.
But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck."**

Genesis 27:39-40 (NIV)

- Both came true.

History of Edom/Esau

- After receiving the secondary blessing, Esau threatens to kill his brother—they reconcile after many years, but always there are bad relations between Israel and Esau's descendants which become the nation of Edom.
- Edom will later refuse Israel passage after the Exodus, be defeated by Saul and David, be cruel to Israel when it was conquered and finally in Obadiah, they are rebuked and judgement passed on them:
- **You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. . . As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. . . . Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the Lord's.**
- **Application: NEVER gloat over God's judgement of others—it is always God's choice of who is to be honored or judged.**

Interesting trivia....in later history, Edom's traditional lands, are the same area as Petra (movie Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade)

- The Maccabee's controlled the area after Alexander's time.
- Area also called Idumea and was the home of Herod the Great; His father was an Edomite.
- The ruins we see today are from the 2nd to 1st century BC—later than most

Biblical stories, but the land, the red rocks, the mountains—the same.

- Never a great nation, never excelled over Israel.

Back to Jacob

- Flees to his uncle Laban in Haran
- Stops on the way and a most unusual dream, angels ascending and descending to heaven (“Jacob’s Ladder” of the spiritual).
- **God appears and gives him the covenant in Gen. 28:13-15, promises him the land, that “all people would be blessed through him” and that God would watch over him and bring him back to the land.**
- He goes to Laban, falls in love with his daughter Rachel.
- Works for her 7 years and is given Leah and then Rachel, but that isn’t all.

Rivalry between the sisters results in the same old story.

- Old story..... Leah has four sons, Rachel initially barren, Rachel gives Jacob her maidservant, Bilhah to have children by her.
- Leah gives Jacob Zilpah to have children with.
- Finally, Rachel has Joseph and later Benjamin.
- Totaling 12 sons, which become the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Though it gets a little complicated later because Joseph’s two sons were adopted by Jacob as his and are listed as “Half-tribes”, but also in some listings, Levi later isn’t listed as this tribe was scattered throughout the land as God’s servants.
- Not a happy family, but the sons (except for Joseph) seem to get along.
- They are very wealthy and he returns to Canaan.

But before arrives another extraordinary encounter,

- Where he wrestles with God and given a new name, Israel, “Prince of God.” Or one who “wrestles with God, strives with God and succeeds, or who turns the face of God.”
- Regardless, quite a growth from the schemer he was early in life.
- *In the end, Jacob does what we all must do. He confronts his failures, his weaknesses, his sins, all the things that are hurting him . . . and faces God. Jacob wrestled with God all night. It was an exhausting struggle that left him crippled. It was only after he came to grips with God and ceased his struggling, realizing that he could not go on without Him, that he received God’s blessing (Genesis 32:29)*
- From: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jacob-wrestling-with-God.html>
- **PEOPLE can change and do at any age.**
- **God wants you to become conformed to the image of Christ—you are an eternal soul and never too old to make progress.**

After settling back in Canaan, Joseph becomes the favored son of Jacob

- Joseph had a special calling from God, but instead of reacting with humility, he brags about it and his brothers hate him for it.
- They sell him as a slave to Ishmaelites who take him to Egypt.
- He was 16-17 when he was sold into Egypt and.....
 - First Potiphar's house; resists temptation and unjustly put into prison.
 - Grows into a man of deep faith, who gives glory to God in his reactions to the Baker and Cupbearer.
 - But must wait 2 more years before his release.
- He was 30 when he was made a ruler in Egypt.
- He was 39 when his brothers first came to Egypt (second year of the famine, or nine years after being made ruler).
- He was probably 41 or so when the brothers came a second time and Jacob comes to Egypt.
- Puts brothers through various tests—for them to deal with and confess sin.

Joseph's final words on his family history

- *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. Genesis 50:20-21*
- Twisted, evil actions brought this about, but God made good of it.
- They will stay in Egypt for 400 years, but you may be wondering.....

Why ok for Israel to go to Egypt?

