**6. “UNITED FOR A DESTINY”**

**Section III:** THE PLAN ORGANIZED

**Biblical Basis:** Genesis 12 – Exodus 20

**Objective:** That each class member may recognize the five unifying factors that God used to mold the people of Israel with a vivid self consciousness of being God’s chosen people to be used by Him as a blessing to the world.

**INTRODUCTION**

The covenant between Abraham and the Lord God was the basis of the Israelite people to be special. God had a plan for these people – that through them all the families of the earth would be blessed. As we view their history, we can trace their progress from being a loosely knit nomadic tribe into becoming a covenant community and then forming a great nation.

But the question that needs to be answered is this: “How did these people continue to perpetuate that vivid self-consciousness that they were a special people of God to be used for His ends?” After the great patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died, what evident factors unified this unusual people into becoming a mighty nation with dreams of destiny?

In this sixth study, we will examine five specific factors that were instrumental in unifying these people to that end.

**I. UNITED THROUGH CIRCUMCISION**

 A. Commanded by God.

 1. Read Genesis 17:9-13 and explain this rite, and its purpose. (Ex 12:48; Deut 30:6)

 2. In light of Genesis 3:15 and 12:3 do you see anything significant about the fact that this covenant rite affected the male reproductive organ? (Gen 21:12; 22:15-18;

 Isa 11:1-5)

 B. Remembrance by the people.

 1. In what way was circumcision unique to Israel? In what ways was it not unique?

 2. What did the ritual of circumcision point to and how did this unite them?

 (Gen 17:9/13; 34:14 Ex 12:48)

 3. Was it possible that the purpose of circumcision may have been misunderstood by many Jews by the time of Jesus? (Deut 30:6; John 8:39;Matt 23:25-28; Gal 5:2-6)

 C. The relationship to baptism.

 1. How was Jesus the fulfillment of circumcision and why do you suppose the symbol changed to baptism? (Col 2:11-12)

 2. How is the focus of baptism similar to circumcision? (Acts 2:38-39; Matt 28:18-20

 Rom 4:11-12)

**II. UNITED THROUGH SEPARATION**

 A. A threefold separation.

 1. What was the significance of ethnic separation as a uniting factor?

 (Gen 18:19; 24:2-4; 28:1-2; 34:9-10)

 2. Why was there separation within the families?

 (Gen 13:10,14-15; 21:10; 25:5-6; 25:34)

 3. How did geographic separation unite these people? (Ex 1:7; 19:5-6)

 B. Separation from and separation to . . .

 1. The separation experience of the children of Israel was not merely to be separation from others; it also meant separation to God.

 2. In what ways are Christians today also united by the separation factors?

 a. I Cor 6:19-20

 b. II Cor 6:14-17

 c. John 17:14-19

**III. UNITED THROUGH DREAMS**

A. Unity built on promises.

 1. What threefold promise did God give these people? (Gen 12:1-3)

 2. How did these hopes keep Israel united for their destiny?

 (Gen 50:19,26; Ex 13:19; 15:17)

 3. Later in her history how did God’s promises keep “hope to continue”: before Israel?

 (Lam 3:19-24; Isa 35:4-10)

 B. Christian’s unity built on hope.

 1. What are the purposes and promises that give Christians hope and also unite them?

 a. Matt 28:18-20

 b. Acts 1:8; Gal 4:6

 c. I Thess 4:13-14

 d. I Peter 1:3-8

**IV. UNITED BY COMMON EXPERIENCES**

 A. Experiences of oppression.

 1. How did the experience of Genesis 34:30-31 unite Jacob’s family? (Gen 35:1-4)

 2. What common oppression did Israel experience in Exodus 1:8-11 and how did it unite them? (Ex 12:12-14, 26-27; Deut 26:5-10)

 3. Often oppressive influences and threats force people to unite. How do Judges 2:10- 23 and Isaiah 1:24-27 bear this out?

 B. Common experiences which unite Christians.

 1. What are two factors that all Christians must come to grips with that link us together?

 a. Eph 2:1-5

 b. Col 3:13-15

 2. How do you suppose God uses oppression today to unite Christians?

 (Rom 5:3; I Cor 12:26; II Cor 1:3-4; Phil 1:27; I Pet 4:12-13,19)

**V. UNITED BY THE LAW OF SINAI**

 A. A unique covenant relationship.

 1. What was the unique basis for Israel to receive God’s law? (Ex 19:3-6; 20:2)

 2. What was the primary focus or objective of God’s law? (Matt 22:36-40)

 3. How do you see the Law of God uniting these people? (Psa 119:9-11)

 B. Israel’s law in relationship to other laws.

The law given by God to Moses certainly is not unique in the sense that no other ancient society had any such moral and ethical guidelines to live by. The code of Hammurabi came into existence in Babylon 1700 B.C. The distinctive of the Israelite code is to be found in the particular form given to its basic laws and the motivation for keeping them. Israel had conditional laws common to societies found elsewhere in the ancient world but obedience to her “absolute law” (Ex 20; Deut 27) is rooted in gratitude for the grace of God’s deliverance from Egypt. The call to obedience bound this people to God in a covenant relationship. As a result life in Israel assumed a meaning and dignity unknown elsewhere in the ancient world.

**CONCLUSION**

United by circumcision, separation, dreams, oppression, and possession of a unique law, Israel could maintain a forward momentum toward the realization of that destiny: “Blessed to be a blessing!” In the same way Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the Great Commission, the promise of inheritance, eternal life, persecution, and faithfully sharing in worship keeps the church focused on its destiny: “to go … make disciples … be a blessing!”