

The stage has been set for the family that would become a nation to be in bondage for four hundred years. That is what God told Abraham (Abram at that time) would happen to his descendants. Look at this closely because this was predicted about 300 years before it began to play out.

“Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

Genesis 15:13-14 (NKJV)

These two verses pretty much describe what we will be looking at for the next thirteen weeks in this volume. So, here we go again! Let’s keep connecting the dots!

WEEK 27 JUDAH AND TAMAR-----Dennis Watson

The Bible is not a compilation of segregated events, it is an integrated message system through which God reveals Himself and His plan to redeem the fallen creation. Genesis 38 seems to be an interruption and an embarrassment to the flow of activity. It interrupts the account of Joseph, and it exposes the sin of Judah. Judah is the line through which the Messiah came into the world. How could God use such a sinful man? We will unwrap this in the devotions this week and demonstrate the grace and sovereignty of God.

Day 1

Read Genesis 38:1-7

As we begin this biblical historical event, we need to see that there is a “disconnect” that has started to take place. How different Jacob, Judah’s father, was from Abraham. You remember that God had said of Abraham: *“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”*

Genesis 18:19 (NKJV) Abraham was adamant that the search for a wife for his son Isaac not be made among the Canaanites. Instead he sent his servant to his country and his family to find a wife for Isaac. Jacob, however, was more concerned with his business and the family conflict with his two wives. He neglected his sons, and they all, except for Benjamin and Joseph, made very tragic choices.

That is where we are. Judah followed in the direction set by his father. He was in Canaan. He made his own choice of a mate without the direction of his father, Jacob, who was preoccupied with other things. The big sin here is the sin of geography. They were in a place and among a people where they did not need to be. Beginning in Genesis 49, we see God’s plan to get the family out of Canaan and into Egypt which became a safe and secluded place for a period of time.

But here we are with this very difficult account of Judah and his daughter-in-law. Judah marrying a Canaanite woman was a case of the sin of geography. How often is that the case? We are frequently in places we should not be, and the result is sin that compounds. Judah and his Canaanite wife, Shuar, had three sons: Er, Onan and Shelagh. Er was evil so God killed him. We do not know what it was that he did, but his character was apparently corrupt. We will find out about the other two sons tomorrow.

Think about this biblical, historical account. The sin of geography is a sin that if not repented of and replaced with obedience, will be a sin that compounds. Compounding sin is sin that just keeps on building. If there is no repentance it just keeps on going. All sin will have consequences. However, sin that compounds is one sin followed by another without repentance. Is there a sin that you are continuing in? If so, it is and will compound. Repent quickly and turn to the Lord in obedience.

Day 2

Read Genesis 38:8-11

God is serious about the devastating effect of sin. We see this in the law that was given in Exodus and Deuteronomy. God wanted sin removed from the people because it could potentially lead to the destruction of the country and, in particular, of the line of the Messiah. God knows everything, but we are all still responsible for our actions. Er was evil from the outset and the Lord killed him. Seems extreme, but we see in Scripture that God is not passive about sin.

Now we come to the second son, Onan. There was a practice in ancient times which under the law in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 became known as levirate marriage. It is literally a marriage with a brother-in-law. After Er died his wife Tamar was to be taken by his brother, and the first son born to Onan and Tamar would be considered the child of the deceased husband. That way the family name of the deceased brother/husband would carry on through that son. However, Onan acted unfaithfully regarding his responsibility to do this. His sin was that of irresponsibility. He would not do what needed to be done to carry on the family line so the Lord killed Onan too. Then there was the third son, Shelah. Judah kept him from Tamar and just assumed that the two-time widow would go away. He promised that the youngest son Shelah would marry her, but he did not keep his promise.

Was the line of Judah coming to an end? What was going to happen? Er lost his place because he was evil. Onan lost his place because he was irresponsible and unwilling to join in the plan to continue the family line. Judah was unwilling to have his last son, Shelah, marry Tamar. So Tamar decided to take things into her own hands.

It is at this point that I like to, and need to, bring up the point of God's best. Tamar took things into her own hands because others had forsaken their responsibility. That does not make it right and shows what happens when God's own people do not seek His

best. Are you seeking His best? I believe there are blessings and benefits in store, long-term, when God's people seek His best. God's will and plan will be accomplished, but it sure is a blessing to be willingly participating with Him for His best.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Luke 3:33 and Matthew 1:1-6

We will see tomorrow the offspring that came from an illicit relationship between Judah and Tamar was a child by the name of Perez. Until then we jump ahead to connect to Jesus. It is important to remember that all of the Bible has as its end view Jesus, the Messiah of God.

So far we have seen God create a perfect world with man being the crown of His creation. When it was all done, He proclaimed it *“very good.”* But then there was the sin and rebellion of the first man and woman. That was followed by the promise of God to send One who would crush the enemy’s head. Then came the sibling rivalry of Cain and Abel. That was followed by a new beginning with another son, Seth. After the judgment of the flood on the evil imaginings of mankind, God establishes a relationship with Abraham and made him a promise to bless him and make him a blessing. But then there is conflict between Sarah and Abraham and the plan to have a child by their own scheme with Hagar, Sarah’s handmaid. Then the saga continues with the conflict between Esau and Jacob. Keep in mind God does not use perfect people because there are no perfect people. That is why He had the plan to send His Son who is the perfect One.

In Matthew’s gospel he opens up with the genealogy of Jesus. In the first verses we see four women mentioned in the line of Jesus, all of whom were gentiles. The first we meet is Tamar. She was the daughter-in-law of Judah. She deceived Judah who had broken his promise to her. But God, who is faithful and sovereign, worked in all of this *“affair”* and continued the line of the promise first made to Eve in Genesis 3:15.

It is overwhelming to read in the Bible the ugly sins of man, and that includes our sins. But it is even more overwhelming to read about the continuing sovereign grace of God to bring redemption to all. God’s plan of redemption is amazing. That is one of the many reasons we sing, *“Amazing Grace.”*

Day 4

Read Genesis 38:12-30

What a crazy account! We have some major intrigue here. Er died because of his evil behavior and character. Onan died because of his disobedience and rebellion. Judah failed to keep his promise and was deceived by Tamar who felt she must take matters into her own hands because of the failures of everyone else in her family! What a mess! That is what happens when people turn their own way and ignore God. It makes trouble for all.

You read the account. What can be added? Here we have a case of deception, lust, and sexual perversion, sex outside of marriage with one posing as a prostitute. Both Judah and Tamar were in the wrong. This is not a case of differing cultural norms. They acted unfaithfully to God and to the issue of marital fidelity. Tamar took into her hands to do what should have already been done. Judah should have provided his youngest son for Tamar to fulfill the plan of levirate marriage so that a child would have been born to Er. Judah did not do this. He followed his lust and fell into her trap. She exposed Judah as the father after Judah threatened to have her stoned to death. Judah had no choice but to own up to it. The outcome was the birth of twin boys—Perez and Zerah.

Wouldn't it be great "if" and won't it be great "when?" Wouldn't it be great if we would all follow the Lord and do His will and pursue His best? But then we would not need a Savior. There would have been no need for Noah to build the ark. When we do not follow the Lord and do His will and seek His best, we create real problems for ourselves and others—particularly our family members. God intervenes and accomplishes His plan anyway, and in our rebellion and the rebellion of others, we miss out on God's best. The foolish choices of Jacob and then Judah, along with Er and Onan spun a web of trouble for many. But "*He makes all things beautiful in its time*" **Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)**.

Won't it be great when God has finished off sin, and the only thing left will be His best—justice, righteousness, and peace? Oh, what a glorious day that will be! We will all be done with sin, and sin will be done with us because God has done away with sin and all of its consequences.

Day 5

Read Genesis 49:8-12

Jacob had twelve sons over which he spoke his last words regarding each one of them. Here is what J. Vernon McGee had to say about this:

"This deathbed message is dramatic because it is prophetic. It tells what will happen to the twelve sons of Jacob when they become tribes. What was prophetic then has now become largely historical."¹

The passage we read today is prophetic and is about Jesus, the Messiah of God. There are some very early prophetic passages in Genesis that connect regarding the promise of God.

The protoevangelium (the first gospel) of Genesis 3:15 is the place we first see the Gospel. To the serpent, the representative of Satan, it was a curse. To the woman, it was a promise that her offspring, coming from her seed, would defeat Satan and render him powerless. After the murder of Abel by Cain comes a new beginning in Seth. Then God made a covenant with Noah and his sons after the judgment and rescue from the flood. Next God made the promise to Abraham that through him, again from Adam and Eve through Seth, through Noah, and through Shem, that all of the people of the world would be blessed. That promise then flowed through Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and then to Judah and his offspring. The passage today is clearly prophecy that finds fulfillment in Jesus through the tribe of Judah.

The 'scepter' speaks of authority in the hands of a ruler. In this case the ruler is God and He has placed that authority in the family of Jacob (Israel). So divine authority will continue through the family line through Judah. The phrase "*from between his feet*" speaks of Judah's seed. Shiloh speaks of rest and tranquility.

¹Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Jesus, as the Prince of Peace, is the One who brings rest and tranquility. He is the Shepherd. He is the promised One who would crush Satan's head. He will reign forever and ever.

Now the prophetic connection continues in Revelation.

*"But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." **Revelation 5:5 (NKJV)***

*"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" **Revelation 11:15 (NKJV)***

God has a plan and nothing or no one can thwart His plan. God's plan is to bless and redeem. A person can wreak havoc on themselves and others, but they cannot hinder the plan and purposes of God. Jacob blessed Judah but made no mention of his numerous failures. Think about how God has blessed you and still works through your life. He has removed your sin and failures as far as the east is from the west. It looks like Jacob practiced the ways of God in this regard. He transferred to Judah a departing word from God that defined his life. It was not his questionable behavior that defined him, but God's promise.

Think about that. Let the promises of God define your life.

WEEK 28 JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE DREAMS---Chris Watson

Have you ever have found yourself in a bad or tough situation, that was not of your own doing? That is where we find Joseph in this week's readings. He is in a bad situation that seems to get better, only to get worse again. But God has a plan, He always does.

Day 1

Read Genesis 39

Maybe this is the first time you have heard this biblical, historical, account or maybe it's your fiftieth. Every time I read it, I am amazed. I wonder what my response would be if all of this was happening to me. First Joseph is almost killed, then he is sold into slavery by his brothers. However, God used this and showed favor to him. He is eventually put in charge of all of Potiphar's belongings. Things were looking good for Joseph. Then he was tempted by Potiphar's wife. He made the right and godly decision, but because of that decision, he was thrown into prison for something he did not do.

From the outside looking in, it would be easy to ask what God was doing and why would God allow this to happen. I think Joseph could have asked these same questions. He trusted God when things went well and even when things seemed to fall apart. God used Joseph in Potiphar's life and we will see this week that God used him in other tough situations. I believe that during these times Joseph's faith was being strengthened and at the same time, God was preparing him for a special purpose!

God has a plan for all of our lives. We are to worship and glorify Him, and as we do that He directs our path. Maybe things are great right now or maybe things couldn't get any worse, like with Joseph. Do you know God? Do you trust His plan? Are you able to depend on Him even when it doesn't add up or make sense? Ask God to help you trust Him when it makes sense and even when it doesn't. Give whatever may be going on in your life right now to the Lord and say, "God I trust you!"

Day 2

Read Genesis 40

As we read the end of chapter 39 and 40, we see that God used Joseph while he was in prison. God gave him success and also had him there to interpret dreams. One was a great dream while one wasn't so great. In verse 14 after Joseph had given the cupbearer a favorable interpretation of his dream, Joseph asked him to remember him when he got out of prison. By remembering him he could help Joseph get out of there as well! I think that would be a fair request of the cupbearer, to remember Joseph, don't you? However, the last verse in chapter 39 says, "*The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.*" How could he have forgotten? Joseph had given him the best news he had probably heard since he had been in prison; how could he forget Joseph?

Have you ever felt like the Lord has forgotten you? If you have, that feeling is probably from the enemy, not from the Lord. The enemy wants us to believe that the Lord forgets about us or that He sees us in difficult situations but doesn't care. I wonder if Joseph was thinking "any day I may get out of here because the cupbearer will remember me." But that was wishful thinking because the cupbearer didn't even remember him.

God often gets the "blame" for things that happen in our lives. As we will see tomorrow, this was part of God's plan, but sometimes in the middle of the situation, we can't even see God's plan. We may feel deserted, forgotten, or not loved. However, this couldn't be further from the truth! Scripture tells us "*We know that all things work together for the good of those who are called according to His purpose*" **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)**. We may not be able to see it in the midst of the situation, but God knows and sees.

Take some time today to either thank God for the times that you felt forgotten and alone, acknowledging you now see how God used those times in your life, or take time to thank God for the difficult times you are in right now, trusting that He sees the whole picture. He hasn't forgotten you! Maybe He is preparing you "*for such a time as this.*"

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Genesis 41:1-14

Joseph was forgotten for two years. Can you imagine? I think I would have been bitter, but it doesn't appear that Joseph was. Notice how this all fits into God's wonderful plan as we discussed yesterday. The Lord caused Pharaoh to have a dream that no one could interpret, not even the ones who were supposedly able to do so. Then the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph, two years later! He tells Pharaoh about Joseph interpreting his dream, and Pharaoh had Joseph brought from prison to interpret the dream.

"Joseph was in this place for a specific time and reason. He was going to save Israel from the famine that was to come. "By saving Israel, Jesus is born so we can be saved".² One has to believe that after God used Joseph in this way, Joseph knew everything happening was part of God's plan. It has been said that in situations we face we can either become bitter or better, and I believe Joseph became better. What about you?

Has there been an event, or events, in your life in which you weathered the storm and when you came out on the other side, you were better? Or were you bitter? I imagine there are hundreds of stories of hurt, pain, and loneliness that I am not aware of. There are many different stories from everyone reading these devotions, and I wouldn't begin to imagine that I know what being in all of those situations is like. However, I know God can and will use it all. Don't become bitter; become better for God's glory.

Today's devotion may be a little harder than normal. If you find yourself bitter over a situation or experience, ask the Lord to help you to let it go and for your heart to be free from anger and bitterness. Lay all of these experiences before the Lord and, like Joseph, ask the Lord to help you trust His plan!

²Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 124

Day 4

Read Genesis 41:15-36

God's grace is always evident, even when we don't see it. In this biblical, historical, account we see the grace of God. There was a famine coming and there would not be enough food or water for everyone. But God was going to use this famine in His plan. He could have allowed it to happen and not offered provisions; however, He choose to provide. He gave a dream to Pharaoh and Joseph interpreted the dream, allowing them to get ready and prepare for seven years of famine. Look back at **Genesis 41:25b**. **(NIV)** *"God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do."* We see from verse 25 that the famine was first to go through God's hands, He was allowing it as part of His plan. I wonder if Pharaoh caught those words from Joseph. God was sending the famine and would use it for His glory.

I am guessing that if Joseph could see all that would happen in his lifetime, he might not have signed up to play this part in God's plan. However, if he had seen what an impact and game changer it was, then maybe he would have. Either way, here he is in the middle of saving God's people from the famine that God allowed.

As a believer, we must trust God with His plan, even when it doesn't make sense and even when it is something difficult that He allows. The things that are sometimes the most difficult, and even the ones that we never figure out why we went through them, God uses in our life and in many cases He uses in other people's lives as well. We must stop trying to figure out why it's happening and trust His plan. This is much easier said than done! Take some time today to acknowledge that all of your life experiences first flow through God's hands. While it may be hard or tough to see why He allows these times, trust Him that it is all part of His great big plan!

Day 5

Read Isaiah 42:5-9

Today we read another prophecy of the One to come, Jesus Christ. Of course Jesus has always been (John 1:1-3) but He would come into this world as a human. Take a moment to read back over verse 7. These are the words of Isaiah the Prophet, spoken some 700 years before Jesus. Notice how true they are. Let's examine verse 7:

"To open the eyes of the blind" – We see this happening in John 9 as Jesus heals the blind man. We can also see it in Jesus' coming and speaking the truth about Himself so that people's spiritual eyes are opened as they see Jesus for who He is, Savior of the world.

"To free captives from prison" – **Luke 4:18-19 (NIV)** says, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"*. This prophecy was being fulfilled as Jesus was in Nazareth.

"To release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness" - John 8:12 tells us that Jesus told the people that He is the light of the world!

No one can make these things up, the prophecies from hundreds of years ago are being fulfilled in the New Testament.

As you pray today, make verse 7 into a prayer. Thank God that as a believer He has opened your eyes. He has freed you from prison, and He has given the light, Himself, the one True King!

WEEK 29 GOD PROVIDES FOR THE ISRAELITES IN FAMINE

-----Dennis Watson

God is amazing and powerful and will always accomplish His plan. He provided a way for Joseph to be in Egypt at a very pivotal time in history. There was a famine coming to the land and God placed Joseph there with wisdom and power to provide for His people.

At Harp's Crossing we have a special fund called "The Joseph Fund." The name for this fund came from this biblical, historical, account. Joseph knew from the dreams he interpreted for Pharaoh that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. During the years of plenty he led the people to store up. When the years of famine came they were ready for them. Our "Joseph Fund" is just that. When we have financial surplus we store up so that when emergencies come, or lean times, we are prepared. That is what this week's devotions are about.

Day 1

Read Genesis 41:38-57

We learned last week that God provided Pharaoh with dreams that told him about things to come. God provided Joseph with the ability to interpret the dreams and Joseph then told Pharaoh what to do. Pharaoh knew that the ability to interpret the dreams had come from Joseph's God. For this reason, Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the number two man in all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. As part of his job, he would oversee the storing up of food and later the distribution projects.

Have you ever had a time in your life when God blessed you in a huge way with finances or other provisions? What did you do? The good-ole American way is to go out and splurge. We think of this money as extra. I have learned, (unfortunately not as early as I would have liked) that there is no such thing as extra money. When God provides what appears to be surplus, it is for something specific, you can be certain. We need to be careful

and not foolish. It may be that something is about to happen to your car, your home, or some other "thing", where you will need that extra money. It is not extra after all. God knew and provided in advance. Or, it may be that He provided it for you to help someone else.

That is what we see here. This was the first "Joseph Fund." When tough times came, the people still had food. People came from all around to buy food so that they would not starve.

God provides. Ask Him to enable you to see how He has provided for you or others you might know. Ask to be wise in how to use His provisions to help others and provide for family needs and wants.

Day 2

Read Genesis 42

And now things come full circle. Some say, “What goes around comes around.” **Numbers 32:23b (NKJV)** says, “*And you may be sure that your sin will find you out.*” The famine became widespread in the land. Israel’s (Jacob’s) family is impacted by the famine so he sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain for food. He had heard that there was plenty of grain in Egypt. There is one of his sons whom Jacob would not let go with them to Egypt—Benjamin his youngest. He could not bear to be separated from Benjamin.

The ten older brothers headed for Egypt. When the ten brothers arrived in Egypt they come face-to-face with the governor over the land—their brother Joseph. It had been thirteen years since they had sold him to the traders. He was seventeen when he was sold and he was thirty when his brothers arrived in Egypt. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him. He accuses them of being spies and has them thrown into prison for three days. It was Joseph’s way of teaching his brothers a lesson for what they had done to him. They had told him they were not spies but were twelve brothers, but one had died and one was at home with their father. He had them released from prison and told them that if they were telling the truth they would bring their younger brother back with them. To make sure they would follow through, Simeon, one of the brothers, would be held in Egypt until they returned. When they departed with sacks of grain, Joseph returned their money hiding it in the sacks. As they were going home one of the brothers discovered the money and was terrified. When they got home they were really frightened when each one found that there was money in their sack. They told Israel, their father, and he was grieved by the account of the trip to Egypt. He would not let them return to Egypt, he was thinking that he had not only lost Joseph but he would also lose Simeon.

It is always better to own up to your sins and failures than it is to hide from them. It is true that eventually your sin will find you. You will have to deal with it. Better to do it sooner, than later. Ask God to enable you to be honest about your sin.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Genesis 43

It was bound to happen. Due to the famine, Israel (Jacob) and his sons ran out of food and became hungry. Israel instructed his sons to return again to Egypt to buy grain. **Proverbs 16:26 (NIV)** says *"The laborer's appetite works for him: his hunger drives him on."* Israel did not want to send his son Benjamin back to Egypt with his brothers but he wanted to eat. He sent gifts along with double money, to return that which they found in their sacks and to buy more grain. When they left, Israel said, *"And may God almighty give you mercy before the man."* That is what we all need—mercy from God; and more than we can ever know. Mercy includes and implies forgiveness. The brothers and their father knew they needed forgiveness for the money that appeared to have been taken by them. They needed mercy from God for the selling of their brother Joseph. They did not know what they were about to face but they knew they needed food and they knew they needed forgiveness. They went to Egypt taking their youngest brother Benjamin along with them.

God is sovereign. He was in the process. The promise was that the Messiah, Jesus, would come from Judah's family. God could have easily had all of the brothers killed for the way they treated Joseph. However, He had a plan. That plan required grace and mercy from God and from Joseph. All through the Old Testament we see God preserving the family members through whom Jesus would be born. God was in all of this, not just to save Joseph but to save many others, including Judah.

God has worked and is working in your life. Not just to forgive and save you but also to give His mercy and forgiveness to others through you. Give thanks to Him for His mercy and forgiveness, and look around and find those who need mercy and forgiveness from God through you.

Day 4

Read Genesis 44

Joseph continues to toy with his brothers. As they get ready to return home, he had his own special silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack. He then sent his steward to follow and catch up with them, accusing one of them of stealing the cup. Of course they deny it, and say that if it is found that the one who took it would die and the others would become slaves. After a search of all of the sacks, from oldest to youngest, it is found in Benjamin's sack. The others were terrified. Tearing of clothes was the ancient way of expressing extreme sorrow and displeasure, and that is exactly what they did. The brothers were really upset and their minds were swirling as they were trying to figure out what to do. They may have just run out of options.

All of them were brought back to appear before Joseph. They fell down before him and pleaded for Benjamin; however, they still continue their lies. They told Joseph that one of their brothers was lost and torn to pieces. Even when they believed God was judging them for their sins against their brother, they continued to weave their deception and compound their sin. It seems that it is often easier to continue in sin than to come to the point of making the decision to stop, repent and do what is right.

Is there an area of sin in your life? Joseph's brothers lived a lie for almost fifteen years! What unsettledness had to be present in their lives. That dark cloud was forever hanging over their heads and when something happened they assumed that God was judging them. God forgives! But first we must be honest and confess our sin to be released from it. Sin left undealt with, can yank you around like a whip.

Spend time asking the Lord to search your heart and reveal any sinful ways. Confess, repent, and do the right thing!

Day 5

Read Psalm 110

This Psalm is a Messianic Psalm. That means it is one of those forward-looking prophetic Psalms that speaks about Jesus, the Messiah. As you read it, make sure you keep in mind that this is about Jesus, written hundreds of years in advance. You will hear wording that we find in the New Testament applied to Jesus.

One such phrase that is in the New Testament book of Hebrews is **Psalm 110:4**. This verse says that the coming King would be a priest forever *“according to the order of Melchizedek.”* In chapters 5-7 of Hebrews, Jesus is the One who is this priest in the order of Melchizedek. A priest was one who stood before God on behalf of the people and stands before the people on behalf of God. Jesus came as God’s priest and as such He stood for and died for the people on God’s behalf. Today He is interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25). The priest made sacrifices on behalf of the people for their sins. Jesus, our Priest, did not make animal sacrifices for our sin because He became our sacrifice.

He was like Melchizedek in that we do not know of a beginning or end of Melchizedek. Jesus has no beginning and no end. In more ways than we can know, Jesus is a Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

The Old Testament has a priesthood and sacrificial system which God gave to provide temporary forgiveness for sins. The sacrifices were reminders of sin and the need for forgiveness. We do not make animal sacrifices today because Jesus, our priest, became our sacrifice!

Give thanks to God for our Great High Priest, Jesus.

WEEK 30 JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS

-----Chris Watson

Maybe you have seen one of the TV shows where siblings reunite or a parent and child reunite after years of being apart. Maybe they never even knew each other. I can imagine that would be nerve racking. I wonder what thoughts went through Joseph's brother's heads when they realized who he was or the thoughts that went through Joseph's. We will look at it this week.

Day 1

Read Genesis 45:1-5

The emotions that Joseph must have had! In fact, verse 1 says that he couldn't control himself any longer. What would your reaction have been if you were one of the brothers? What if you were Joseph when he was revealing himself to his brothers? Wow! We see in verse 3 that Joseph's brothers couldn't speak because they were terrified to be in his presence. They were afraid that he would do something to them.

Look at Joseph's response, *"Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you!"* (Verse 5) What? Joseph tells his brothers no worries, don't be upset or mad at yourselves, God had a plan, and part of that plan was to bring you here as well. Incredible! Joseph was obviously aware of what God intended, and while he could have been angry, he simply shared with them that everything was okay because in the circumstances, God saved lives.

To be honest, I would like to think my response would be the same as Joseph's, but for some reason I am not sure it would have been. What's your response when things go bad, when things don't work out like you want, or when life just seems "unfair"? Do we complain, get upset, or even try to get back at someone who did us wrong? Or, can we respond like Joseph and realize that even if it was bad or evil, God might use it in our lives or in the lives of others. Ask the Lord to help you see how He sees, and to realize that when we can't, we need to trust Him.

Day 2

Read Genesis 45:16-28

As we read today, not only was Joseph saved from the famine, but so was his father, his brothers, and their families. God used what happened to Joseph to save thousands of people including his own family. Now, some would say “that’s not fair”. Have you ever said this? Or if you have kids, have they ever said this? Was it fair that Joseph, who was thrown in a well, sold to travelers, tempted by Potiphar’s wife, and thrown into jail for several years, was in charge of Pharaoh’s things, and his brothers who started all of the trouble got to come and be saved from the famine? Yes, yes indeed, and while it doesn’t seem right or fair, it’s exactly the story of all Christians.

We all want our own way, but God sent Jesus. Our sin was what He died for. He died a horrific death. Jesus was spit on, laughed at, locked up, mocked, forsaken by his own, and suffered for the sin of man. It was our sin that put Jesus on the cross. Of course, it was God’s plan and He went willingly. It was His plan that was carried out. We are like Joseph’s brothers, we are all guilty. However, when we come to Jesus, acknowledging our guilt and sins, He takes us in. You know it’s not fair, praise the Lord. If it were fair, I would get nothing but death and hell. But because God loves me, He sent His son to give me life, not fairness; mercy, not condemnation; grace, not law.

Today, thank God that He didn’t give us what we deserved, but like Joseph did to his brothers, He showed us mercy and brought us into the family.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Genesis 45:6-15

Yesterday we saw the connection to Jesus and we will see it today. A remnant means something that is left over or a part of something. Marty Machowsik says, “God knew the famine was coming and all of Joseph’s family would die if they didn’t get food. So God sent Joseph ahead to Egypt so Jacob and his sons could be saved from the famine. They were important because God made his covenant with Jacob and his father Isaac, and Grandfather Abraham before them”.³

God was making sure that part of Abraham’s family was safe because Jesus was going to be born in this line. Remember the promise that God made to Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac? This plan of the famine was partly so Abraham’s line could continue and fulfill the words and prophecies spoken beforehand. Wow... what intricate detail and planning.

Could you or I have come up with this plan? No way, no human could have thought all of this through. Just think, as of today, after 6 months, we haven’t even gotten out of the first book of the Bible, and we see just how detailed, orchestrated, and intricate the plans of the Lord are.

Thank the Lord today for His direction and His plans!

³Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 134

Day 4

Read Genesis 46:1-7, 26-30

Everyone has differing opinions on how they feel about family reunions. Some people love them and some would rather just not have them. The family reunion we read about today, is not your ordinary family reunion. A son once thought dead is alive, a father who must have mourned for years is now rejoicing, and the family is back together!

The account of the relationship of Joseph and his brothers will continue, no matter how their story started. However, the reunion of father and son is totally different. We know from reading the account, up to this point, that God was in control and orchestrated it all. It's interesting to see all of the pieces that came together, even though it took years to happen.

Sometimes we get to see all the pieces come together as the Lord works in a situation, and sometimes we may not. Either way, we know that He is working and His plans and purposes will not be thwarted. As you go about your day today, think of the way God's plan has played out in your life. Maybe you have experienced some bad or difficult situations but you have been able to see the Lord bring it all together. Maybe the Lord used you in someone else's life because of your experiences. Or, maybe you are going through a difficult situation and as hard as it is to see, you know God is working and His plan will prevail. When you can't see His hands, trust His heart.

Ask God to help you to trust His plan and His purpose. To God be the Glory!

Day 5

Read Isaiah 49:1-6

This passage speaks of Jesus as God's servant. We know from John 1:1-14 that Jesus was the Word and became flesh and dwelt among men and women. God sent Jesus to carry out His plan, to save the people from their sins. Today, Jesus saves us from our sins.

Just think of Jesus being a servant. Jesus is God (Trinity), so the ruler of the universe lowered Himself and lived among humans. He lived among humans so that He could take the penalty of their sins and they could live with Him for eternity and know Him in a personal relationship! This is incredible and while we know this and experience it daily, we must not grow used to it or see it as something we deserve. Rather, let us be thankful for the gift of Jesus daily, many times throughout the day. Without Jesus we have only death, destruction, no peace, and hell, just to name a few. With Jesus, we have life and when we pass from this life we have peace, heaven, freedom from sin, and fulfillment in Jesus. Praise be to God for what He has done for us. Remember, we do nothing to get it or deserve it, we just receive it. We don't boast in what we did, we received what had already been done through Jesus Christ.

Thank Jesus today for your salvation and what He did!

WEEK 31 SLAVERY OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

-----Dennis Watson

The book of Exodus opens with the Jacob-Israel family in bondage in Egypt. Egypt had been a safe place for them but became a place of slavery. We see that the Jacob-Israel family experienced rapid growth under God's watch care. Pharaoh became threatened by the number of people that made up the Jacob-Israel family. Pharaoh ramped up the harsh treatment of the Jacob-Israel family and sought to eliminate them. However, all of this was under God's guidance and watch-care. He is always in control. Warren Wiersbe expresses it this way:

"God used Israel's experiences in Egypt to prepare them for the special tasks He gave them to accomplish on earth: bearing witness to the true and living God, writing the Holy Scriptures and bringing the Savior into the world."⁴

Day 1

Read Exodus 1:1-7

The opening verses of Exodus connect to the Biblical, historical, account of Genesis. When we left Genesis, Joseph had just died and now we come to the account of the Israelites in bondage in Egypt. It is amazing to read the accounts in Biblical history and see God's directing hand. When the events are seen chronologically it is easy to discern the direction of God.

When Jacob and the remainder of his family came to Egypt, the total of the Jacob-Israel family in Egypt was seventy:

"And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy." Genesis 46:27 (NKJV)

⁴Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

After Jacob (Israel) arrived in Egypt, and just before his death, he blessed his sons. He told them how God promised him that his family would increase and become a multitude:

*"Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,"⁴ and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'" **Genesis 48:3-4 (NKJV)***

In these verses we see this had become a reality. No doubt God had blessed the Jacob-Israel family before Egypt and especially during bondage in Egypt. Here is how one commentary describes the growth:

"Jacob's descendants increased: The Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous (cf. Acts 7:17). Several generations separated Levi from Moses so that the time from Joseph's death (Gen. 50:26) to the growth of the nation as described in Exodus 1:7 was probably little more than 100 years. The adult males in the Exodus totaled 600,000, not counting women and children (12:37), so the total Israelite population at that time may have been about 2 million. No wonder the land (i.e., Goshen, Gen. 45:10, in the southeast Delta) was filled with them. According to God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) a large nation had emerged. They had yet to receive a land (Gen. 15:18-21) and a "constitution" (the Mosaic Law)."⁵

There is no doubt God's hand was on the Jacob-Israel family. I call it that because it is still just a massive family that is connected to the promise of Abraham and the promise given to Eve that her seed would bruise the serpent's head. The Jacob-Israel family would become a nation when delivered from the bondage of Egypt. It is really exciting and encouraging to see the roots of our salvation and faith!

⁵The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

The significance of the Old Testament cannot be overstated. God reveals to the readers His plan and how it is rooted in a promise given to Abraham and then to the nation of Israel. Ultimately the whole plan is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Day 2

Read Exodus 1:8-10

At this time Joseph had been dead between 100 and 200 years when a new king, or Pharaoh, came to rule in Egypt. The new Pharaoh had no regard for Joseph. Perhaps, to Pharaoh, the Jacob-Israel family had been so insignificant that Joseph was just a distant memory. By being instrumental in implementing the plan to store grain through the years of abundance to sustain through the years of famine, he provided not only for his family but for all of Egypt. However, it may have been a case of selective memory. The numbers of the Jacob-Israel family were increasing at an exorbitant rate. When Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill the male babies of the Jacob-Israel family, God protected them. The midwives feared God and did not kill the male babies. When asked by Pharaoh why they let the boys live, they answered *"Because the Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women, they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them."* **Exodus 1:19 (NKJV)**

The real issue here was selective forgetfulness. Pharaoh's real concern was the growing number of the Jacob-Israel family. They had grown so much that they were a threat. He was concerned that the Jacob-Israel family would join up with one of their enemies and fight against them and escape. The Jacob-Israel family was now a necessity to their way of life. Their slave-labor had become necessary for Egypt.

I love what Warren Wiersbe says about this:

"Why would the Egyptians want to make life miserable for the Jews? Israel was a source of blessing in the land, as Joseph had been before them (Gen. 39:1-6), and they weren't causing trouble. Pharaoh's stated reason was that the presence of so many Jews was a security risk: since the Jews were outsiders, if there were an invasion, they would no doubt ally themselves with the enemy. However, whether Pharaoh realized it or not, the real cause was the conflict announced in Genesis 3:15, the enmity

between the people of God and the children of Satan, a conflict that still goes on in the world today. No people in recorded history have suffered as the Hebrew people have suffered, but every nation or ruler that has persecuted the Jews has been punished for it. After all, God's promise to Abraham was, "*I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you*" Genesis 12:3 NKJV). God kept that promise in the way He dealt with Egypt and Babylon in ancient days and Stalin and Hitler in modern times. God is long-suffering as He sees nations persecute His chosen people, but eventually His hand of judgment falls on the oppressors."⁶

There is nothing new under the sun. We keep coming back to this statement from Ecclesiastes. The persecution of God's people continues today. But remember that God is in control. This has been evidenced in history. It is still true today.

⁶Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Matthew 2:13-15

It is really strange to think that in the middle of a foreign and hostile nation there could be safety and security. Often the calmness in the eye of a storm provides us with a time to get things straight. Consider Jonah. He needed to think some things through to get where he needed to be, so God provided him a safe place in the belly of a big fish. I'm sure that was some smelly thinking time. But he did get it right, repented and obeyed God by going to Nineveh.

The Jacob-Israel family found safety from the Canaanites and from themselves in Egypt, even in slavery. Egypt was a place of safety and security for them until the time was right for them to be delivered and become the nation of Israel.

There was a time the new parents, Mary and Joseph, took their young Son, Jesus, to a safe place in Egypt. After the visit of the Magi (wise men) to Mary, Joseph and Jesus, Joseph was warned in a dream to take his family to Egypt for safety because Herod was seeking to destroy His Son, Jesus. So with this, Matthew's gospel connects Jesus to the prophecy found in Hosea 11:1. Here is a great explanation from one commentary:

"The Messiah was sent to and returned from Egypt so that the prophet's words, Out of Egypt I called My Son, might be fulfilled. This is a reference to Hosea 11:1, which does not seem to be a prophecy in the sense of a prediction. Hosea was writing of God's calling Israel out of Egypt into the Exodus. Matthew, however, gave new understanding to these words. Matthew viewed this experience as Messiah being identified with the nation. There were similarities between the nation and the Son. Israel was God's chosen "son" by adoption (Ex. 4:22), and Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. In both cases the descent into Egypt was to escape danger, and the return was important to the nation's providential history. While Hosea's statement was a historical reference to

Israel's deliverance, Matthew related it more fully to the call of the Son, the Messiah, from Egypt. In that sense, as Matthew "heightened" Hosea's words to a more significant event—the Messiah's return from Egypt—they were "fulfilled."⁷

It is amazing to see the connections so clearly made. God is the true author of the Bible. He caused Matthew to write these words and make the connection to Jesus. The Bible is all about Jesus Christ the Messiah of God!

⁷The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Day 4

Read Exodus 1:15-22

Abortion. Perhaps many today would have applauded the actions of Herod in seeking to get rid of Jesus. After all, recently in the state of New York that is exactly what took place:

"A standing ovation for abortion? That's what New York's Reproductive Health Act got in the Senate chamber when it passed last week. Lawmakers and bystanders stood and applauded a law that legalizes abortion all the way up until birth, for any reason."⁸

Once again it can be said, "There is nothing new under the sun." If they applauded in New York and they stood by during the killing of the male babies in King Herod's day, they must have been doing it in the days when Pharaoh called for the killing of the Hebrew newborn baby boys in Egypt. In the United States, as of this moment according to an online abortion clock, "61,160,433 babies have been killed while still in their mother's womb since 1973."⁹ It is a sad thing to think of killing babies at any stage of development. Pharaoh took his place as a murderer of babies with the purpose of wiping out the Jacob-Israel family. Many throughout history have attempted this. Hitler sought to exterminate the Jews. Political leaders in other nations have sought to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. But it is amazing to see all of these attempts continue to fail.

The Hebrew midwives feared God and instead of killing the boy babies they worked to save "*the male children alive.*" So Pharaoh issued a decree to all his people that "*Every son who is born you shall cast into the river.*" His attempt was to ultimately bring an end to the Hebrew people. But God intervened and the people multiplied and grew mightily. Not only that but it was in this attempt to kill the baby boys that God delivered the deliverer, Moses, by way of Pharaoh's own daughter.

⁸<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2019/01/30/new-york-abortion-law-liberal-leaders-celebration-death-life-column/2670049002/>

⁹<http://www.numberofabortions.com/>

So we see in action **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)**, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* It is a wonderful thing to see the hand of God at work!

Day 5

Read Genesis 15:13-16

God told Abraham about his descendants. God told him his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not their own. He told him that they would be in slavery and treated cruelly for four hundred years. He told him the events of the slavery and deliverance from that slavery would take place. He told him that they would be afflicted for four-hundred years. But He also told Abraham that He would deliver them and they would come out with great possessions. God orchestrated history through the choices of people to make it such that the descendants of Abraham were in bondage in a foreign land. Through a series of historical events, Joseph, the son of Jacob who had been sold by his brothers to some traveling Midianite traders, was sold to Potiphar who was an officer of the Egyptian Pharaoh. So Joseph is now in Egypt. Then, through another series of historical events, which we have already looked at, Joseph become entrenched in Egypt. He became the second in command in Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh.

God clearly had a plan which included and required Abraham’s descendants to be in Egypt. It became a time of safety and security but also a time of slavery. This was of course no surprise to God. God was in on the people being in Egypt and He was also in on getting them out. The Jacob-Israel family had been there so long that most of them probably began to think of Egypt as their home. They had become comfortable. Later, as they wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus, they often desired to return to Egypt. So they had probably settled into the Land of Goshen for good but God would have no part of that. That was not His plan.

God used the hostility of the Pharaoh, who did not know Joseph, to cause the Jacob-Israel family to be anxious to come out of Egypt.

After God had rebuked Job for his complaints and had questioned Job, Job gave this one verse response:

"I'm convinced: You can do anything and everything. Nothing and no one can upset your plans." **Job 42:2 (MSG)**

What a blessing it is that God is in control, His kingdom will come and His will shall be done!

WEEK 32 GOD PROTECTS BABY MOSES-----Dennis Watson

The last half of Genesis 50 is a transition to Exodus. Joseph brought his family, including his father, Israel (Jacob), to Egypt. The words given to Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved and mistreated (see Genesis 15:13) in a foreign land had become a reality. God was in the mix sovereignly accomplishing His plan. God would now raise up a deliverer for the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. Like Moses, Jesus was born and as a baby his life was threatened by a political leader. Like Moses, Jesus would be a deliverer. God is once again seen as the one moving history toward His planned outcome. Enjoy the continuing movement of God to deliver His people.

Day 1

Read Genesis 50:15-26

All of the sons of Israel have relocated to Egypt. Their father, Israel, is dead and Joseph's brothers are scared that he will get back at them for mistreating him and selling him to the traders that brought him to Egypt. The brothers did not know that Joseph had already forgiven them. Forgiveness is a two-way street; it must be given and it must be received. Joseph had treated his brothers kindly and had obviously forgiven them. However, they remained fearful.

When the brothers approached Joseph, they told him that their father had asked that he forgive them. They did not ask for his forgiveness but told him that their father wanted him to forgive them. Joseph had already forgiven them and now he tells them that God had a bigger plan. Joseph tells them that although they intended to bring harm to him, God had plans to use what they had done for good. God was using it to save many lives and it was already happening.

There is so much for us to learn here. First of all, we must trust that God will use even the difficult things in our lives, those times

when people intentionally seek to hurt us, for His purpose. Be confident that God is still in control. Do what He wants and leave the rest to Him. Second, we learn that we should forgive before being asked to forgive and we must also forgive even if forgiveness is never requested. We have been forgiven and therefore we should forgive others. Joseph had already closed this chapter in his life and was now moving on to do what he needed to do. Not forgiving others can lock you up and prevent you from being able to fully carry on.

Have you forgiven those who have wronged you? Have you received forgiveness that has been given? Thank God for His forgiveness and His ability to use all things to accomplish His purposes.

Day 2

Read Exodus 1

We now move into the book of Exodus. The title of the book in the Greek translation is Exodus and means “A going out.” In Hebrew the title is “These are the names” which is the first phrase in the book. Clearly Exodus picks up where Genesis leaves off. It continues the narrative that had already begun. It continues to trace the history of man, but more specifically, the history of Israel and God’s dealing with them.

The new nation of Israel has been in Egypt now for more than 300 years. A new king in Egypt, called Pharaoh, comes to rule. He does not know anything about Joseph, his family or his history. Pharaoh saw the Israelites, also called Hebrews, as a growing threat. The Israelites were multiplying at an alarming rate and Pharaoh did not like it. He decided to put an end to the rapid growth so he began to treat the people of Israel “ruthlessly.” He put great burdens on them hoping to slow their growth. Instead, the Hebrew people grew all the more. He had another plan—to kill all of the baby boys as soon as they were born. However, the Hebrew midwives would not kill the babies. They told Pharaoh that the women were strong and babies were born before they got there. The midwives chose to obey God and ignore the demand of Pharaoh to kill the babies. God honored their obedience.

No matter what Pharaoh did, the people thrived because God had promised that anyone who cursed His people would be cursed and anyone who blessed them would be blessed (see Genesis 12:3). Pharaoh then decided to have all of the baby boys thrown into the Nile River.

In biblical history, God always raised up one that would come along to rescue His people. God is faithful. He made a promise to always be with His people. God is about to truly show Himself great! Thank God for His presence and His faithfulness!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Exodus 2:1-10

"Moses is writing this account of his parents and of his own birth and it is a modest record. This is why we must turn to other portions of the Bible to give us more information about the events in Exodus. If given the opportunity, most of us would want to tell about our parents in detail, but Moses didn't even mention his parents by name. They were ordinary people. They were in slavery. They were members of the tribe of Levi. This is all Moses tells us about them at this point. Later on we are given their names as Amram and Jochebed."¹⁰

Pharaoh was fearful of the Israelites. He plotted to bring them under control by limiting their population growth. He had the baby boys thrown into the Nile River. What a joke! God had promised to make Abraham's descendants a huge and mighty nation. Pharaoh made a feeble attempt to thwart God's plan.

It is a foolish thing to attempt to prevent the plan of God. Millions have tried with no success. After hiding the baby for three months, his mother made a waterproof container (basket), placed the three-month-old Moses in the basket, and put it in the Nile River. She had his sister, Miriam, keep watch over the floating basket. The daughter of Pharaoh saw the basket floating with the baby Moses in it and felt compassion for him. She soon discovered it was a Hebrew baby. Moses' sister, Miriam, who had been watching, went to Pharaoh's daughter and offered to find a Hebrew woman to nurse and care for the baby. Guess who she found, his own mother! What an amazing plan! His mother nursed and cared for him and Pharaoh's daughter paid her to do it! Pharaoh's daughter gave him the name Moses which means "to draw out."

God saved the baby Moses to rescue Egypt from bondage. God

¹⁰Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

would use another special baby to deliver people from sin. Many years later, the Roman King, Herod, was also killing the baby boys and an angel told Mary and Joseph to take their child, Jesus, to Egypt.

God's plans will not be thwarted. He will finish all that He starts. He uses people who will lock in with Him, even when the situation appears to be an impossible or hopeless one. Like Moses' mother we need to be creative and do what we can in trust and obedience to Him and leave the outcome to Him. He is faithful!

Day 4

Read Acts 7:2-22

Stephen, a deacon in the first century church, had an opportunity to give an explanation to some Jewish religious leaders about who Jesus was. The Jewish leaders were critical of Christians. They believed that Jesus was destroying their Jewish faith system.

Stephen, in his speech, tells the religious leaders about where their faith came from and that Jesus was not only part of it but the focus. He begins all the way back with Abraham and traces the biblical history up to Moses. He was showing that Moses was part of a bigger plan that pointed to Jesus. Stephen says that the table was set, so to speak, for Moses to come and deliver the people from bondage in Egypt. Stephen says, "*At that time Moses was born*" (**Acts 7:20**). The timing was perfect. It was right at the time that God had determined. His people, Israel, were in slavery in Egypt and had been for more than 300 years. He was now ready for them to be delivered or, at least, to begin the process.

Stephen was taking advantage of an opportunity of attacks made on him, not to defend himself or lash out, but to tell the truth about Jesus! He took full advantage of that opportunity to help the Jewish leaders to see Jesus in the context of their own history. Stephen was helping the religious leaders connect the dots.

Be prepared to share with people, within their context of life, who Jesus is. The goal is to help them know Him. Remember, Jesus is not an afterthought! He is a person in history and at the same time beyond history. He is the One who wrote history before history began and then fulfilled it!

Give thanks to God for His plan of history and that He made it known to us. Be prepared to share it!

Day 5

Read Isaiah 7:10-14

On Friday we usually look at a prophecy or a Psalm about Jesus. Many times prophecy have both an immediate fulfillment and a further out fulfillment. Such was the case here. There would be a woman, a virgin, who would marry and have a child and before He was old enough to know good and evil the alliance between Israel and Aram would be broken. There was also a far-out fulfillment which was understood by Matthew (see Matthew 1:23) to be fulfilled in Jesus. So there was a close-in fulfillment and a far-away fulfillment. "God sent Isaiah the prophet to encourage King Ahaz that the alliance of two enemies would not succeed against him. Isaiah tells Ahaz to ask for a sign. However, revealing false piety, Ahaz says that he will not ask for a sign. This answer sounded pious but something in the way he said it showed he did not believe Isaiah. Perhaps he did not want to believe Isaiah, who had been prophesying about the eventual destruction of Judah if her people did not return to the Lord."¹¹

There were two things in this prophecy about Jesus. First, it says that He would be born of a virgin. Mary was unmarried and had not yet "*known a man.*" That means she had never been sexually intimate. Second, it tells us that Jesus would be called Immanuel. Immanuel is a name that means "*God with us.*" Matthew quotes this passage in Matthew 1:23, applying it to Jesus. Jesus is the one born of a virgin and who is "*God with us.*" He was not an ordinary man. He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and He was the physical presence of God in the world.

God gave King Ahaz a prophecy to strengthen his faith. It may not have done anything for his faith but it sure does for mine!

¹¹The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty

WEEK 33 MOSES FLEES TO MIDIAN-----Dennis Watson

God was preparing a deliverer for His people to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. In the Bible Moses' life is divided into three 40-year periods. Each of these periods were preparation for Moses.

First forty years in Egypt

Second forty years in Midian

Third forty years in the Exodus wanderings

The second forty years were the result of being ahead of God's timing. Moses sought to rescue a Hebrew from an Egyptian. The second forty years were a time of leading sheep, also to prepare Moses to lead a large number of people.

The third forty years were the result of God's call in His timing. God's timing is always perfect.

God has a way of getting us where He wants us to be. This week we look at God preparing Moses for the great work of delivering His people from bondage.

Day 1

Read Acts 7:20-22

It is safe to say that Moses grew up advantaged. I am not talking about the advantage of being brought up in Pharaoh's palace. He was God-advantaged. God placed him in the palace of Pharaoh to prepare him for what God had in store for him and the people in Egypt.

God is always at work. He is never inactive. Look at the words of Jesus:

*"But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." **John 5:17 (NKJV)***

Isn't it great how God cares for us? Last week we saw how God protected the infant Moses and placed him in a safe place—a basket in the Nile River and then in the Palace of Pharaoh. See, he was advantaged although it was a difficult time for his parents and all the Jacob-Israel family.

God used the first forty years of Moses' life to prepare him for the middle forty and the last forty years of his life. He was, in Pharaoh's household, God-advantaged. In fact, when we as God's own are seeking to be in His will, even when we are not, we are God-advantaged! While in Pharaoh's palace God was at work preparing Moses for what was to come.

I believe Moses loved God and was called according to God's purpose. Even when he was seeking to do what was right by killing an Egyptian that was beating a Hebrew, God used it. Moses was doing the delivering work, he was just too early. God used it to fuel Moses' passion and get him out of town. But more of that tomorrow.

For today we need to understand that the God-advantaged Moses experienced education that thoroughly prepared Him for the two most history-impacting periods of his life. I do not believe that during that time Moses was thinking to himself, "God is preparing me for something special." Yet God always is and has been preparing His own for special times to come. It is safe to say that God had Moses where He wanted him and was preparing the way. He was preparing him "*in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.*" Here is what Adam Clark says in his commentary about this regarding the Egyptians:

"Who were, at that time, the most intelligent and best instructed people in the universe. Philo says, Moses was taught arithmetic, geometry, poetry, music, medicine, and the knowledge of hieroglyphics."¹²

¹² Adam Clark's Commentary

God is eternally good! He is always seeking to adjust us to His plan. The problem comes when we resist the adjustment. It is our part to trust Him as He is at work. Moses was right in his desire to rescue his people. It was just not the right time.

Just think about how you, too, are God-advantaged. Think about the times He worked things out in your life when you were not particularly happy with the circumstances. Now you can look back and see how God was at work, working things out for His will. God works to conform us to His plan.

Day 2

Read Exodus 2:11-15

Moses was aware that the people in bondage being used for slave labor were his "*brethren*." He went out one day to check on them to see how they were holding up under their burdens. He saw one of his "*brethren*," one of the Hebrews being beaten by an Egyptian. In his passion and concern he intervened and killed the Egyptian. The next day he saw two of his "*brethren*," Hebrews fighting and once again he intervened to stop them. One of them questioned Moses, asking if he was going to kill him like he killed the Egyptian the day before. Moses was fearful, and when word came to Pharaoh that he had killed an Egyptian, Moses had to run for his life.

But thank God, His children are God-advantaged. Even when we jump ahead and try to take things in our own hands, He orders things according to His wise ends. As far as Moses' intervention between the Hebrew and the Egyptian, things were not yet ripe for the deliverance of the Jacob-Israel family. Warren Wiersbe explains the situation like this:

"The measure of Egypt's iniquity was not yet full; the Hebrews were not sufficiently humbled, nor were they yet increased to such a multitude as God designed: Moses is to be farther fitted for the service, and therefore is directed to withdraw for the present, till the time to favor Israel, even the set time, come."¹³

God's timing is perfect. Man's timing is either too early or too late. It was not time. However, the time was coming; just forty more years.

¹³Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.

It seems like the perfect time to mention this verse:

" And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)

Keep doing what you believe God has you to do. It can become wearisome and monotonous but keep at it. God has a plan and the plan will come together in His time. Don't grow weary. The harvest will come.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-22 and Acts 3:22-26

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-22 and Acts 3:22-26 Reading the Bible is so much fun. It is like reading a novel again when you have already read it and already know how things turn out. It is great to read these accounts with the reminder that it is the Sovereign God of the Bible who is in control. With each reading new details and connections are discovered. With His Word, God has given us an incredible treasure. Each week there is a day to specifically connect to Jesus.

God gave Moses instruction to write about prophets in the law. There would be other prophets but Moses was one of the first. Moses wrote that there would be a prophet like himself who the people were to hear and if they did not, the people would be accountable to God. Adam Clarke writes in his commentary that the prophet to come would be, “a prophet, a legislator, a king, a mediator, and the head or chief of the people of God. This was the very person of whom Moses was the type, and who should accomplish all the great purposes of the Divine Being. Such a prophet as had never before appeared, and who should have no equal till the consummation of the world. This prophet is the Lord Jesus, who was in the bosom of the Father, and who came to declare him to mankind. Every word spoken by him is a living infallible oracle from God himself; and must be received and obeyed as such, on pain of the eternal displeasure of the Almighty.”¹⁴

In the passage in Acts 3, Peter was connecting Jesus the Messiah of God to the words spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy. Jesus was the One who would give the hearers a new law. This time in Acts was a transition period. The Jews were given one final opportunity to accept the Messiah. Of course, we now know that they did not, and Paul came on the scene as the apostle to the Gentiles.

¹⁴Adam Clarke's Commentary.

It is amazing to read these words and see them come to fruition. God provided His prophets to speak forth God's Word to His people. The Jews would be responsible to hear the message of the greater prophet, but their failure opened the door to the Gentiles. Jesus was the mediator, the lawgiver, the One who performed signs and wonders and was the true King.

Adam Clark summed it up this way:

"God never commissioned any human beings to give laws to mankind but Moses and Christ; and therefore, as a lawgiver, Christ alone resembles Moses; for to the present hour none but themselves have given laws in the name of God, which he has ratified and confirmed by the most indubitable and infallible signs, proofs, and miracles."¹⁵

The biblical, historical, account goes on. Rejoice and celebrate what God has done!

¹⁵Adam Clarke's Commentary.

Day 4

Read Exodus 2:16-21

It is amazing how God does things. When Moses transferred leadership responsibilities to Joshua, he told him, *"And the LORD, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."*

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NKJV). Here is an incredible biblical truth: The Lord, *"He is the one who goes before you."* God led Moses to the land of Midian and the Midianites. Talk about going before Moses! Who were the people and what was this land? The Midianites were descendants of one of Abraham's sons Midian by Keturah whom Abraham married after Sarah died. The Midianites were the descendants of Midian and therefore children of Abraham. It seems that God had an incredible way of keeping it all in the family. God had prepared a special place and a branch of the family for Moses to go to. For forty years he was safely being prepared for what was to come. He got married and started his family. He took care of his father-in-law's sheep which was great preparation for shepherding the people of Israel.

God provided Moses with a training ground with spiritual heritage:

"God guided Moses to Midian, because the Midianites were of the seed of Abraham, and retained the worship of the true God; so that he might have not only a safe, but a comfortable settlement among them; and through this country he was afterwards to lead Israel, which, that he might do the better, he now had opportunity of acquainting himself with it. Hither he came, and sat down by a well; tired and thoughtful, waiting to see which way Providence would direct him. It was a great change with him, since he was but the other day at ease in Pharaoh's court.¹⁶

This was a forty-year period of transition in which God went before Moses. Just think, as you walk with the Lord, He goes before you. He has already been there and prepared the way. Trust Him and move forward with confidence and trust in Him.

¹⁶Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.

Day 5

Read Exodus 2:22-25

What about the Hebrew people in bondage in Egypt? They had been there for four hundred years. Hearing their cry under their bondage was no surprise to God. However, now they were ready for rescue. God knew! He told Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 15:13-14, that Abraham's descendants would be in bondage in a strange land for four hundred years. God also told Abraham in the same passage that after that time, after the four hundred years, his descendants would "come out with great possessions." Now was the time. The people were crying out to be delivered. Moses was ready and the rest of the world was prepared.

Here we have another transition. God is spoken of like a mere man who "hears" and "remembers." But He is not like a man. These are anthropomorphic statements. God knows everything. He does not remember like a person who forgets. Human attributes are given to God. God never learns, remembers or hears at least not in human terms.. He knows all. Man's cries connect him to God. It is the case of a person coming to the end of themselves and seeking God. The Hebrew people, the Jacob-Israel family, could not do anything to deliver themselves from their bondage. They were in a place of desperation.

Desperation meets a dead end when a person meets Jesus who is saying, "*Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" **Matthew 11:28 (NKJV)**. It is not necessarily God's plan for us to labor and be heavy laden. It is however, His plan that we seek Him and cry out to Him.

Moses was ready. The Jacob-Israel people were ready. The surrounding nations were ready. The time had come. It was a time determined by God.

We end this week prepared for what comes over the next four weeks which is one of the most pivotal times in all of history—the birth of the nation of Israel! Through God's call to Abraham

God brought His promise to the world. Through His call of Moses, he delivered the Jacob-Israel family which became a nation, the nation of Israel. Through the nation of Israel God brought the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Savior into the world. What an amazing God and what an amazing plan!

WEEK 34 GOD CALLS MOSES-----Chris Watson

God's call is for all believers! If you are following Jesus you have heard God's call and have responded to His drawing. We are all called to follow God and seek Him with all we have. This week we will see the calling of Moses, another person that God used in His plan. We should be like Moses and seek to be used by God as a part of His plan.

Day 1

Read Exodus 2:11-25 and Acts 7:23-29

This is not the first time we see a murder in the Bible; we saw Cain murder Abel back in the beginning of Genesis. In today's reading Moses sought to take things into his own hands and sought to save his people from the harsh and bad conditions they suffered under the Egyptians. While what Moses wanted and sought to do was right, I am not so sure the way he dealt with it was right. We don't know when, but obviously Moses somehow realizes that he is not an Egyptian and that he belongs to the Hebrew people. We would have to admit he had it pretty nice; he was living in the Pharaoh's palace and, most likely, had all he wanted, but he couldn't stand that his people were being mistreated.

While Moses' choice to kill the Egyptian may not have been the best choice, his intention to free and help his people was. After all, they (Israelites) were slaves and Moses was seeking to help them. But instead of them looking to him for help they shared the news of the killing and it made it all the way to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh got word of the killing, he wanted to kill Moses, so Moses fled.

We will read later this week that God had a plan to free the people and Moses is heavily involved in that plan, but now it would be God's way. Like Moses, we often take things into our own hands. Even though our intent and meaning might be right, the

way we go about it may not be the best. Today, as you see things that are against God's heart and desire, ask the Lord to help you respond how He would, not necessarily the way you might respond "in the flesh." Ask God to give you His heart and mind and to see things the way He sees them. John McArthur says, "True faith accepts the Lord's plan." Today, let's accept the plan of God, whatever that might be.

Day 2

Read Exodus 3

From Acts 7, verses 23 and 30, we know that there were 40 years between the time Moses killed the Egyptian and the time he met God in the burning bush. As we saw in our study yesterday, Moses had the desire and wanted to help free his people but probably didn't go about it the right way.

We see from today's scripture that God visits Moses and tells him that he will be used to deliver his people. Although 40 years ago Moses was all about helping his people, and although he wants to help them now, he begins to make excuses. Maybe excuses like "how can I do it" and "what if the Israelites say this or say that?" The difference between now and 40 years ago is that Moses is instructed by God and given the words of God that He will deliver His people under Moses' direction (vs 16 and 17). While Moses' desire was to help his people 40 years prior, this was now God's plan and was being played out God's way.

God had appointed Moses for this time. It was what God had planned for him to do. God often has ways in which He wants to carry out His plans and purposes through us; we just need to be willing to listen, hear, and follow Him. One of the best ways to do this is exactly what you are doing right now, reading and studying God's Word. God often reveals Himself through His Word and through prayer. What might God be leading you to do at this time and in this place? How does God want you to lead your family, co-workers, church, and your friends?

Lord, make us willing and ready; however You may want to use us. He just might be raising you up for this time and this place and for His purpose. We should be saying "God here I am. How do You want to use me?"

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Hebrews 11:23-26

These four verses say so much, along with helping us understand a little more about Moses. In this passage there are two “by faith” statements. The first is that “by faith” his parents hid him for three months. The second is “by faith” Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. We also learn that Moses chose to be mistreated with his people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He knew that seeking God, regardless of his circumstances, was the right thing to do and that he would receive his reward.

Those two small words, “by faith,” mean so much. Hebrews 11 is full of these words. **Verse 1** tells us that faith is, “*Being certain of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” Faith is trusting and taking God at His Word. Moses had the option to continue living lavishly, getting the best food, clothes, and everything that money could buy while living in an ungodly atmosphere, or choosing to obey God. He had the choice to follow the gods of Egypt or follow the One True God. We know that Moses chose to follow God and we will see as we continue reading Exodus that even the choice to follow God wasn’t all glitz and glamour. However, he knew that God would take care of him and that God would be His reward.

May we be like Moses and seek to be in God’s plan! Whether it makes complete sense or not, whether we know the next step or not, may we say “by faith I will follow and trust God, the One True God, no matter what!” In years to come let others say of us, “by faith” we sought and followed God, “by faith” we trusted God when others didn’t. May all who come behind us find us faithful.

Day 4

Read Exodus 4:1-17

At forty years old Moses was ready to help and free his people from bondage and slavery. Now, at eighty years old, he is not so sure; he is not so confident. In today's verses we see Moses as a big "excuse maker." Every time God tells Moses that he is the person to help free his people, he has an excuse or reason why it won't work. In fact, Moses argues and makes one last excuse. In verse 14, the Bible tells us that the Lord's anger burned against Moses; in essence, the Lord was fed up with his excuses.

Unfortunately, we all make excuses when God speaks to us and instructs us to do something. Go somewhere, reach out to someone, give something away, or maybe befriend someone. Sometimes, we immediately obey, but at other times, we might make excuses and either do it later or not do it at all. You may have heard the statement that delayed obedience is disobedience. Moses was in disobedience to the Lord because instead of going as soon as the Lord told him to go, he just made excuses. As we will see later, he did finally obey the Lord but it would have been best to simply take the Lord at His word and head to Egypt as soon as the Lord told Him to go.

Moses was a great man of faith, as we learned from yesterday's devotion, but he often struggled with sin and not listening to God, just like we do. Today, let us be sensitive to God's voice. May we hear what He has to say, and when He speaks to our heart, may our answer be, "Yes, Lord." Let us not make excuses, argue with the Lord, or tell Him why we can't, but let us say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." When He speaks, we need to be ready and willing to obey!

Day 5

Read Isaiah 8:11-15

The religious leaders of Israel that were supposedly God-fearing people didn't recognize God in human form. The King was among them in the man of Jesus and yet they didn't acknowledge Him; in fact, they put Him to death. When Jesus came to earth, He spoke truth and told the leaders to follow God's laws instead of the man-made laws. Of course, they didn't like this. Isn't it interesting that the ones who were supposed to be seeking and following God didn't see Him when He was right in front of them?

Verse 14 tells us that God can be a sanctuary, but in verse 15 we see that He can be a stumbling block. How can this be? It all has to do with how we see God and Jesus. "If the things of God be an offense to us, they will undo us. The apostle quotes this to all who persisted in unbelief of the gospel of Christ, **1 Peter 2:8**. *"The preaching of the cross is foolishness in their esteem; his doctrines and precepts offend them."*¹⁷

However, if we view and know Him as our Father, our comforter, and our redeemer, then He is our sanctuary, a place of rest. Is Jesus a stumbling block to you or is He your resting place? To those who seek to be good on their own and not trust in Jesus, He can be a stumbling block. But to those who know that goodness and hope can only be found in the person of Jesus, He is their sanctuary.

Today, I hope you rest in Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!

¹⁷Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary

WEEK 35 MOSES CONFRONTS PHAROH-----Dennis Watson

God had prepared and called Moses for a certain task—to deliver and lead the Israelites out of bondage and slavery in Egypt. Do you remember how they got there? It was by no fault of their own. Joseph had been sold by his brothers to traders who took him to Egypt and sold him to a man named Potiphar. God gave Joseph the ability to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh and, as a result, he was elevated to a high position in Egypt. Joseph administered a savings plan during a time of great harvests and then a distribution plan during the times of famine. His father and brothers came to Egypt for food and they finally moved to Egypt. Now, after more than 300 years, there are many people that make up the people of Israel. This week we will learn about the hardened heart of Pharaoh and his refusal to obey the command of God from Moses.

Day 1

Read Exodus 4:18-23, 27-30 and Chapter 5

Moses' brother Aaron chose to go with him on the trip to Egypt to lead the people out of slavery. He became the spokesman for Moses. Aaron announced to the people that Moses had been sent by God to deliver them from their captors. He showed them the miraculous signs that God had provided for them. At first the people believed, were thankful, and worshipped.

Moses and Aaron then went to Pharaoh requesting that they be allowed to take the people into the wilderness to have a feast and to worship. The initial request was for a feast celebration, rather than a total departure. Pharaoh immediately refused and accused Moses and Aaron of keeping the people from their work. I guess Moses was expecting Pharaoh to simply say, "Go." However, what he said was "No," and made the people's work even harder. Not only did they have to continue making bricks but now they had to go and find their own straw to be used in the brick making. The people who were overseeing the work became even harsher.

The Israelites complained to Pharaoh about the increased workload and Pharaoh told them it was because of Moses and Aaron. The people then complained to Moses. Their belief and celebration had turned into complaining. At first the enslaved Israelites were thankful that Moses was there to deliver them but when things got harder, they wavered in their faith, grumbling and complaining.

This was a pattern for the Israelites in the Old Testament. They would trust and follow God and then get discouraged, complain, and become disobedient.

What do you do when you face unexpected roadblocks in your life? Do you get discouraged and complain? We have a long record of this pattern in the Old Testament. We can learn a very valuable lesson, if we will. When things get harder than expected, trust God anyway! Difficulty does not necessarily mean you are going the wrong way. Trust God to finish what He started.

Ask God to provide the grace for you to stay the course even when the course becomes difficult.

Day 2

Read Exodus 5:22-6:1

I have been right where Moses was! I have often done what I thought God wanted but it didn't work out the way I wanted or expected. And, like Moses, I whined to God, "Why did you do this?" Moses was disappointed because he was following God's instructions. He went to Pharaoh, asked him to let the people go into the wilderness and worship and make sacrifices. I guess Moses was again expecting Pharaoh to say, "Go." However, instead his answer was again, "No!" Pharaoh then made the people's work even harder.

We have to remember a few things. First of all, with God, time is not a big deal. He is not on a time schedule. We have a tendency to think that if things do not happen at a certain time then it may not be God's will. Second, we think that we know what God wants to accomplish and how He wants to accomplish it. His thoughts and ours are certainly not the same! God has plans we could never understand. He has ways of accomplishing His plans that include much more than we could ever understand.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. **Isaiah 55:8 (NKJV)**

God encouraged Moses in response to his prayer. God told him that He (God) would lead the people out of bondage and that He (God) would do certain things to Pharaoh. God was going to show Himself great so that the people would know that God was great and powerful!

Our part is to trust God even in the most difficult of situations! How many times do people give up because things get difficult? Ask God to enable you to trust Him when things do not appear to be working out. God is faithful and He will finish what He starts.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Exodus 6:2-9

Moses, along with the Israelites, struggled because God's deliverance was not immediate. God answered Moses' complaint telling him that he would get the people out of the bondage in Egypt. However, as God's answer continues in today's passage, God tells him more than just His promise to get them out of Egyptian slavery. He tells them that He would also redeem them. This is forward looking. It looks to Jesus as the ultimate redeemer. God goes way beyond just getting them out. He says that He will lead them to the land of promise. This is the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He also tells Moses that He will be their God and they will be His people.

It is important to remember that God is holy and sinless and all people are sinful. How was it that Holy God would have a relationship described here as, *"I will be their God and they will be My people"*? God was welcoming them into a special relationship. In order for this to happen, the sin problem would have to be dealt with. God knew that one day He would send Jesus, the ultimate redeemer, making the relationship possible. Jesus would not just lead us out but He would lead us into a relationship with Holy God. All the way back in Genesis 3:15 we see that God had a plan to redeem people from sin and bring the conflict to an end. He repeats His plan in various ways throughout the Old Testament. God is in the redeeming business.

The people were so discouraged by their circumstances that they did not receive the words with enthusiasm. Often, we are discouraged by our circumstances to the point that the salvation God has provided for us is not enough to bring the encouragement we need.

Ask God for the grace to enjoy and find full contentment in what He has done for you in Jesus.

Day 4

Read Exodus 7:8-13

Moses spent the first forty years of his life in Egypt being raised as Pharaoh's daughter's son. After fleeing to Midian, he spent another forty years there. He then encountered God in the burning bush and returned to Egypt to be the deliverer of God's people from bondage at the age of eighty.

When he had his second encounter with Pharaoh, he discovered that God had hardened the heart of Pharaoh. In reality, God predicted that Pharaoh, in his resistance to God, would harden his own heart. Several times in Exodus we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 8:15, 19, 32). God knew of his resistance and used it to accomplish His purposes. As a result of Pharaoh's resistance, God said that, *"The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord."* **Exodus 7:5 (NKJV)**

In today's passage we see that when Aaron throws down his rod to show God's power the Egyptian magicians do the same. Aaron's rod became a serpent and the magician's rods also turned into serpents. However, Aaron's rod swallowed up the magician's rods. What Aaron did with his rod was from the power of God. What the Egyptian magicians did was trickery. God showed His superiority by causing Aaron's rod to swallow the Egyptian's rods. God's power overcame! Even after the display of God's power over the Egyptian magicians, Pharaoh's heart continued to harden.

Ask God to soften your heart so that you will be submissive to His plan and will.

Day 5

First Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The prophet Isaiah said that there would be one who would come and bring light to people walking in darkness. In Matthew 4:15-16 this prophecy is applied to Jesus. In John 8:12 Jesus says that He is the light of the world. Jesus is the light that Isaiah was talking about. Also, in Isaiah 9 there is one described who would be man and God at the same time. It says that He would be *"Mighty God."* Only Jesus fits this description. He was born of a woman, not just any woman, but one who was a virgin. Jesus was born as a baby just like everyone else yet He was not conceived by a man, but by the Holy Spirit. He was fully God and fully man. As man He died in our place to take our punishment. Since He was fully God, He lived a sinless life and therefore defeated death and the grave when He was raised from the dead.

There are several other names for Jesus in Isaiah 9. One of those describes the result of His activity as Light and Mighty God. As a result of what He accomplished as the God-Man He would also be the *"Prince of Peace."* Since He provides light for living and walking safely through life and since He died for us, taking away sin's penalty, He brings peace. As *"Prince of Peace,"* He rules in our hearts and will ultimately rule with peace. He will take away all competing forces. The opposite of peace is conflict. When Jesus rules, He settles for us the issue of competing forces. You can have only one boss or master. All others hold a distant second place. Think of it this way; when Jesus is Lord of your life many of the decisions you struggle with are already made. I often encounter people who are in a struggle and they say, "I just don't know what to do." That is not really the struggle. As followers of Jesus they know what to do. The real problem is are they going to follow Him or their own fleshly desires? Jesus brings peace, but to experience it fully you need to follow Him.

Seek FIRST His kingdom!

Week 36 GOD SENDS PLAGUES AGAINST EGYPT

-----Chris Watson

It must have been a crazy time to have lived during the plagues that take place in this week's reading! God could have simply made Pharaoh let the people go from the beginning, but in His plan, this isn't what happened. Rather, He used plagues and difficult times to teach and draw the people to Himself. Pharaoh was evil and did not fear God; God even used this for His glory. God's plan, even when hard to see, is always best.

Day 1

Read Exodus 7:14-24

Can you imagine standing there and seeing the whole Nile River turn to blood? The Nile is approximately 4,200 miles long and 2 miles wide. This whole body of water was turned to blood and the people had to look elsewhere for drinking water. Incredible!

But I wonder what must have been going through Moses' and Aaron's minds. Exodus 7:3 and 7:22 says that they already knew that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened again and that Pharaoh would not listen to them, but they obeyed the Lord and followed His commands anyway. That must have been disheartening! To follow the Lord, doing what He says in hopes of freeing your people, and yet knowing all the while that Pharaoh's heart would still be hard and he wouldn't let the people go! However, Moses and Aaron followed the Lord. While I am sure it didn't totally make sense to them, they trusted His plan.

I want to be like that! I want to follow the Lord when it makes sense and when it doesn't, when things are going great and when things are falling apart. I want to trust the Lord even when I don't feel like it. Trusting God is not an emotion or something that just happens by chance; it is an intentional choice to trust and follow God. Even when it seems like there is no hope or even when it's difficult, we know that we can trust Him. Isaiah 40 tells us to

trust and hope in the Lord, not people, things, or even friends or family, but to choose to trust Jesus. What do you choose?

Today, let's CHOOSE to trust God and to put our hope in Him and Him alone!

Day 2

Read Exodus 9

God takes care of His people; He always has and He always will. As we have learned in previous devotions, this doesn't mean that His people won't face hard times or that life will go as planned. Rather, it means we can trust God to take care of us no matter what we go through.

The Israelites found themselves in the middle of some pretty crazy plagues. From gnats and flies to boils and hail, it must have been quite a sight to see. However, notice in Exodus 9:4 and 9:26 that God made a distinction between the Egyptians and God's chosen people, the Israelites. In verse 4 it says that no animals of the Israelites would die and in verse 7 that fact is confirmed. Again in verse 26 we read that Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was the only place in Egypt that it did not hail. In both of these instances God was caring for His people. At the same time I believe it was a reminder for them that in all of the plagues He was still in control. He was still calling the shots, even when Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

We may look at what's going on in our lives, the lives of our family and friends, or even the life of our country and world, and things seem to be falling apart. However, there are ways in which we see God working and God doing what only He can do. These times often remind us that, no matter what is going on in our lives or around us, God is still ultimately in control. As the song says, "He's got the whole world in His hands." We need to trust His plan and His heart, knowing He cares for us.

Place at the Lord's feet whatever may be going on with you and trust that He has that very thing in His hands.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Exodus 10:1-2

You may have asked this question several times when reading this week's scripture, "Why is God continuing to harden Pharaoh's heart?" In these two verses we get the answer. The answer was not so much for the Israelites or the Egyptians right then, but it was for their children, grandchildren, and their great, great, great grandchildren! It's so they would know that God is the Lord (v. 2).

We often see, in the here and now, only what is right in front of us. But God sees it all, the before, the present, and the future! His plan is being crafted; His heart is being conveyed. Just think about what happened thousands of years ago and we can still read about today. We see that the works that God has performed are just some of the many reasons we can know that the Lord is God!

God had the future moms and dads, sons and daughters, and aunts and uncles all in mind during this. He wanted the truth to be passed on! Do we pass it on? Do we want to pass the truth of God on to our families? 100 years from now, no one will really know who you and I were, apart from a picture on a shelf or maybe a few stories. But they can know our God, they can know the truth. What we pass on to our kids right now is huge. We can pass on the truth and fear of God or we can pass on nothing; the things of this world that will fade away!

I recently read an article by John Piper saying one of the best things a parent can pass on to their family is a marked-up Bible, the knowledge that Dad or Mom loved God. How are you passing God and Jesus on to your family?

Check out the great read at <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/dads-write-in-your-bible>

Day 4

Read Exodus 10:3-20

We have begun to see a pattern here with Pharaoh! Once a plague is impacting him and his people, he tells Moses that he has sinned against the Lord. In **verse 17** he speaks to Moses and says, *“Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the Lord your God to take this deadly plague away from me.”* Had Pharaoh really recognized his sin and turned from it? No. Basically, all he wanted was the plague to be taken away. This was true with this plague and all the others. We have all been like Pharaoh, including myself! We might get into a bad situation, be experiencing tough times or heartache brought on by our own poor choice(s), and we acknowledge it before God and ask for forgiveness. But our real desire is for whatever we are experiencing to stop. Sometimes, we are not really concerned with seeking God and repenting, but we want to get out of the mess we are in. Often, once we get out of the mess, we go right back to our selfish ways of not acknowledging God anymore. At least not until the next tough time begins.

God wants all of us all of the time. He is not satisfied with some of us all of the time or with all of us some of the time; He wants us to be "all in." He wants us to realize that our goal and heart's desire in life should be to live in a love relationship with Him. To do that, we can't continue in sin any longer. Paul made that clear in Romans, chapters 7 and 8. God wants all of us, all of our hearts, our minds, our souls, and our strengths. And when we fall short of that He wants us to acknowledge it and come back to seek Him.

Today, let our prayer be, “Lord I want to follow You all the days of my life. The good days and the bad days, the happy and the sad days. I want to follow You both when I am in turmoil and when I am flourishing!”

Day 5

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and Acts 3:18-23

We have already seen that Jesus is all over the Old Testament! Today we see another glimpse of that. God used Moses to lead the people out of Egypt as a part of His plan. As we see in Deuteronomy today, Moses understood that God's plan also included Jesus. It is mentioned in Acts that who the prophet Moses was talking about is Jesus. Of course we know that Jesus wasn't just a prophet as some would have us believe; He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Jesus was also a prophet in that He spoke the words of God. He prophesied His own death and resurrection. Jesus was here on earth to tell us the very words of God. He was here to live, to die, and to be raised again. He was here to save us from our sins and to show us how to live and take the Gospel to the world. We are to follow Him, we are to seek Him. One of the greatest ways we can do this is through reading His Word, just as you have done today. Just think! We have the "rest of the story," as Paul Harvey would say, and it's all true. Moses, Peter, Paul, and Abraham didn't have the Bible as we have it today. Sure, they had the words of God but they didn't have the 66 books wrapped into one book that connects the dots from the beginning of time until the new earth. We do. We have it right in God's Word, the Bible. Isn't that incredible? May we treasure the Word of God, it is one of the greatest treasures in the world.

Perhaps you have seen a video of brothers and sisters in other countries receiving their very own Bibles for the first time. They cherish them and are so thankful for God's Word. They treat them like they are the best gift they have ever received and they are often crying tears of joy. I want to treat God's Word like that.

Thank God for His Word!

WEEK 37 THE LAST PLAGUE AND THE FIRST PASSOVER

-----Dennis Watson

God had brought nine plagues upon Pharaoh and all of Egypt. The goal was two-fold; first, to convince Pharaoh to let the people leave from Egypt and second, to show God's greatness. There was one remaining plague, and the Jews still celebrate it today. Christians also celebrate it today, but in a very different way. The tenth plague was the plague of the death of the firstborn. By way of reminder, here is a list of the first nine plagues:

1. The Plague of Water Turned to Blood
2. The Plague of Frogs
3. The Plague of Lice
4. The Plague of Flies
5. The Plague of the Livestock
6. The Plague of Boils
7. The Plague of Hail
8. The Plague of Locusts
9. The Plague of Darkness

Day 1

First Read Exodus 11

God told Moses there would be one last plague and then Pharaoh would send the people away. How far would you have to go before reaching the end of yourself so that you would seek God and His mercy? The land of Egypt had been ruined by the previous nine plagues. There was little left as far as food sources. The people were crying out for relief. But when Moses announced the coming of the tenth and last plague, Pharaoh's heart was once again hardened. He refused to let the people go. God told Moses that now Pharaoh would finally let the Israelites go. The grip of sin can be stubborn and relentless. We see that Pharaoh was unmoved, even by the devastation that had come to the people and the land of Egypt. With the last plague he would be touched; his own firstborn son would die.

We can hear God, either through His Word or through His Spirit. By ignoring His voice and continuing in our own way of disobedience we allow our hearts to become hardened. A hardened heart is like a callous that forms on your hand. It continues to get harder and harder and it becomes less and less sensitive to touch. Eventually, hands like these are hard and insensitive. For some workers, calloused hands are protective and enable them to do their work. But for others, like surgeons, calloused hands would be a negative thing for their work. When it comes to relating to God, a hardened heart keeps us from walking with Him and experiencing His blessings and benefits. In this last plague there would again be a distinction between God's people, and the Egyptians. God was going to provide a way for the Israelites to be protected; this points to Jesus. Only Jesus can break sin's hold. The only hope of breaking the stronghold of sin is found in Jesus.

Ask God to enable you to keep your heart soft and sensitive to His Word.

Day 2

Read Exodus 12:1-30

The first eleven chapters of Exodus are about Moses, the deliverer. Chapters 12-14 are about the deliverance of Israel. Chapter 12 is a high point in Exodus. The events in chapter 12 mark the beginning of the Jewish religious calendar.

"Here we see the establishment of the Feast of Passover. The Feast of the Passover was instituted as a memorial to Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their adoption as Jehovah's nation. The Passover is a festival that laid the foundation of the nation Israel's birth into a new relationship with God."¹⁸

Death was going to be the rule for all in Egypt. The tenth plague was the plague of death for the firstborn of animals and people—Egyptians and Israelites. There would be death in every home. However, God provided a way to make a distinction between the two. For the Israelites who trusted God and were obedient there would be a substitute death. God instructed the Israelites to take a lamb that was perfect—without blemish—that was less than a year old. They were to kill it in the evening on the designated day and put the blood of the lamb on the outside doorposts as a sign that the death of the lamb was their substitute. At midnight the angel of death would come to put to death the firstborn of every household. If the angel saw the blood of the lamb on the doorpost it would pass over that house and no further death would come to the household. The name Passover was given to this special observance and was to be a reminder of God's provision through the blood of the Passover lamb.

All over Egypt in the homes of the Egyptians there was loud crying because death had come to their home. Among the Israelites all was quiet. We will see in tomorrow's passage that the Passover Lamb, here in Exodus, points forward to the true Passover Lamb, Jesus. Give thanks to God for the wonderful blood of Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

¹⁸Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read I Corinthians 5:7-8

The events of the Passover Feast in the setting of the Exodus really do point to Jesus. Paul's writing in today's passage shows Jesus as our Passover Lamb. He also links it with the subject of leaven. As the people were preparing to leave Egypt they were to prepare bread without leaven. There would be no time for the dough to rise as they were preparing to leave Egypt in haste. In the future the Feast of Unleavened Bread would remind them of the haste with which they left Egypt. Leaven was also a symbol of evil, although, leaven itself is not evil. However, leaven was essential to cause the dough to rise when left for a time in a warm place. The dough was then placed in an oven for baking. If it was left too long it would continue to rise and ultimately spoil all of the dough. The same is true in a believer's life and in the church. If sin is left unchecked it will spread and have a devastating effect on many people.

Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He is our substitute. In the same way, on the evening of the plague of the death of the firstborn, the angel of death saw the blood of the lamb and then passed over that house. The lamb's death was the substitute death. For us; Jesus is our substitute, He is our sacrifice. Jesus' death was substituted for ours. He became sin for us and died in our place. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is similar to the Israelites celebrating Passover. The Israelites remembered the substitute lamb and God's deliverance. We remember that Jesus died for us as God's provision for our forgiveness.

As the people prepared to leave Egypt, they did some things that made all the difference in their lives. First, they sacrificed the lamb and put the blood on the outside doorpost. Second, they prepared the bread without leaven. They trusted God's provision. Have you trusted His provision? Have you placed your faith in Jesus as God's Passover Lamb who died for you?

Thank God for His provision. If you have not received Him, please do so now!

Day 4

Read Exodus 12:30-42

It's hard to imagine being in slavery. The Israelites had spent around 400 years in this situation, apparently with each year becoming more oppressive. That's more than 15 generations. The people had lived for all of those generations with a culture of slavery. Now, through God's provision they were about to be set free! The words of Martin Luther King Jr. ring true for the people, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty we are free at last."

At this time there were 600,000 men. Counting women and children there could have been as many as 2 million people departing Egypt. What an incredible number of people. After Jacob's arrival in Egypt along with his family there were seventy. Now there were around 2 million. God blessed the people and they multiplied as God had promised Abraham and now they were a great nation!

Everything happened just as God had said. The people gave them resources—gold, silver, and clothing. Pharaoh sent them out.

God is the God of all, including all of history. He accomplishes His purposes and even tells ahead of time what He is going to do and how He is going to do it. We are blessed to see God's incredible track record of prophecy, promise, and fulfillment. We live in a wonderful time when we still have prophecy and promises of God waiting to be fulfilled.

Thank God for His faithfulness and for delivering the Israelites from slavery.

Day 5

Read Psalm 45:1-6

Today we look at a Psalm which points to Jesus as the Messiah. In Hebrews 1:8-9 this Psalm is quoted and helps to label Psalm 45 as a Messianic Psalm. This Psalm is a word of encouragement as it speaks of a coming King, Jesus, who would ride as a victorious King and warrior.

This is what is pictured in **Revelation 19:11-13**:

“¹¹Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.”

The things we see in this Psalm ring true of Jesus. His reign will be with truth and righteousness. He will rule over His enemies and all people will bow before Him. He accomplished this victory at the cross where He defeated the enemy of God and man, Satan. His throne will last forever. His reign will be without end. There is only one King whose reign will never end and that is Jesus.

The Israelites, throughout their history, have been plagued by their enemies. It all started with the Egyptians and has continued through history. This Psalm would bring a fresh word of hope to a suffering people. It also reminds us that God has a plan to defeat the enemy of God and man and then have that King rule forever with truth and righteousness.

Give thanks for the eternal rule and reign of King Jesus!

WEEK 38 GOD PARTS THE RED SEA-----Chris Watson

The Israelites had already seen the One True God do some pretty amazing things as He was preparing them to be freed from slavery, the last being the Passover. However, this week we will continue to see what only God can do. With their backs against the army and the Red Sea in front of them, God did some great things!

Day 1

Read Exodus 13:1-16

It's important to see what the Lord is doing now and what He will do in the future, but it's also important to see what He has already done. Today's passage makes sure that those that come after the Exodus will know how and why the Lord delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians and Pharaoh's rule, because their God is great.

The Lord wanted the generations that would follow to remember what He had done and to worship Him. Thousands of years later we read about it and it is still celebrated. Leaven, in scripture, represents sin (Luke 12:1 and 1 Corinthians 5:8). Of course, we cannot be without sin; the only way that can happen is through Jesus.

Scripture tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Of course, the Passover is connected to Christ as we see the last supper with the disciples. We also celebrate communion in what God has done for us as we eat the bread and drink the cup. Jesus was and is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Today death is not passed over us by putting blood above our doorposts. Rather, we have eternal life and escape spiritual death by trusting in the blood and death of Jesus, which was foreshadowed in this passage. Notice the last supper (Passover) in Matthew 26 was celebrated on the First day of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread (Matzah) means "without sin."

Matthew 26:26-29 (NKJV) says ²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."²⁸ This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus is our Passover, we will be passed over (be given life with Jesus) during the time of God's judgment, if we have received God's free gift of salvation.

Take some time today to thank God for His elaborate plan. If you have accepted His blood, His gift of salvation, thank Him. If you haven't, receive it today, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Day 2

Read Exodus 14:1-7

I wonder what Moses must have thought when the Lord told him that Pharaoh and his army were going to come after them again. I can imagine his emotions were quite crazy. However, we know he obeyed and turned back to camp when instructed by the Lord, as the end of **verse 4** said, *“The Israelites did this.”*

God was setting up the opportunity to show off. Verse 4 tells us that He will get the glory and the Egyptians will know that He is the Lord. Now we might think, “Isn’t enough, enough?” Haven’t the Israelites been through enough already? However, the Lord had a plan to show them He was the Lord and to continue showing that He deserved the glory.

Have you ever had enough? Have you ever said I just can’t do it anymore? We will see tomorrow how the Israelites responded, but what is your response when you are pushed to the limit? Sometimes we might feel like it is being piled on but we know that God is right by our side. As one song says, “Never once did we ever walk alone.” Sometimes when we face difficulty or what seems like a never-ending heap of trouble and distress, God is taking time to fashion us into His image. At the same time, He is waiting to show off and show us that He is the Lord. We see this happen in the book of Job. In fact, as I have shared before, I struggled for a time with anxiety and it was not fun. Looking back, I wouldn’t have asked to go through it. However, standing on the other side, I learned so much and can now say that I am thankful for what God did in my life during that time. While it’s often difficult turning those tough times around, when we have come through them God has shaped, molded, and taught us things we would never have learned otherwise.

Take whatever you may be going through today and give it to the Lord. Lay it before Him. While you might feel that you can’t take anymore and you just want to turn back and go to Egypt, wait, trust, and know that God is in control.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Exodus 14:8-9 and Romans 9:17

God has everything in His hands! The kings, leaders, and even the authorities that seem to be so wicked and anti-God are in His hands. While they have the free will to choose evil and go against God, God can still use and direct this. We see this in today's passage, especially Romans 9:17. God raised and used a wicked Pharaoh for His glory and His purposes. Sometimes people say they are not "playing" or "doing things God's way," and while it may be true that they are not actively seeking God, He can still use their decisions for His glory. Even as God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He was using Pharaoh for His glory. We will see tomorrow how God comes through.

God saving Israel is incredible but as Marty Machowski says,

"The greatest celebration comes when we remember that Jesus was born to the sons of Israel in the Promised Land, in a town called Bethlehem. So when we celebrate Israel's salvation from slavery in Egypt, we can also celebrate our salvation from slavery to sin."¹⁹

Are you amazed yet? Are you amazed at the details and intricate plans of God's way of salvation? It is not just by what we read in the New Testament, but also by what we see in the Old Testament and its direct connection to the New Testament and Jesus. The Bible, written by God through some 40 different authors, is God's plan of salvation for His glory. This salvation includes what we have been saved from, such as sin, hell, the enemy, and also what we have been saved to. Most importantly, we have been saved to a relationship with God, heaven, and an eternity with Him.

Thank Him today for your salvation and for His plan, then choose to trust His plan!

¹⁹Marty Machowski, Long Story Short, pg. 164

Day 4

Read Exodus 14:10-31

These verses contain so much! Remember how God had walked with the Israelites and saved them through all the plagues? It was obvious that God was on their side and fighting for them. Yet when the Egyptians came back after them, they got angry and sarcastic as they asked Moses, *“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?”* (**Verse 11**) How quickly they had forgotten and now turned their back on God and Moses saying they would have been better staying in Egypt, stuck in slavery.

Isn't it good to know that God often does things in spite of our lack of faith? God knew that the Israelites were now questioning Moses, which was in essence questioning God. Unfortunately, this is a theme we will see continue. They had forgotten what God had done. But soon they would remember. As the chapter ends, we see that they put their trust in the Lord.

We are often like the Israelites. We see God work, we see Him move, we see what only He can do, and then with our back against the wall and a sea in front of us, we begin to question, mock, or get angry with God. I wonder if the Israelites had forgotten what God had done. Have we? Take some time to write down how you have seen God work in the past, doing what only He can do, and thank Him for it; then rest in Him. Don't try to fix things, but rest in Him.

A key verse in all of scripture is **Exodus 14:14**, *“the Lord will fight for you; you only need to be still.”* Literally it means to put all of who you are into trusting and following God and He will fight for you! That's what the Israelites needed to do, trust God, and He would fight for them, which He did.

Day 5

Read Psalm 45:6-9

This passage is talking about none other than Jesus. We also find these verses in Hebrews 1:8-9 which, in fact, confirms this is speaking of Jesus. **Verse 6** says, *“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.”* Isn’t it incredible to know that if we have called on the name of Jesus, we too, will be with him? 2 Timothy 2 tells us that we will reign with Him. What a promise! We can look forward to spending eternity with God for ever and ever. If you want to get a little better picture of what this might be like, read the book Heaven, by Randy Alcorn.

These verses also tell us He will reign with righteousness and that He loves righteousness and hates wickedness. The Son of God is perfectly righteous and hates everything that is not. As Christians we are followers of Christ. In fact, the word disciple means to be a follower or learner, so as Disciples of Christ we are following Jesus. Are you? Do you seek righteousness and hate evil? Is your heart that of Jesus? 1 John 1 tells us that if we claim to have fellowship or be a follower of Jesus, then we are to follow the light (Jesus), we are to follow righteousness. While we might stumble and fall we are to acknowledge our sin, repent, and follow God. Remember that we were told in Genesis 6, that the people’s minds were on evil all the time, meaning they were totally opposite of what God’s heart was and is. May it be said of us that our hearts and minds are always on Jesus, always on righteousness, and when we veer to the left or right, may we jump back on the path, the path of Jesus.

Ask God today to direct your thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions so they are always on Him.

WEEK 39 GOD PROVIDES FOOD AND WATER FOR ISRAEL

-----Dennis Watson

Do you think you can squeeze water out of a rock? If you are wondering, go find a rock and give it a try. You can't do it no matter how long and hard you try. This week we will see God's miraculous provision for His people as they journey.

Day 1

Read Exodus 16:1-8

And the complaining begins. Just one month, a mere thirty days after an incredible and miraculous delivery out of slavery, the people begin to whine about being hungry. I've been hungry before, like "I missed-a-meal hungry." I'm not sure how hungry they were, but it was enough for them to complain to Moses and Aaron. They were longing to be back in Egypt in slavery, as long as they had food to eat. This was not the first case of complaining. At Marah they also complained because they didn't have water to drink and what they did have was bitter. God provided fresh water when He instructed Moses to throw a tree into the water. God told them that He had been their healer. When they came to Elim He provided for them twelve wells and seventy palm trees.

Their complaining could have been dealt with in a different way. Paul says "*To do everything without complaining and arguing.*" **Philippians 2:14** He also tells us to not be anxious but to pray and make our request known to God (Philippians 4:6.) Why complain? Why whine? The people of God, the Israelites, had seen God's miracles. They had experienced His care and seen Him work miracles. They had seen the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. He told them at Marah when He gave them water that He was the God who healed them (Exodus 15:27). Here we find one of the Hebrew names of God "Jehovah Rapha." God says, "*I am Jehovah Ropha.*" This means "God is healing."

What about you? How do you do in light of the blessings of God? Do you complain? Instead of complaining, tell Him what you need. The people complained to Moses. Instead of asking Moses to pray and ask God to provide, they complained. Why don't we complain less and pray more?

Day 2

Read Exodus 16:9-35

The Israelites had forgotten about God's provision and complained against Moses. In today's passage God miraculously provides once again for their needs. First of all, He sends quail for meat. At evening the quail would fly into their camp. Second, in the morning they went out to find that after the dew had dried there was something left on the ground. They were curious and asked, "What is it?" And that became its name—"what is it" or manna. Moses told them that God had sent it along with the quail to provide for their needs. God had told them to gather just enough for each person each day and no more. They had just what they needed. Some people tried to gather extra and store it up. The extra spoiled and caused worms and smelled bad.

God also provided a time of rest for the people. He granted them instructions to gather twice as much food on the day before the Sabbath, Friday, so that on the Sabbath they could rest. He wanted them to know that He intended for His people to have a day of rest. He built it in from day 1 (and days 1-6). God created all things in six days and then rested on the seventh so that the people would know they needed a day of rest and He later strictly instructed them to observe the Sabbath Day.

God provided what they needed, even though they complained. God is gracious and kind beyond our ability to understand. He gave them what they asked for and needed.

What do you need from God? Have you asked? Ask for what you need and thank Him for His provisions.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read John 6:31-40

Once again, we must really celebrate that we have this perspective. We can read the New Testament and look back and see with clear eyes what was really going on. Thousands of years ago God provided manna for the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus tells the Jewish religious leaders of His day that His Father provided the bread and then tells them that now He is the bread from God. The bread, manna that God provided, literally saved the people from starving to death all those years.

They had no idea that what God provided, and they ate, was pointing to something far greater. Jesus tells His listeners that He is the bread of life. Jesus tells them that, like the manna of old, He has come down to be the One who saves. He would not just save them for another day, but He would bring to them everlasting life. He was the bread of life that God provided so that they could eat and live forever. Like the manna-bread, all of the people had to go out and gather it each morning, Jesus says that all who come to Him and believe in Him will never hunger or thirst. He is the One who brings the real lasting and eternal food. He is talking about true salvation and it is forever.

God's plan to provide for His people has never been an afterthought. It was the plan from before the world began. We get to see the plan unfold and then we get to see it fulfilled in Jesus.

Have you come to Him? Have you believed in Him? Have you turned to Him to have your hunger for true life filled? If you have, give thanks to God for His amazing provision. If not, why not come to Jesus in faith right now? Confess and believe that Jesus is God's Son, whom He sent to die for your sin. Believe that He was miraculously raised from the dead to give you eternal life and victory.

Ask Him to save you and invite Him to live in you.

Day 4

First Read Exodus 17:1-7

How much of our complaining and anxious nature could be eliminated if we would simply trust God? Once again, the people gripe and complain against Moses because they are thirsty. They even wanted to stone Moses. Once again, they failed to remember that God was daily providing manna out of nothing and, once again, we see the enduring love of God. Instead of punishing the people, He told Moses to strike the rock and He provided water for them.

Have you ever thought that our struggles, needs, and appetites are good things? We will not always have everything we want and need right when we need it. In fact, God uses and even causes us to hunger and thirst so that we will ask Him to provide. Notice I said ask Him, not complain and whine. Look at **Deuteronomy 8:3**:

"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

Food and water are not all we need. God shows us that we need Him. Now look at **I Corinthians 10:4**:

"They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

There it is again. We see Jesus in the Old Testament. Paul says that the rock the water came from was Jesus. Moses struck the rock. God had Jesus, our Rock, also struck for us. He alone provides everything we need, even when we do not immediately know our own needs.

Give thanks to God for providing all we need!

Day 5

Read Psalm 72:1-2 and 2 Timothy 4:8

As we have already seen, the entire Bible is ultimately about Jesus. The more you read and study the Bible, the more you will see Him. The passage in Psalm 72 was written by Solomon, who was a king and very wise. He amazed the world in which he lived with his wealth and his wisdom. He asked God for wisdom to rule as a wise king and God answered his prayer.

However, Jesus would be the King and Judge of righteousness. He was righteous because He never sinned and He was both completely God and man. He was also righteous, because He came from God and was returning to God. When He comes and establishes His eternal Kingdom on the new Heaven and new earth, He will rule and judge with righteousness. All who have surrendered to Jesus as Savior and Lord and recognized His Kingship will receive from Him the crown of righteousness. Here is what one of my favorite commentaries says about the crown of righteousness:

“A crown of righteousness” is, I believe, the reward for a righteous life, and Paul will receive that. “Unto all them also that love his appearing” does not refer to doctrine you hold regarding His appearing. You may be a premillennialist, a postmillennialist, or an amillennialist. I have news for you: there’s no reward for holding any one of those views. The question is: Do you love His appearing? To love His appearing means that you will have to love Him. Oh, my friend, do you have a close relationship with Him? Have you ever told Him that you love Him? (I have a notion that Paul told the Lord every day that he loved Him, because he had hated and persecuted Him before.) There is a crown for those who love His appearing. I would like to have that crown. I believe it will shine brighter than all the others.”²⁰

I, like Paul, anticipate that crown. I look forward to His appearing because I am His and He is mine. How about you?

²⁰Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

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