- When they weren't supposed to go there before.
- **But remember God told Abraham:**
- ***Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there." Genesis 15:13***
- God gave Jacob permission to go to Egypt where 70 people became about 3 million.
- They were isolated, did not intermarry or serve Egyptian gods.
- **Applications: #1 Always listen for *current directions*.**
- **#2 Being part of God's will sometimes means isolation (Noah, "God shut him in," Joseph, Moses in Midian for 40 years), isolation often a time of preparation and growth.**

And so the ship of God's plan has completed one part of the journey

- From Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—from these individuals we now have a nation.
- Sometimes they did great things, sometimes very bad things.
- Tested, blessed, suffered and rejoiced, sometimes because of their actions; sometimes because God gave blessings or trials
- As Heb.11:13 puts it *"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth."*
- No one of them could see the whole plan, but they trusted God and His will was accomplished.

What do we learn from their lives on the balance of God's sovereignty and our responsibility

- The Patriarchal families are men and women we honor, but their lives were far from smooth sailing—and usually their problems were caused by what they did.
- Abraham brought untold misery into his family and down to the wars of today by not waiting on God and having a child by Hagar; Isaac caused strife between his sons by not obeying God's decision on who should be first from the time the boys were born and attempting to make a son first who God rejected; Joseph acted arrogantly; his brothers sinned terribly by selling him as a slave.
- ***Yet no matter how they messed up on the decks, God is the captain of the ship, and it traveled forward to His destination.***
- The family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made it safely to Egypt where they would grow into a great nation.
- Because God never let go of the helm.

Additional applications on the balance of sovereignty and free will

- Knowing God has us tightly in his grip and all of life is under His control, knowing the ship of our life will make it safely home should give us great peace and encouragement.
- What it SHOULD NOT give us is complacency.
- The Bible is VERY CLEAR that we are responsible for how we act, what we do with the gifts and opportunities God gives us and that there are consequences

seen and unseen, temporal and eternal.

- Jacob a great example of one who began as a schemer, deceiver and who through times believing God, working very hard, responding to his commands, and ultimately wrestling with God finally becomes Israel, the one who struggled with God, who is now called “Prince of God.”
- Always chances to begin again, to do better.

As we look at their lives, where are you on your journey?

- Maybe you are having a great time and the trip is going great.
- Perhaps you are at a little seasick; perhaps you are tired of the journey.
- Maybe you are working hard below decks when it seems like others do nothing but lounge in the sun.
- Maybe your voyage is pleasant, perhaps it is sad, but wherever you are if you are alive, your journey isn’t over, as this last story reminds us....

One final story to remember in life’s journey (anonymous)

- An old missionary had spent his life laboring in obscurity in the jungles of distant Africa. He had buried the love of his life there in the foreign field, and both of his children. He was now returning back to his beloved America, to a land of distant memory. All his family and the friends of his childhood had long preceded him in death. His health was broken as the old man of God boarded a steamer coming home for a final time.
- As fate would decree, on the same ocean liner was a world-famous celebrity with his entourage. As the massive ship entered New York harbor and sailed past the Statue of Liberty, the sound of bands playing could be heard and the noise of thousands of people at the dock to welcome home this famous star of screen and stage. As the ship docked, ticker tape filled the air, music and shouts were loud and boisterous. Soon the star had left the ship and the parade followed him down the street.
- As the old missionary gathered his personal belongings, and walked down the gangplank, not one person was there to meet him. As a tear trickled down his face, the old man of God looked to heaven, and in a voice of dejection he said, “Lord, after all of these years of faithful service, could you not have sent just one person to welcome me home?”
- From the battlements of heaven, a voice spoke softly in reply: ***“You see my son that is the point. You are not home yet!”***

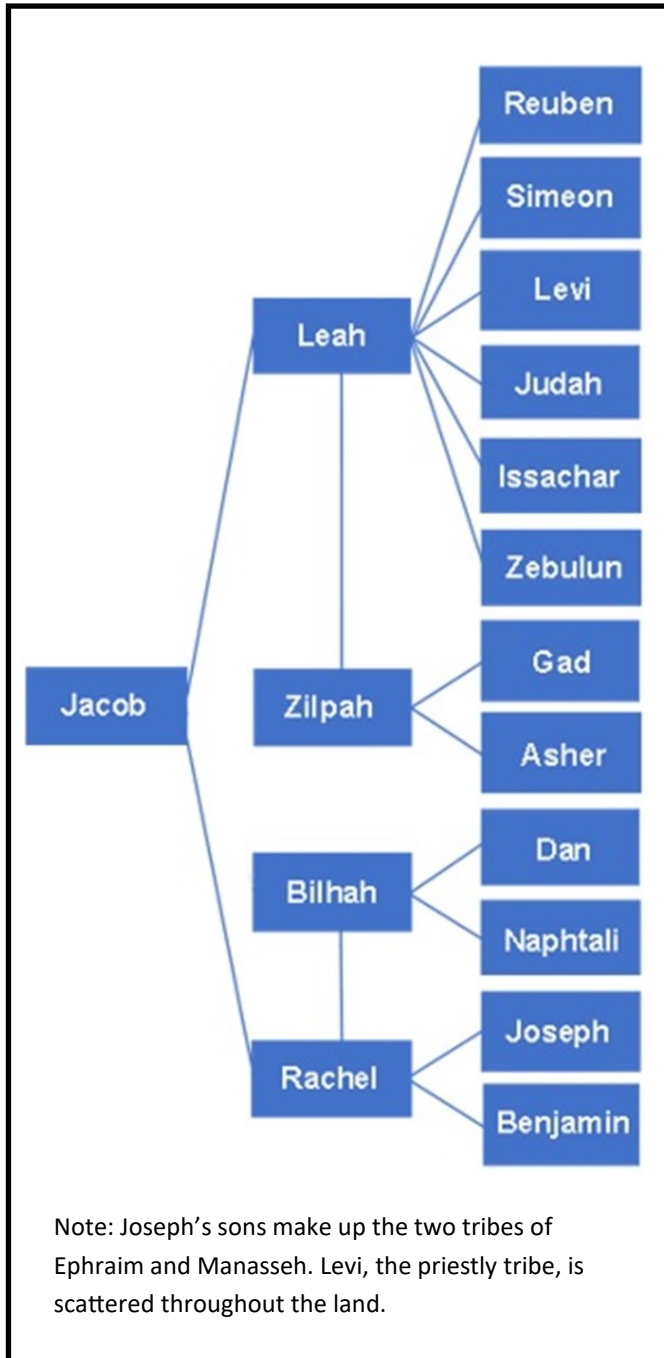
This story is a reminder to all of us

- Our ship is not at its home port; we are not home yet. Our Sovereign God will get us to our destination, but....
- We ought not to expect the peace and ease of heaven when there is work yet to be done on earth.
- As Amy Carmichael said, ***“We have all of eternity to celebrate the victories, but only a few short hours before sunset to win them.”***
- Until then—be a pleasant shipmate; work hard to get along with your fellow passengers; do your assigned tasks.
- And most of all, pay close attention to the words of your Captain, the Lord Jesus and be assured of a glorious welcome when you do arrive home and join that great family of God that began with Abraham and also includes you.

****Copies of the notes and links to other materials are at www.bible805.com

The Twelve Tribes of Israel —Jacob’s sons

Below is the chart of Jacob’s sons, the heads of the Twelve tribes of Israel, listed by their mother.



Later how the Tribes initially settled the land of Canaan following the conquest by Joshua.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

From a person to a people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph *plus, a discussion of God's sovereignty vs. man's responsibility*

In addition to the discussion time in class use the space after the questions for personal journaling and application thoughts on the lesson.

1. To review, what are the four major events in the Bible so far and who are the 4 major people we read about from chapter 12 of Genesis on?
2. Draw the illustration of the two lines that illustrate God's plan for the earth and the human lives that carry it out, explain what they mean and how the two interact with each other.
3. Summarize Isaac's life. What did God tell him about his two sons? How did he respond to God's prophecy about them?
4. Summarize Jacob's life, what did he do that showed his trust in God?
5. Summarize Joseph's life, how did God use him to change the history of a nation?
6. Realizing that we aren't home yet, how should we act on the journey of life?
7. Additional thoughts, comments, questions, or applications from the lesson: