

The Israelites have now entered into the Land of Promise. God has protected them and has taken care of them during the forty years of wilderness wandering. As they enter the land, their unfaithfulness continued. They fail to conquer the people of the Promised Land and those people become a real problem. God raises up judges to deliver the people of Israel, time and time again. We see the periods of unfaithfulness repeated over and over in the book of Judges. Later on, the people cry out for a king so they can “be like other nations.” God tells the prophet Samuel, *“Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them”* (1 Samuel 8:7). The people rejected God and He allowed Samuel to anoint Saul as their first king. We will see the struggles brought on by this.

WEEK 53 RAHAB'S HELP-----Dennis Watson

God is sovereign and wastes nothing. God is in the business of saving the savable. We will meet Rahab this week. Rahab was a woman of questionable lifestyle, yet God used her when she became savable. She helped the spies who were sent by Joshua to spy out Jericho. This was not what saved her and her family. What saved her was her trust in the plan the spies had given her. She was to place a scarlet thread in her window which would be a sign that all in the house would be delivered when the Israelites came to defeat Jericho.

Day 1

Read Joshua 1

For forty years, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, turning an eleven day trip into what was for many, a lifetime. A whole generation of people who rebelled against God died during the wilderness wandering, including Moses. Joshua was now the leader and he had been trained by Moses to lead the people into the Promised Land after Moses' death. God had instructed Moses to commission Joshua as his successor (Numbers 27:15-23). He was one of only two adults who experienced Egyptian slavery and lived to enter the Promised Land. Caleb was the second.

God spoke to Joshua and gave him instructions regarding taking the next step to move into the Land of Promise. In His instructions, God told Joshua four times (Joshua 1) to *“be strong and courageous.”* Joshua had been both strong and courageous on the journey. He had seen the struggles and had seen God protect and deliver. He knew they were where they were because God had brought them to this place at this time. Joshua was leader at a pivotal point for Israel, God's plan, and history. It was vital for Joshua to know of God's presence, God's encouragement, and that God was the source of his strength. Remember, God instructed him four times, right at the beginning, to *“be strong and courageous.”*

God had brought the people of Israel to this time and place. It was a new beginning. The time had come for the next generation to take the next step. They knew that nothing was impossible with God and they could trust Him because they knew He was in control.

Be strong and courageous as you move forward following God's plan. He is faithful and He can be trusted!

Day 2

Read Joshua 1:1-7

Be aware that when God is leading, He has already prepared the way. Not only is He leading, but He is absolutely sovereign! He is in control. Yes, it was Joshua who sent the two spies into Jericho, but ultimately, it was God. Therefore, He was the one who protected and kept them safe on their mission. It was a great spy story, but in reality, it was a biblical, historical account of God preparing the way to take the Land of Promise.

However, God provides people along the way and, in this case, the person He provided was a woman of not so good moral character by the name of Rahab. Rahab hid the spies up on her roof under stalks of flax. She sent the king's men on a false trail, then sent the spies safely on their way, lowering them down by a rope. Rahab's house was part of the wall of the city of Jericho.

The Psalmist says all of our days were written in His book before one of them came to be (**Psalm 139:16 NIV**). Who wrote your story? God wrote yours and everyone else's. The spies' lives were in God's hands. Rahab's life was in God's hands. They could all rest in trust and obedience with their eyes fixed on Him.

Do you think the spies were fretful or frightened? Perhaps they had moments of anxiety, but they knew they were in keeping with God's plan and will. They went with confidence and He took care of them. Be encouraged as you follow and trust Him; He will take care of you.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Matthew 1:1-6

Yesterday, we saw God's protection and deliverance through a woman of questionable moral character. Today in our passage, we see that woman, Rahab, mentioned in a very interesting place—the family tree of Jesus! That's right! God honored Rahab's faith by allowing her to be a far removed great-grandmother of Jesus. We know that it was her faith that God honored because she is also found in the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11. James 2:25 says she was justified by works, but it was her faith that worked.

God has a way of showing Himself great and powerful. He also shows that His plan, grace, and mercy are greater than our sin. One of the most beautiful biblical, historical events in the Old Testament is the account of the coming together of Ruth and Boaz. In week 50, we will look closely at this account of love. We know from the book of Ruth that Boaz's father was Salmon. It is not until Matthew 1 that we find out who his mother was—Rahab! Do you have any people of questionable moral character in your family tree? I am sure we all do. Be careful not to feel shame for Rahab's son, Obed, or her grandson, Jesse, or her great grandson, King David! It was not her SIN for which she is known or remembered; it is her FAITH!

"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; ¹² As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:10-12 (NKJV)

"But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence."

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NKJV)

Give thanks to God because His grace is greater than all our sin!

Day 4

Read Joshua 2:8-24

We know from early on in our journey God promised Abraham that through his people all of the nations of the world would be blessed. Rahab was not a Jew, she was a Gentile. Biblically, all non-Jews are Gentiles. She was not from Abraham's family, so she was not an Israelite. However, while living in the land of Canaan, she had heard about God. She knew of His power and plan. She knew that forty years earlier He had parted the waters of the Red Sea for the people to cross on dry ground. She knew He was going to give the land in which she lived to the Israelites. In Verse 11, she confesses that "*God is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*" She had knowledge of God and she believed Him and now she confessed her belief in Him. Then, in Verse 12, she asks the spies to give her a token or a sign to protect her and her family when God gives the land into the hands of the Israelites.

The spies gave her a scarlet cord to place in the window so when the soldiers came, they would know to spare all who were in her house. She would be spared when the soldiers saw the scarlet cord. The judgment of God, through the soldiers, would pass by her house when they saw the scarlet cord. This sounds very familiar. When the Israelites were being delivered from Egypt they were told to put the blood of a lamb on the door post. The blood would be a sign for the angel of death to pass by and not bring death to that house. All inside the home would be safe.

Rahab heard about God and she believed God to be who He claimed to be. She ultimately placed her faith in God's plan to save her and her family. God saved her, not just for her sake, but for His name's sake and His plan. Jesus was born as her far-off great-grandson. Thank God for His amazing plan!

Day 5

Read Isaiah 41:8-14

What very encouraging words these must have been for the people of Israel. God calls them His servants and His friends. He tells them He has taken them from the ends of the earth and He has chosen them. He speaks words of intimacy to them telling them He chose them and would not cast them away. He tells them He is their strength and help and He tells them He will protect and deliver them and they need not fear those who attack and seek to harm them. How comforting those words were to Israel.

We see in Verse 8 the interchangeable name of Israel, which is Jacob. Jacob's name was eventually changed to Israel. God calls Israel, "*My servant.*" Jacob, as an individual, was the servant of God. God chose Jacob over Esau, the firstborn of Isaac. Jacob's name was changed to Israel reflective of the nation his descendants would become and Israel was God's chosen vessel through which He would bless the world. In Isaiah, God encourages the people of Israel by telling them they are His servant and He would be their strength. He tells them He will protect them in war and He will be their help.

All of these promises were very important to the people of Israel, but there is one promise which is tucked away in these verses that anticipates the Messiah. In verse 14, Isaiah writes about the coming "*Redeemer*" who will be the "*Holy One.*"

God comforts them with His presence and protection and encourages them with the future promise of the Holy One. God's covenant with Abraham was rock solid! It could not be violated. God would do what He had promised. By His own promise, God had obligated Himself to protect the Israelites and the line of Abraham through Judah. God is faithful and will finish.

As redeemer, Jesus pays our fines and debts. An old song says of Jesus, "He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay." The Redeemer is Jesus and He paid our sin debt! Give thanks to God for taking the steps to pay the debt we could never pay.

WEEK 54 JERICHO FALLS-----Chris Watson

God's power is incredible! There is NOTHING that God can't do. The Israelites have seen God do amazing things up to this point. Unfortunately, they forgot many times what He had done. This week, we see God do more great and mighty things!

Day 1

Read Joshua 3

The spirit of the Lord is all powerful! The Ark of the Covenant was a reminder of the Lord's greatness and power. Verse 8 of this passage tells us the priests carried the Ark to the water's edge and it was to go into the Jordan River before everyone else. God was going before them; this was for God and His glory.

In Verse 7, we read God was also doing this so the Israelites would know that God was now with Joshua, much like He was with Moses. Joshua was now to lead them and carry out God's plan. The way God was going to show this to the people was allowing them to cross over the Jordan River on dry ground. Of course, the focus was not Joshua at all, but God was using this to convey to the people that they serve a mighty God and Joshua knew this mighty God.

God goes before us. If we know God as our personal Savior, we can know that God always goes before us. We are never alone, we are never secluded, God is always with us. The more we seek God and His plan, the more we become aware of His presence and we see that we are not alone.

Psalm 139:8-9 says, *"If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."* If we know this truth, then we know God is always with us. In our difficult times, He is there, when we rejoice, He is there, and on our best and worst days, He is there. God is there because He wants to know

us! He wants us to glorify Him and to know Him. It's all about Him, not about us. May we know Him and His presence!

Day 2

Read Joshua 4:1-5:1

Why did God perform this remarkable miracle at the Jordan River? Verse 24 tells us explicitly, *“He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.”* God did this for His purposes and glory, as we read yesterday. While we see in Verse 14 that Joshua was also exalted like Moses, during this miracle, the explicit reason was so the world would know and fear the Lord.

This was another defining moment in the life of the Israelites! This was something that only God could do. The Israelites celebrated and remembered this miracle through the setting up of twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel. The focus wasn't on the stone memorial itself, but on what God had done. The stone memorial was only important because it pointed to and reminded the people what God had done. The focus wasn't to worship the stones, but to worship God. It was also intended to be a reminder for generations to come, as we see in Verses 21 and 22. God and Joshua didn't want the people to forget, then or in the future, what God had done. This would be a constant reminder.

We have a reminder at Harp's Fayetteville, a stone memorial at the fountain. It is a reminder for us of how God provided the current worship center. A building that originally was estimated to cost around \$2.2 million would actually cost \$5.5 million. This happened for various reasons, but as you might have heard or remember, the timing of the building happened during Hurricane Katrina when steel prices went through the roof. However, God provided and the stones are intended to remind everyone of God's provision. When our children ask “What are those rocks there for?” We have a chance to tell them. God provided and the building was paid for in full!

Have you experienced miracles like this in your life, ways in which God has provided? Have there been times God came

through for you when all seemed lost? Are there times in which God walked the storms of life with you when everything was chaotic? Keep a journal, write these times down; be reminded of God's grace and provision. Journaling can be so helpful. Over the years I have started and stopped and stopped and started. However, I realize how important it is, not only for me to look back at what God has done, but also so those that come behind me, like my children and my grandchildren, can know. If you don't journal or write how God is working in your life, begin now. Find or buy a journal and name it "12 Stones." Include in it the ways God has been faithful and then keep up with it. What a blessing and reminder it would be as you read over it and then pass it on to your children and grandchildren. They can be reminded of how our God is faithful!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Joshua 5:10-15

Can you imagine getting ready for battle when, all of the sudden, someone appears before you with a drawn sword in hand?

Joshua's question was probably like most of ours would have been, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" Notice the response; he answered he was for neither, but the commander of the army of the Lord. We will see in the next chapter, the Lord does give direction and also victory for Joshua and his people. However, when he encountered Joshua, his focus wasn't on whose side he was on, but rather he was the commander of the army of the Lord.

The commander, of course, speaks of Jesus. We see this in Revelation 19:11-19. As we note in this passage, His robe is dipped in blood and the words "*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*" are written on it. **(Verse 16b)** Jesus is our commander; He is the One whom we follow, love, and serve. If we are in His army we know how the fight ends. The end of Revelation tells us that He prevails, He lives, and He reigns. The enemy and sin are defeated and we live in victory.

Our response to an almighty and loving God we see through Jesus should be like that of Joshua. When Joshua realized who it was, scripture tells us he fell facedown in reverence to the Lord. What is our response to the Lord? Do we think of it as "no big deal?" Are we in awe? Do we not care? Do we fall on the ground in reverence? May we, as believers, recognize that wherever we are, the Lord is with us. We can call Him not only Lord, but friend. Not just friend, but redeemer. Not just redeemer, but lover of our souls. Today, let us realize if God is with us, nothing can be against us.

Day 4

Read Joshua 6

The historical account of Joshua and the wall of Jericho never gets old. Verse 1 of Joshua 6 lets us know the people of Jericho had heard about the Israelites and most likely heard about the Israelites' God because no one went in or out of the city. Jericho was ready for battle, so it must have really thrown them off guard when the Israelites simply started marching around the wall.

Can you imagine what the people inside the walls of Jericho must have been thinking? At first, they might have been scared and thought they were about to go to battle. However, when days six and seven came, they were probably laughing, making jokes, and were a lot more laid back. In fact, Veggie Tales has a DVD on this and the song says, "Keep walking, but you won't knock down our wall. Keep walking, but she isn't going to fall! It's plain to see your brains are very small to think walking, will be knocking down our wall." The folks in Jericho were probably having a field day by day six, and, at this point, were probably not concerned at all.

However, Joshua and the Israelites were doing just as the Lord told them; they were being obedient. I am sure some of them probably thought it was strange and definitely a weird new battle strategy, but they trusted God and did what He said. On day seven, the walls came down! Everyone was destroyed with the exception of Rahab and her family, because she had hidden the spies and followed their instructions.

We are to follow God, no matter what. Sometimes our enemies and even those closest to us, including our friends and family, will laugh and make fun of us. It's not our job to defend ourselves or the Lord: Our job is to keep following Him and doing what He says without exception. We must listen and obey the Lord whether everyone is doing it or whether no one is! Trust and obey, always!

Day 5

Read Zephaniah 3:14-20

These verses ring so true. They were true for the Israelites then and they are also true for us now! Just look at some of the verses that are spoken in Zephaniah:

15- *“The Lord has taken away our punishment.”* If we know Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we will not face the ultimate punishment of our sin which would be to spend eternity apart from Christ in hell. Rather, we will spend eternity with Jesus, the One who has redeemed us.

17- *“The Lord your God is with you.”* As we were reminded a few days back, God is always with us. He has been and will always be if we are His children. Therefore, in the good and the bad, we don’t have to be anxious or worry because the One who created the world, the One who created us, knows us in a real and powerful way, better than anyone else.

20- *“At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home.”* There will be a time when God takes us home. Eventually it will be to a new heaven and a new earth. Much like it was when Adam and Eve walked in the cool of the day with God. We will most likely enjoy some of the things we enjoy today, but without sin and always in the presence of God. In his book, Heaven, Randy Alcorn reminds us that heaven will not be a place where we will sit on a cloud playing our least favorite hymn or worship song. Rather, it will be a place that is full of God and we will know Him and also know others. If you haven’t already done so, I challenge you to read this book to get a glimpse of what it will be like when God gathers us to Himself.

Take some time today to thank God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do! Be ever so grateful if you know Jesus and are a part of His family. If not, today is the day of salvation!

WEEK 55 ISRAEL AND AI-----Dennis Watson

The people of God, the Israelites, had finally escaped Egypt and experienced forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Under the leadership of Joshua, they had crossed the Jordan River and seen the walls of Jericho fall. They were beginning the process of taking the Land of Promise and they were off to a great start. However, the land of victory was about to become a place of defeat. Perhaps the only known defeat came as a result of one man's rebellion. How often is this the case? One person does not follow the way of God and many people suffer. This is what comes on the heels of the victory at Jericho.

Day 1

Read Joshua 7:1-12

After the great victory at Jericho, they experienced a crushing defeat! I am sure the people were soaring high and feeling good about "their" accomplishment and they were probably proud! Uh-oh! Be careful, pride comes before a fall. It was God's doing that the walls came down. It was His doing they won that battle. He had told the people in Joshua 6:18 not to take the things that were to be consecrated to the Lord; silver, gold, bronze, and iron. In Verse 1 of Chapter 7, there is a different word that indicates there was an interruption to the flow of the narrative. The writer uses what is called an adversative conjunction. Instead of the normal 'and' or 'then' of historical narrative, he uses the word 'but.' So there was an interruption to moving into the Promised Land due to disobedience.

A small group of warriors is sent to Ai to continue conquering the land. Pride makes the enemy appear smaller than he is and fear makes him appear larger. It did not really matter the size of the troops; they were doomed to defeat because there was disobedience in the camp! The little band was routed and thirty-six men were killed. The reason for the defeat was the sin of Achan. Achan stole from God some of the items that were to be placed into the Lord's treasury.

There was sin in the camp and God knew it! God knows all things, nothing can be hidden from Him. Joshua fell down before the Lord and blamed God for the defeat. He thought God had brought them this far and then let them experience defeat. However, God rebukes Joshua and tells him to get up and deal with the sin in the camp.

God takes sin seriously; we are forgiven, but it can still hamper the flow of God's blessings. In particular, it can cause us to fail in giving glory to God. Sin in the camp can get a person, family, or entire church off track! Is there sin in your life that you have not dealt with? Have you tried to hide sin thinking that God does not know? He knows! Confess, repent, turn to Him in obedience and get back on God's path.

Day 2

Read Joshua 7:13-26

God chose the use of lots to indicate who had stolen the things that were to be placed in the Lord's treasury. We do not know exactly what these were, but God did not need the lots. So why did He use this method? If you ever watch programs like American Idol or the Voice, you know the producers try to create drama when announcing a winner or someone who has been voted off the show. There is often a long dramatic delay before the announcement. I believe God used the lots to create some time for Achan to confess. God does not enjoy the suffering and death of the wicked. He wants us to repent and turn to Him. The process revealed the tribe, the family, the household, and finally, the person, Achan. What do you suppose he was thinking during this time, as the process narrowed down to him? Did he think he would not be found out? Did he not realize that he could have confessed, repented, and probably avoided death for himself and his entire family?

Achan's name means troubler. The name of the valley where Achan and his family were killed and buried was called Achor, which means trouble. Sin always brings trouble. It may appear that the outcome was extreme, but God takes sin seriously. *"The wages of sin is death."* It ultimately resulted in the death of God's only begotten, sinless Son, Jesus. God takes sin very seriously. Do you?

The sequence of Achan's sin is the process repeated over and over—"I saw, I coveted, I took." This was the process with Eve and the forbidden fruit. It is the same process King David followed in his sin with Bathsheba—see, covet, take. Sin causes the forfeiture of God's blessings! It takes us down a path that does not bring harm just to the sinner, but to many other people, beginning with those closest to the sinner.

Ask God to enable each person in your family to confess their sins, repent and seek God's grace and mercy.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Joshua 8:30-35

Before we look at the victory at Ai, we will look at the end of the account. Before moving on from sin there must be an altar. Today is the day we see how this biblical historical account points to Jesus. After the victory at Ai, Joshua was instructed to build an altar. The altar was not to be built with stones cut nor shaped by the hands of men. Man was to have no place in providing for his sins. No human work was to be associated with the sacrifice, lest sinners think their own works could save them (**Eph. 2:8-9**).¹ The altar was built in a valley between two mountains; Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. Mt. Gerizim was the mount of blessing and Mt. Ebal was the mount of curses. It was at the foot of the mount of curses that the altar was to be built. This was so the people would know that the peace offering had taken away the curse brought on by Achan's sin.

What an extreme difference from chapter 7 to chapter 8! When sin is dealt with, we are prepared to move on—to begin anew. The sin was dealt with ultimately through the sacrifice that God provided before the foundation of the world. When Joshua obeyed God and made the altar and offered the sacrifice, he appropriated the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God. When Jesus came He brought peace to all who would receive Him. When you received Jesus as your peace offering from God you appropriated God's covering for your sin. Because of Jesus you can begin anew every day.

I hope you have received Jesus and God's gift of peace for you. He became sin for you and took away the curse of sin. Give thanks to God for His peace provision.

¹Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament- The Bible Exposition Commentary - History

Day 4

Read Joshua 8:1-29

After the victory at Jericho, the people were flying high and apparently feeling proud. For some strange reason, they thought they had won the battle to take Jericho. It should have been obvious that horns and shouting could not make fortified walls fall! God gave Jericho into their hands, but they soon forgot. There are some very notable differences between the events of Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 and these are lessons for us. First of all, when they decided to go up against Ai, Joshua failed to seek God in prayer. Had he prayed, he probably would have been told by God that there was sin in the camp and it could have been dealt with before continuing. Unfortunately, they went with the instructions of some of Joshua's military leaders. In Chapter 8, Joshua waited for instructions from God. Second, in Chapter 7 they were over confident and took only 3,000 troops, but in Chapter 8, Joshua took 30,000 troops and he commanded them himself. When God gave them Jericho, they were not to take any of the devoted things. Everything was either to be destroyed or placed in the Lord's treasury. But on taking Ai, they were told they could take the spoils or the things taken in war for themselves. It was too bad Achan had not been more patient and obedient.

Praying and seeking God's direction should be the normal procedure for God's children. Seek Him and His ways. Ask for His guidance and wisdom. Ask Him to show you if you are out of His will in any way.

Day 5

Read Jeremiah 33:14-15

When God writes history in advance, it is called prophecy. Just about everything in the Bible that is not historical narrative is history in advance or prophecy. There are prophecies in Genesis that speak of events coming that will be history for Israel when they become reality and are recorded in the book of Exodus.

The passage today in Jeremiah is history written in advance or prophecy. It is prophecy about Jesus. We have already seen that when we read in the Old Testament about a *“branch springing up from David,”* it is referring to Jesus many years before His actual coming. Here, in Jeremiah, we read He will execute *“judgment and righteousness.”* This means He will bring with Him judgment and righteousness. Jesus was completely righteous. He did no wrong and perfectly accomplished His Father’s will, all of the time. He brings righteousness to everyone who believes in Him as the One who died for sin. The Bible speaks of righteousness being imputed or granted to believers. In Christ, because of His work on the cross, sin and its curse was removed from believers and God granted them the righteousness of Jesus.

However, for all who refuse Jesus and His work at the cross, He will ultimately bring justice or judgment. The person who does not receive the saving work of Jesus takes on his own judgment or justice. Jesus accomplished our justice on the cross. He took our guilt and our judgment. A major part of your history was written in advance, but you play a part. If Jesus brought for you both justice and righteousness, then your judgment has been accomplished in Jesus and His righteousness has been given to you. If you have not received His work at the cross, you will eventually bear your own sin and bypass His righteousness. If you have received Him, give thanks for the miracle of Jesus taking your punishment and for the righteousness He has given you. If not, receive Jesus, the historical Jesus, Son of God, and His finished work at the cross to take your judgment and give you His righteousness.

Week 56 The Sun Stands Still-----Dennis Watson

This is an incredible biblical historical event. Abraham was told by God that the Israelites would not have the land until the time of the Amorites was fulfilled and He gave the people over 400 years to turn to Him. We know of only one who did, Rahab. The Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua and Caleb, were tasked with taking the land which was promised by God.

Day 1

Read Joshua 9:1-27

Satan is a liar and he only appears to be your friend. All he needs is a foothold and he can move in and very subtly take over. We see this in the biblical and historical account of the Israelites being deceived by a group of people from Gibeon.

The people of Gibeon were neighbors of the Israelites living in the land the Israelites would soon conquer. They had already miraculously defeated Jericho and finally defeated Ai and were about to face a coalition of five Canaanite kings preparing to war with Israel. Before the encounter, they would come face to face with a subtle enemy. This was not a fighting, hostile, enemy but a conniving, deceptive enemy. This enemy knew they could not defeat Israel. They would have to use another tactic—deception. They pretended to be from a far-away land and their goal was to have a treaty with the Israelites. They claimed to have heard about the great victories God had given to Israel when they escaped Egypt and the victory over the kings of Heshbon and Bashan. They wanted to be Israel's servants and have a covenant with them. It all sounded innocent enough. The real problem was that the leaders of Israel did not "ask counsel of the Lord." If they had, they would have known that this was one of the enemies they were to defeat. It seems they figured this was a small thing and they did not need to bother the Lord with this one. "We can handle it ourselves." So, Joshua entered into a treaty with this group. When the people discovered what had been done to them three days later, it was too late.

They were in a covenant with the people of Gibeon which would set the stage for an incredible miracle of God.

In Ephesians 6:11, the Lord tells us through Paul's writing, "*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" (methods of the devil) We should be aware that the enemy does not always come at us with a pitch fork and horns. He is usually subtle and convincing. If you have to say, "well, there is really nothing wrong with it," this may be an indication there is something wrong with it. **James 4:7** says, "*Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*"

Be ready. Your enemy will use various methods to trip you up and make your journey a difficult one.

Day 2

Read Joshua 10:1-11

Was the account of Gibeon deceiving Israel to make a covenant with them a random event? Not hardly, it was the lead up to the incredible miracle we read today. It is always great to see how God uses the bumbling foolishness of His own people and then He really does “*cause all things to work together for good to those who love God.*” And “good” in this instance is an incredible understatement. It led the way for one of the most incredible miracles in the Bible.

The people of Gibeon had tricked Israel into making a covenant with them. The king over Jerusalem had heard of the great victories Israel had achieved by God’s power. So, he called four other kings to join him in attacking Gibeon “*because they had made peace with Joshua and the Israelites.*” **Verse 4b** They failed to connect that since Gibeon was in alliance with Israel, Gibeon was as strong as Israel.

The men of Gibeon sent a message to Joshua simply saying, “Come help us, we are under attack.” It is interesting to note that in **Verse 8**, “*The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you.”*” It is a good thing I’m not God. I would have said, “Too bad for you. You made this mess, now you fix it. If you had not been tricked into a covenant with those people you would not be in this fix.” That is not what God said. He fights for us even in the messes we make! Joshua and his army marched all night and came upon their enemy suddenly and “*the Lord routed them before Israel.*” Then the Lord sent a hailstorm and more of the enemy were killed by the hail than by the army of Israel!

The Lord is good, even when we aren’t! “*But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away*” (**Isaiah 64:6**). We are not good, but He always is! He is always fixing our messes.

Day 3

Read Joshua 10:12-15

Normally on Day 3, we connect to Jesus, but this week, we will do that on Day 5. Joshua wanted to make sure the job was finished and he made a very bold request of the Lord. His request was for the sun and the moon to stand still over Gibeon so the people could have revenge over their enemies. Joshua wanted to finish the battle and defeat his enemies. Upon Joshua's request, God stopped the entire solar system so there could be enough daylight to complete the task. Did this really happen? Is this normal? Of course, it really happened, and no, it is not normal!

A miracle is a special act of God that interrupts the normal course of events. God uses miracles to reveal Himself, His will and His Word. It is often the desire of Bible believers to try to explain a miracle away with natural phenomenon. There is no need to do this. The greatest miracle of all that opens the door for all of the other miracles in the Bible is the miracle of creation. Frank Turek, in his book I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist writes:

In fact, miracles are not only possible; miracles are actual, because the greatest miracle of all—the creation of the universe out of nothing—has already occurred. So with regard to the Bible, if Genesis 1:1 is true—“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”—then every other miracle in the Bible is easy to believe.²

It is very interesting and intriguing to read speculations of how it could have happened and the accounting for the missing or additional time. A miracle is not explainable nor is it provable. The resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot be proven, but it can certainly be demonstrated. I see people who have been transformed by the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A hymn writer put it this way, “You ask me how I know He lives; He lives within my

²I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, Frank Turek, p. 203

heart.” I also see mountains, stars, planets, and I hold my grandchildren. The miracle of creation is demonstrated before my eyes on a daily basis.

God worked many miracles to protect the seed line of the Messiah. This is one of those miracles. Give praise and thanks to God for His sovereign plan, purpose and preservation of the line of the Messiah.

Day 4

Read Genesis 15:16; Joshua 10:15-19

God had already promised the descendants of Abraham that they would receive the land. The five kings and the people they ruled were known as Amorites. New Unger's Bible Dictionary says, "The Amorites were so prominent that their name seems sometimes to be used for Canaanites in general."³ When we read in Genesis 15:16 that the people who would be the descendants of Abraham would return to the land of Canaan, God was speaking of the Israelites. The power of God through Israel would drive the Canaanites/Amorites out of the land. The time would be four generations later (after the promise to Abraham). This would be the time Israel was in bondage and the time given to the Amorites by God to repent and turn to Him. God was extending His grace to the Amorites during the time the Israelites were in Egypt. It was time for Israel to come to the land. The time for the Amorites to repent had passed. Look at this from J. Vernon McGee's commentary:

That time had now come. God brought the children of Israel across the Red Sea not only for their sake, but also to demonstrate His redemption through power, as He had by blood that last night in Egypt when the angel of death passed over the homes on which the blood was on the doorposts. This was not only to convince the Egyptians that there was the living and true God amidst all the idols of Egypt, but also to convince these people in the land. Remember that the harlot Rahab had said, "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you" (Josh. 2:10). She believed. Now if that woman believed, anybody could have believed God.⁴

The people of Canaan had ample time and opportunity to turn to God which was why He delayed the time for Israel to enter the land. God was being patient, but only Rahab responded.

³ The New Unger's Bible Dictionary.

⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

God was telling Abraham that He would not put his descendants in the land until He had given the Amorites a chance to turn to Him. Look at the amazing grace of God. However, only Rahab was a taker. The others ignored the activity of God.

The time had come to begin to take the land God had promised.

Day 5

Read Joshua 10:20-43

This is definitely one of those passages in the Old Testament which is hard to read. There was so much killing which seems inhumane, however, we must remember what was going on. God was giving the land to the people of the promise. The people of the land had been given over four hundred years to turn to the Lord and He had undoubtedly given plenty of reasons for them to come to Him. We read yesterday that Rahab had heard enough about Israel's God for her to place her faith in Him and provide for the spies. If Rahab was open enough to believe, then the others were "*without excuse*" (see Romans 1:20). People everywhere have enough revelation for them to seek the Lord as Rahab did. There may have been others who came to the Lord we do not know about, but we do know that Rahab was delivered and was used by God to rescue the spies. She is in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5) and she is listed in the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11:31.

What we see here is time running out. It happens every day. People live their lives with the revelation of God all around them and time runs out. The day of their death comes and the opportunity to turn to God in faith is gone. We cannot blame God.

⁷But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ⁸But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:7-9 (NKJV)

God was faithful to establish the nation of Israel as His people. He was faithful to give them the land. With the giving of the land, it had to be conquered. There is coming a day of separation. Those who are God's children by faith will be separated from

those who are not. He has prepared a place for His own to live forever apart from sin and everything associated with it. I am grieved some will not come to Him by faith, but I am thankful for all who have and will.

What about you? Have you come to Him by way of faith in His Son Jesus who has taken away your sin and guilt? What about those around you? Are you pointing them to Him?

WEEK 57 GOD CALLS GIDEON-----Chris Watson

The saga of the Israelites continues. One minute they are following hard after God and the next minute, they are complaining or following after other gods. During these times, one of God's people steps in to lead. It's not that this person is perfect or has it all together, but God uses this person for a specific time and purpose. We will read this week about Gideon in the book of Judges. The book of Judges is exactly what it sounds like, judges who were judging what Israel was or was not doing. This week, we make the leap from Joshua to Judges. In between these times, the land was given to the various tribes and we see Israel continuing to go back and forth.

Day 1

Read Judges 6:1-10

Sin has consequences! God gave the Israelites over to the Midianites for seven years because of their sin. The Midianites worshipped false gods and made life unbearable for the Israelites. The Midianites were evil people. Can you imagine living under the conditions we read about in today's passage? In Deuteronomy 20:16-18, God gave the Israelites instructions to destroy the idol worshipers who would be living in the land they would take over. These instructions were given so they would not be led astray to worship false gods. Apparently, they didn't do this and it came back to bite them!

Oftentimes, we go through trouble and suffering which is not the result of our own personal sin. At other times, we go through trouble and suffering that is the result of our sin, as in the case we read today. The times of trials which are not a result of our direct sin, God often uses to mold us, teach us, and draw us closer to Him. The times of trouble and suffering which are a result of our sin may be more of an opportunity for God to get our attention and to get us to wake up before we continue on the downward slide. This is what happened in the case of the Israelites. For

seven years, they lived under very harsh conditions and it wasn't until the seventh year they finally cried out to God. God sent the prophet Gideon and they were reminded of all God had done and all of His mighty works. Gideon then reminded them of what they had done, basically turned their backs on God, forgetting about Him, and they had started worshiping other gods Verse 8.

What about you? Are you there now? Are you running from God, seeking other idols and gods when only God will satisfy? God is waiting for you to come back and He wants an intimate relationship with you. Turn back to Him. Maybe you are in a right relationship with God, but you know others that are like the Israelites in this account. They are seeking contentment in everything but God and it is overtaking them. Make it a focused decision to pray for them and for God to open their eyes.

Day 2

Read Judges 6:11-16

Most likely, you have experienced something in your life that you clearly recognized was none other than God! Or, maybe you have heard others say, “that could only be God.” God was setting up this historical account for such a time.

God was going to use Gideon to save Israel from the Midianites, as we see in Verse 14. When the angel of the Lord came to relay this to Gideon, he was hiding from the Midianites threshing wheat! He was trying to salvage some food without them knowing and he was afraid of them. During this time, the Lord visited Gideon and told him that He was going to bring the Israelites out of the Midianite’s hand. In Verse 15, Gideon told the Lord that in his own tribe, his clan was the weakest and he was the least in his family. I wonder if the Lord smiled when He heard Gideon’s response. It’s likely He did as He was getting ready to do something for which only He could get the credit. He was going to use the most unlikely and least person to accomplish His purpose.

God was calling Gideon. Though Gideon had his excuses, it didn’t matter because God was calling and He told him that He would be with him. God was setting this up so what would take place later could only be because of God. He was calling Gideon because He knew that Gideon would say he couldn’t do it. God was using an unlikely person to accomplish His tasks.

We might often think or say, “God couldn’t use me to _____, after all, I am the _____ in my family!” We make excuses, perhaps not teaching Sunday School because we don’t know the entire Bible, or not sharing our faith because we don’t have all the answers. Or, maybe you have a dream God has given you, telling you He wants to use you, but you make excuses for why you can’t do it. Whatever God has called you to do, as with Gideon, the Lord has said, “I will be with you” and that is all you need. Step out, step up, and watch the Lord work!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Judges 6:17-24

Gideon saw the pre-incarnate Christ, the Son of God. The angel of the Lord is only mentioned in the Old Testament and isn't mentioned again until after the birth of Christ. Jesus declared Himself to be existent before Abraham (**John 8:58**). This is incredible! Jesus, as the angel of the Lord, was appearing in the Old Testament long before His birth. Gideon was in the presence of holiness and perfection. If God wanted to, He could have taken Gideon out, but because of His love and grace, He didn't. He wanted to use him for His purposes. Marty Machowski says, "Gideon was a part of God's plan to save Israel. Each time God saved Israel He was preparing the way for Jesus to be born."⁵ The One who would take away the sins of the world was making Himself known. When Christ was born, He was here in physical form and when He ascended to heaven, He left the Holy Spirit with us. We see Jesus throughout the Old and New Testaments and He is here with us today.

We see all of scripture points to Jesus, the only hope for you, me, our country, and the world. We cannot stand, sit, kneel, or even live in the presence of God without Jesus. He is our guide, strength, comforter, and our very life. Jesus is our lawyer. He pleads our case before our Judge, God. God is not only our Judge, He is also the jury. The only thing that Jesus has to show God is what we did with Him. If we trusted in Jesus, then we are free, if not, we are in bondage to sin and spiritual death both now and after our physical life.

Do you know Jesus? Do you have a relationship with Him? Have you confessed your need to be saved from your sin to know God through Jesus? If not, why not today? Your lawyer wants to plead your case, but you must first trust Him and confess your need for Him. If you know Jesus, you need to tell others of their need for Him!

⁵ Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, 234

Day 4

Read Judges 6:25-40

Idols and gods, they are everywhere! It's been said that an idol is anything we put in the place of God. In other words, it's something we spend most of our time on, are consumed with, and can't live without. What is your idol(s)? Is Jesus your everything? If not, what is taking His place?

In today's account we see the god of Baal. Gideon's father had an altar to Baal. There are many different kinds of gods today, but take notice, all other gods that are worshiped are dead. From Buddha to Baal, they are not alive, they are dead. Did you get that? They are dead! People who worship such gods are worshipping a god that is dead. A god that can do nothing! This is sad, really sad. Baal was a god that had been made up by the people.

In this account, Gideon did what should have been done. He destroyed the altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole. Then, Gideon's father said that if what he did was wrong, Baal could take care of it himself. Of course, nothing happened. Gideon knew he worshiped and depended on the one true God.

In the United States and across the world, there are hundreds of gods and idols. People worship them every day. We have seen pictures of Muslims bowing down to Allah and we know it is a false hope. As believers, God has called us to share Jesus, the one true God, with everyone we meet. We are to live it, show it, and share it. What idols need to be torn down in your life today? What idols need to be torn down in our country? The only way this can happen is by seeking God!

Day 5

Read Jeremiah 33:16

Last week, we learned or were reminded that Jeremiah 33:14-15 speaks of Jesus. In fact, in Matthew 1, we see the genealogy of Jesus and we see David and others in this line. Today, we see the name by which He will be called, “The Lord Our Righteousness.”

It doesn’t get any clearer than this. The name says it all. It leaves no room for our righteousness (goodness/perfection) because we have none, it leaves no room for bragging because we have nothing in and of ourselves to brag about and it leaves no room for us to work our way to heaven because we have no good in us.

Third Day has a song titled Trust in Jesus. Here are the lyrics that go along with this verse. Read them slowly.

Trust In Jesus

One of these days we all will stand in judgment for
Every single word that we have spoken
One of these days we all will stand before the Lord
Give a reason for everything we’ve done
And what I’ve done is

Trust in Jesus
My great Deliverer
My strong Defender
The Son of God
I trust in Jesus
Blessed Redeemer
My Lord forever
The Holy One, the Holy One

What are you going to do when your time has come
And your life is done and there’s nothing you can stand on
What will you have to say at the judgment throne
I already know the only thing that I can say I

Trust in Jesus
My great Deliverer
My strong Defender
The Son of God
I trust in Jesus
Blessed Redeemer
My Lord forever
The Holy One, the Holy One

This is it! We are to trust in Jesus and then follow Him all the days of our lives. We must realize we have no righteousness on our own! Do you know Him? Are you depending on His righteousness or yours? Thank Him today for who He is!

Here is the link to the song-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BtaCeJYqZA>

WEEK 58 GIDEON'S VICTORY-----Dennis Watson

Gideon's time as a judge in Israel was characterized by three periods that describe where he was spiritually. First, he was fearful; the first period of his leadership was cowardice. Secondly, he was encouraged by God; the second period was characterized by conquering. After his victory, he fell into sin and brought confusion to the people before his death. The last period of his leadership was characterized by compromise. Gideon started weakly, was encouraged by God, but finished poorly.

Day 1

Read Judges 7:1-8

Gideon was ready to lead an assault on the Midianites who had terrorized Israel for seven years. The Midianites were so numerous they could not be counted. (The actual number was 135,000, see Judges 8:10.) Certainly, Gideon was only mildly encouraged by his army of 32,000, but God told Gideon that he had too many. Not too many to win, but so many they would think they had done it themselves. God told Gideon to release all who were fearful. Twenty-two thousand went home, leaving Gideon less than half—10,000. Perhaps Gideon was encouraged that he still had 10,000: all did not leave, but the Lord said there were still too many. He gave Gideon a culling method. He was to send the soldiers to the water's shore and have them drink from the water. Those who got water in their hands and licked it like a dog would be his army—300! The others who got down on their knees were sent home. I don't think the method was important. What was important was God's plan to get the army down to the size that no one could mistake where the victory came from. God had arrived at the army He would use to give Gideon the victory.

Whose plan and whose victory was this? It was not Gideon's plan, nor was it to be his victory. God wanted Gideon and everyone else to know it was by God's might and for God's glory,

the Midianites were defeated. Gideon needed to know that since God was on his side he could win the victory without any army at all.

Give thanks to God for showing us He is faithful and we can trust Him.

Day 2

Read Judges 7:9-15

God has ways of giving His people encouragement. It is usually through hearing. It has been said that Satan uses the eyes and God uses the ears. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Sin usually comes through the portal of seeing. Eve saw the fruit was pleasing to look at. Achan saw the gold and silver and took it. God knew that Gideon had seen the vastness of the Midianite army. He saw they looked like a swarm of locusts. Gideon was still fearful, but God did not leave him. Instead God sent him, along with his servant Purah, into the Midianite camp in the evening. While they were there, they overheard a discussion between two of the Midianite soldiers. One had a dream and the other interpreted it to mean that God had given the Midianite army into the hands of Gideon. Where did the dream and the interpretation come from? They both came from the Lord. It was for Gideon! God has a way of getting His Word to us if we are seeking and listening.

Gideon was encouraged by what he heard and he worshipped God. He then returned to his 300 men and told them to get ready to go into battle because the Lord had given the victory!

Listen! Read! Seek! God is our encouragement! We are to put our eyes on Him, not our circumstances. We are to listen to what He says, not what the pundits say. God's Word and Truth is our encouragement to trust in Him and not in our own strategies. Gideon's encouragement came from God. **Verse 16 (NKJV)** begins with "then." *"¹⁶Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers."* He led his band of soldiers into the battle with a plan. No offensive weapons, but an encouraging Word from God!

What do you need? Seek God, listen to and read His word! He will encourage you to stay in the battle. Thank God for His encouragement!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Judges 8:22-35

The first three verses of this section present quite a paradox—the people want Gideon to be their king. Correctly so, he refuses and says God is to rule over them. Then, he requests gold from the spoils taken to make an idol. Right after the victory God gave, Gideon fell into sin! Be careful after high times! Pride comes before a fall! And fall Gideon did. This doesn't seem to fit. Where did it come from? Gideon tells the people to bring gold and they brought over forty pounds, with which he made a golden ephod. The ephod was a vest probably similar to the one worn by the high priest. However, this one was used for worship—an idol. The people were confused and distracted by the ephod. The people worshipped the golden ephod.

When Gideon died, the people followed the sequence we see over and over again in the book of Judges. The golden ephod was a step, just one additional step away from God and to the worship of the false god Baal. During Gideon's lifetime, the people enjoyed forty years of peace. He had delivered them, but the deliverance was only temporary, largely because of Gideon's failure near the end of his life.

What a tragic situation! Leadership is to be passed on. It is not to be a temporary thing that works as long as the leader is present. Gideon was just a man. He could deliver Israel from a temporary fleshly enemy, but not from the real enemy—the enemy within. God sent the ultimate deliverer who delivers from the real enemy—sin. There is no one who can deliver from the real enemy except Jesus. Ask Him to save you from the biggest enemy of all—sin.

Day 4

Read Judges 7:15-25

All was quiet in the Midianite camp. It was time to change the guards, the beginning of the middle watch, which was probably from 10:00 pm to 2:00 am. The guards who had been working were going home and new ones were taking their place. It was probably a routine swap which took place regularly. They had no idea Gideon had been in the camp and had overheard a man telling about a dream he had. A dream which encouraged him. Gideon returned to his army of three hundred men and told them to get ready to go because the Lord had given the Midianites into their hands. The plan was simple and divinely inspired. Each of the three hundred soldiers was given a trumpet, a clay pitcher, and a torch. The soldiers were divided into three groups of one hundred men each. On Gideon's signal, as they surrounded the camp, each man was to blow his trumpet, break the pitcher exposing the light of the torch, and shout, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*" When that happened, the Midianite soldiers were so shocked and terrified they fled and some even turned their swords on each other.

As the Midianites fled, Gideon summoned the others, some of whom had probably been those who had gone home. To say the least, the Midianite army was routed and 122,000 Midianite soldiers were killed in the battle. How was the battle won? With three hundred soldiers of Gideon, trumpets, pitchers and torches! There were no swords. Although the shout was about swords, there were none for Gideon's army. Obviously, the battle was the Lord's and it was won by the Lord! God provided everything they needed, including the encouragement.

Thank the Lord that He is the one who fights our battles. We show up and obey Him and the victory and the glory are His!

Day 5

Read Jeremiah 33:17

This section of Jeremiah is talking about Jesus. The promise in the verse we look at today is that Israel will always have a king on the throne of David. Was this promise true? Of course it was! All the things God promises are true. We need to understand what He is saying and how it is true.

The people of Jesus' day knew of this prophecy and this is why some of them wanted to make Jesus king. They did not understand His Kingdom was not of this world. He came to defeat sin and establish an eternal kingdom characterized by justice and righteousness.

Some have felt this promise was incorrect because the throne ceased to exist in 586 BC when Jerusalem fell. However, God did not promise an unbroken monarchy, but an unbroken line of descendants from David who would be qualified to sit on the throne when it was reestablished. David's line would not fail before the righteous Branch came to claim His throne (cf. Luke 1:31-33). The genealogies of Matthew and Luke show this promise was fulfilled as Christ was able to trace both His legal line through Joseph and His physical line through Mary back to David (Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-31)⁶ Jesus was completely qualified to be the one who would sit on David's throne. However, He is not here in physical form sitting on a physical throne. He is sitting on the throne in heaven right now until God has finished His work of calling out a people for His name, preparing things to put His Son Jesus on the throne of the universe. *The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."* **Psalm 110:1 (NKJV)**

Thank God for the coming Kingdom of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

⁶The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Explanation of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty

WEEK 59 GOD GIVES SAMSON STRENGTH----- -----Chris Watson

We pick up this week in Judges 13 and we find the Israelites once again going after everything but God. Up to this point, we have seen God do some pretty incredible things through ordinary people. The focus, of course, is God, but He uses people just like you and me to fulfill His purposes or to carry out His plan.

Day 1

Read Judges 13:1-5

We know that after Gideon died, the Israelites began worshipping idols again and putting their focus on everything except God! Today's passage shows a lot of the same thing; they were doing evil in the eyes of the Lord and they had been delivered into the hands of the Philistines. Notice, however, this time it doesn't say the Israelites recognized they had sinned or they called on the name of the Lord. It doesn't appear at this point that any of this happened, but God, in His grace and divine plan, would bring into the world a child that would begin the deliverance of Israel. Dennis Watson has often said God is the need maker and the need meeter! This is true here. However, the people of Israel had gotten themselves into this mess when they decided to continue in sin and now God was sending Samson to begin the deliverance. At this point in this account, we don't know if the people of Israel recognized they needed deliverance or if they even cared.

I would dare to say that all of us have been in similar situations. We have perhaps found ourselves in a bad situation by willful sin; we may be at the beginning or knee deep in sin and not even know we need help. We may still be stuck in the "sin is fun for a season" arena. Even then, God just might be preparing a way to bring us out. Often He uses a parent, sibling, close friend, situation, tragedy, or He may draw us to Himself to deliver us from sin like He was beginning to do with the Israelites. We may not know our need for the deliverance then, but, all the while,

God is working on our deliverance to draw us to Him. Can you think of a time when God used someone or something to deliver you? Maybe at the time you were ready to be delivered or maybe you didn't even know you needed deliverance until God showed you or until God put a certain person in your life to help show you. Praise the Lord for His deliverance! How might God want to use us to deliver others? God is the only deliverer, but He might want to use us in the process. Who are we praying for, sharing with, loving on, and showing Jesus to? Sometimes, it doesn't happen overnight but through a consistent diet of love and grace, along with truth and righteousness.

Thank the Lord for His deliverance from sin, hell, death, and the enemy! Thank Him for showing us grace and love and pray we might also show grace and love (deliverance) to others, even when they might not think they need it.

Day 2

Read Judges 13:6-18

In this passage, Manoah's wife conveyed to him what the angel of the Lord had told her. His response could have been anything from "you're crazy" to believing her. We see here his response was to believe her and take her at her word, but he did not just believe. In Verse 8, he prayed that the angel would come again for confirmation and to teach them how to raise the boy. The angel did return and reiterated to Manoah what he had told his wife. While there wasn't any new information given in the second visit, it was confirmation to Manoah that it was God speaking and his faith was strengthened.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us, "*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*" I have never seen God (or the angel of God) physically, nor has God ever spoken to me in an audible voice, but His inaudible voice has been just as loud, if not louder, than an audible voice! While I have never heard the voice of God audibly, the way He speaks to me and to many believers is through His Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. I don't see Him with my physical eyes, but I have assurance He is always with me. He is our hope, our everything.

When God speaks to us through His Word, the Holy Spirit, or through someone else, our next step often reveals what we really believe. When God speaks, how do you respond? Do you do nothing? Do you ask for fifty confirmations that it is Him speaking? Do you simply listen and obey? Or, do you totally ignore Him? Our response to God's speaking often shows us what we believe. At Hollonville, I have often said that when God speaks, He desires a response! He doesn't speak to hear Himself talk or because He needs a personal pep rally. Rather, He speaks and then asks us to respond. Unfortunately, the lack of response is still a response. The next time God speaks to you, respond in an obedient fashion! Obedience breeds obedience, which breeds an ever growing walk with the Lord!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Judges 13:19-25

Can you imagine if we still sacrificed or offered burnt offerings to the Lord as they did in the Old Testament? The negative side might be that groups like PETA would probably come after us. But the positive side is that it would remind us of the cost of our sin every time we had to make a sacrifice or offering.

The sacrifices made in the Old Testament always point to Jesus. Some say a loving God would just overlook sin, but the opposite is true. Sin is completely opposed to God and His plan, because He is holy and righteous (perfect). He can't just overlook sin. The sacrifices reminded the people their sin was serious and it couldn't be glossed over. It had to be paid for and that was why the sacrifices were needed.

When the time was right, God sent His only Son to pay for our sins. Let that sink in for a minute... We have heard this for years and many reading this know Jesus, but it has become so commonplace to say this that we don't take time to truly think about it. The Creator of the world, the One who made the mountains, stars, and all the planets, came in human form to die for our sins! We are powerless on our own, we are hopeless, useless, and condemned to hell, but God, rich in mercy and love, became a man and sacrificed Himself for us, for you and me.

When Manoah and his wife made the sacrifice to the Lord, it was another picture of the sacrifice God would make on our behalf. Don't ever get used to that! Don't ever let it become old or, "Yeah I've heard that a thousand times." Bask in the grace and love of Jesus Christ and the hope we have in Him. He is our everything, the ultimate sacrifice made so we could be free from the power of sin, hell, and the enemy. We should live to know God and the One whom He sent (John 17:13). Take time today to thank God for His grace and what His sacrifice means to you!

Day 4

Read Judges 14:1-9

Having the Spirit of the Lord is an incredible blessing. As believers today, we have the Holy Spirit who walks, talks, leads, and guides us. Today, we read in Verse 5 the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson with power so great he was able to overcome the lion and tear him apart with his bare hands. What a sight to behold!

You can be certain it wasn't Samson who did it; it was the power of the Lord in him. When God works in and through us, it's not us; it's God in us. As we have seen throughout Genesis, when God worked through people like Abraham and Jacob, all that was accomplished had little to do with them. All credit was due to the Spirit of the Lord in them.

When we see the spirit of the Lord at work in and through us, we shouldn't be boastful or proud. We need to be thankful and humble. We get the impression in today's account Samson didn't acknowledge God for the victory, but just kept going on about his day. When God works in and through us, we need to acknowledge His working, be thankful, and realize the Spirit of the Lord at work in us. After all, it is not us, but Christ in us.

In Philippians 3, beginning in Verse 4, Paul says, *“If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes*

from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.”

Paul’s argument was that we have nothing in ourselves; we do nothing in ourselves, the focus is for God and His glory. It is the Spirit of the Lord in us and we can know Him and gain a closer walk with Christ. Today, don’t boast in yourself but boast in the Lord.

Day 5

Read Jeremiah 33:18 and Hebrews 7:23-25

Last week, we looked at Jeremiah 33:17 and learned that a descendent of David would be king of Israel. Of course, we know this king is Jesus. Today, we read there will always be a priest who would make sacrifices for the people. Marty Machowski says, “Back when God gave His law to Moses, God said that whenever the people sinned and deserved to be punished, they should bring a lamb to the priest for him to kill. The priest would offer a sacrifice up to God to make payment for their sin. The lamb would be killed in their place.”⁷

Hebrews 7:23-25 are incredible verses! This passage conveys Jesus is the One who was pierced for our sins and yet He is also the priest who offers up the sacrifice. Jesus is our only hope to know God and to spend eternity in heaven. He is the go-between for us and God. Much like Moses was the go-between for the Israelites and God, Jesus is the same for us. The end of Verse 25 says Jesus lives to intercede for us. This is incredible! Do you understand this? Our only hope is Jesus, not some of Jesus, not a little of Jesus, and not Jesus plus something else, but all of Jesus. He is the only hope for everyone.

If we die without Jesus, we will immediately be apart from Him. If we haven't come to Jesus to have our sins forgiven, when God looks on us, He sees nothing but our sin, which leads to death. However, if we know Jesus when life on earth is over and God looks at us, He will see the blood of Jesus and that is our only hope. We deserve to be punished, but in God's rich mercy, Jesus was punished for our sin. He became our substitute. He took our place for us, praise the Lord!

Take time today to thank God that He intercedes for us. Praise the Lord!

⁷Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, 246

WEEK 60 SAMSON LOSES HIS STRENGTH----- -----Dennis Watson

God has always been and will always be faithful to His covenant and, therefore, to the people of the covenant. He raised people up, in this case, judges who would deliver the people and rescue them from their enemies. God provided superhuman power and strength for deliverance to take place. Samson was given incredible strength by God for the purpose of delivering the people from the Philistines. Although he became overly self-centered, God still worked through him to bring deliverance.

Day 1

Read Judges 16:4-14

Though Samson became entangled in struggles with the enemy of Israel, the Philistines, it was not due to his cooperating with God. Instead, it was because of his own affairs. It is safe to say although God had chosen Samson to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines, he was a womanizer. He was always following his desire for women which always got him into trouble. After he connected up with a harlot in Gaza, we read, *“He loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek.”* That woman was Delilah, one of the enemy, a Philistine. Delilah’s “love” was for hire. The Philistines hired her to get to Samson. She was not the least bit interested in Samson, but he was interested in her and God was interested in using Samson to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. What Samson would not do as the leader of an army, God used in bringing about the destruction of many Philistines.

Samson’s eyes got him into trouble over and over again. Samson pursued his fleshly desires with no consideration of his Nazirite vow. Samson was set aside for God’s purposes, but he lived for his own. Delilah was what the writer of Proverbs called an “immoral woman.” She was not the problem, Samson was. He allowed himself to be led astray by his own desires. He entangled himself with the Philistines instead of defeating them!

This is what we, too, often do. Instead of winning over those who are without God, we join them. Samson was not leading an army against the Philistines, he was among them with an immoral Philistine woman.

You have been set aside for God's purposes. You are called upon to win those of the world to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Are you joining them or inviting them to join you?

Day 2

Read Judges 16:15-22

Believers in Jesus Christ rarely just jump into serious sin. It's usually been brewing for a while. Samson wanted the attention and affection of Delilah more than he wanted to live from and for his vow to God. He had gotten himself so entangled with the world, it seemed as though he could not escape and he would give up anything to satisfy his worldly desire. Delilah was trying to trick him into telling her the secret of his strength and he was playing a game. She was fighting an enemy. Why would a man of God be sleeping with his head in the lap of an immoral woman?

The only thing Delilah wanted to know was the secret of his strength so she could tell it to the Philistines and receive 1100 silver coins in return. He told her three lies: bind me with seven bowstrings, tie me with new ropes, and weave my hair into a loom. Each was supposed to make him like any other man. Each was a lie. Each lie took him closer to the truth. It is extremely dangerous to flirt with sin. He was playing a game. It was a game to him and he got too close; but he was thinking, "I can handle this."

His hair was a symbol of where his strength originated. His strength came from God who made him to be a Nazirite from birth and for his whole life. There was no strength in his hair. He forsook the three symbols of his vow by touching a dead body, being in a vineyard, and now forsaking the vow by exposing the vow.

Our sin has consequences! After his hair was cut off, he became weak. The Philistines captured him, gouged out his eyes and made him a grinder in prison. What a sad story. However, God was not finished. As you live your life, consider **Proverbs 4:23**, "*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*" Don't let your heart depart from God!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Judges 16:23-31

Samson was not really the enemy of the Philistines, except he had made himself such. He had become a source of aggravation to them. Samson was to be a leader, but his focus was on being a champion. God was their enemy! Samson was God's leader, chosen to begin the defeat of the Philistines. God was not finished with Samson and Samson was not finished with the Philistines.

When you spend time in seclusion alone with your sin and failures, God can use that time for your good. Remember Jacob? He was alone just before he met his estranged brother after twenty years of separation. It was then he got into the wrestling match with the Angel of God. Obviously, Samson used the time in prison to repent and turn to God and His purposes. He probably reviewed his life and saw where he had turned aside from God. His eyes had gotten him in trouble; now they were gone. He could see better now than ever before. He could see where he had gone wrong and a way to make it right. He could see how to make the end of his life an impact against the Philistines. His hair had grown back and he had grown in his understanding of his place among the Philistines.

He prayed for God's strength so he could get revenge on the Philistines for blinding him. God even used his wrong motives. The section closes with, "*So the dead that he killed in his death were more than he killed in his life.*" Jesus came for the purpose of dying for our sin. He never departed from that mission. Samson came to begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. Most of his life he lived off mission. It was not until the bitter end of his life that he got it right and even then, his motives were impure.

In his death, God used Samson to deliver Israel from their enemy, the Philistines. God used Jesus to deliver us from our sin in His death.

I am thankful God uses even poor motives. Thank God that He is at work even when you may not be seeking His will. Thank Him that Jesus remained and remains faithful to His mission to save.

Day 4

Read Hebrews 11:32-12:3

The happy ending to Samson's life did not come until several thousand years later. Many Philistines were killed when Samson's strength returned to him and he pushed down the two pillars causing the palace they were in to collapse. Samson was killed along with many Philistine leaders.

The first part of Samson's life was characterized by sensual living. He was led astray by his passions and did not follow God's will for his life. However tragic it became, his life ended well and the writer of Hebrews includes his name in the roll call of faith. The names of men and women in Hebrews 11 are of people who, through great difficulty, trusted God. As a result God accomplished something great through them. The testimony of God's power is on display through people who trust Him. Their lives, even thousands of years later, were about God. Samson is remembered here as a man of faith who, in the end, displayed God's power as he looked to God. Samson's life as a deliverer pointed to the deliverer Jesus Christ.

Samson repented and turned from his ungodly lifestyle. God displayed His greatness through him and on his behalf. Pride and fleshly living can bring corruption. However, we need to follow Samson's example of repenting of any and all ungodly and fleshly living we may be involved in and return to the Lord. Whatever sin has characterized your life in the past, turn away from it and turn to Jesus. He will bless and do great and mighty things for His glory and name.

Thank God for His faithfulness to do great things in spite of our sin.

Day 5

Read Ezekiel 34:20-24 and John 10:14-16

Ezekiel wrote about a shepherd who would come and care for the sheep. Jesus says in the passage in John, *“I am the good shepherd.”* The passage in Ezekiel was mostly addressed to the people of Israel and told how God would gather and care for those sheep. In the passage in John, Jesus makes it clear, *“Other sheep I have that are not of this fold.”* Ezekiel was looking forward to a coming shepherd and I am certain his understanding was very limited, but Jesus explains for His listeners there would be others who would become sheep whom He would gather and care for. There had never been such a shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep. Jesus gave the picture of an incredible connection between the shepherd and his sheep. Of course, Ezekiel referred to David because he was a shepherd and Jesus would come from the family line of David.

When I think of David and a shepherd, I do think of Jesus, but also of the 23rd Psalm. You may want to read it because it gives this wonderful picture of Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and His care for us.

- We lack nothing
- We rest comfortably
- He provides for our thirst
- He leads us safely on pure paths
- Even when we face certain death we are okay
- He is always with us
- We will dwell with Him forever

Thank God that Jesus is your shepherd and no matter what comes, you are safe because He is the Good Shepherd. If He is not your shepherd, perhaps this would be a good time to invite Jesus to be your Savior and shepherd.

Week 61 RUTH-----Chris Watson

Ruth is one of the shortest books of the Bible, but it is not short in meaning and truth. This week we will see how this book is prophetic as it speaks of the kinsmen redeemer. The kinsmen redeemer here was a foreshadowing of another one to come. Chuck Missler says the four chapters of Ruth can be broken up into love's resolve, love's response, love's request, and the redemption of the land and bride!

Day 1

Read Ruth 1

Verse 1 lets us know the time frame we are dealing with, the time of the judges. At this time, there was a lot of back and forth with the Israelites. First they would follow God and then they would revert back to their sinful ways. This happened over and over again. Nestled in this time frame is the book of Ruth.

Ruth 1 is setting us up for the rest of the book. Naomi has just lost her husband and both of her sons and assumes both of her daughters-in-law will now leave. In fact, she instructs them to go back home and hopes they will each be able to find another husband. Initially, they both say they will stay with her, but we see in Verse 14 Orpah leaves and only Ruth stays. Ruth makes the journey home with Naomi. The journey they make is about 75 miles; not a small feat for two ladies to make by themselves.

Verses 16 and 17 are key verses in this beginning chapter. "But Ruth replied, *"Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."* These verses may seem insignificant until we realize where Ruth comes from. Verse 4 tells us Ruth was a Moabite, so when Ruth makes these statements to Naomi, she is turning her back on everything, including idol worship. In 1st and 2nd Kings, we see the Moabites

were evil and participated in human sacrifice and idol worship. So, again, for Ruth to tell Naomi she would follow her, a God follower, and say she would follow Naomi's God, Ruth meant that she was trusting in the one true God! This is amazing to see. In Matthew 1:5, we also see Ruth and her family in the line of Jesus. That's right, a Moabite in the line of Jesus!

This account is more proof that God can take someone who may be following the wrong things and turn their heart to Him. In fact, as believers, we are a type of Ruth. Before being saved by the grace of God, we were doing our own thing, following other gods, perhaps involved in all kinds of evil. As we go through this account, put yourself in Ruth's shoes or see yourself as Ruth and see God's drawing and His plan. However, this is just the beginning of the account of Ruth. It gets so much better.

Day 2

Read Ruth 2

When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, they probably had nothing but the clothes on their backs and they needed food. Verse 2 says Ruth wanted to go out and pick up leftover grain in the fields. During this time, the field owners or workers would get their grain and whatever was not gleaned in the original reaping was leftover for the orphans and widows (Leviticus 19:9). Ruth was going to get the leftovers so she and Naomi would have something to eat. It “just so happened” she was gleaning in the fields of Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech, Naomi’s late husband! I don’t believe it “just so happened” because I don’t believe in coincidences and if you believe in the living God, you shouldn’t either. God’s plan is carried out in the first few verses of Chapter 2.

Boaz notices Ruth and gives special instructions to watch out for her and not to rebuke her. Verse 12 says, *“May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”* This is huge. Boaz tells Ruth that the Lord will repay her and she will be rewarded as she has taken refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. This verse will come into context more in the next 2 chapters.

Notice in Verse 20 Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz is one of their kinsman-redeemers. What is this? It’s important that we know, so we understand this is a turning point in this account. “The kinsman-redeemer is a male relative who, according to various laws of the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or in need. The Hebrew term (go el) for kinsman-redeemer designates one who delivers or rescues (Genesis 48:16; Exodus 6:6) or redeems property or person (Leviticus 27:9-25, 25:47-55, Deuteronomy 25:5-6).”⁸

⁸Gotquestions.org, kinsman-redeemer

As we know, Ruth and Naomi were in need of food, as they had nothing. Naomi still had the land of her late husband and, as we learn later in Chapter 4, she wanted to sell it, most likely because she needed money.

As we enter Chapter 3 and 4, keep the thought and definition of the kinsman-redeemer in mind. Keep in mind from yesterday how we can be compared to Ruth and how God chooses us, individuals, as His Church. Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer, is the perfect picture of what Jesus is to us, our Redeemer.

Thank God for His perfect plan and how it is played out in the Old Testament long before Christ would come. Thank God that His plan is perfect.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Ruth 3

The name Boaz means, “in him is strength.” Again, this is not a coincidence. As we see in **Proverbs 18:10**, it says, “*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe!*” Remember when Boaz told Ruth that she was taking refuge under the wings of the God of Israel (Ruth 2:12)? You can’t make this stuff up! The God of the universe is so detailed and intricate in the things He does.

Today, we see love’s request in Chapter 3. Both Ruth and Naomi know Boaz is the kinsman-redeemer. So Naomi instructs Ruth in what to do and when to do it. This account is not at all sexual in nature nor done in a wrong light. It was all part of God’s plan. Ruth went to lie at Boaz’ feet and once he recognized she was there, Ruth asked Boaz to spread his garment over her since he was the kinsman-redeemer. This was an invitation to marriage. This is apparent in the second half of the verse as Boaz acknowledges she has not run after the younger or richer men.

We see something similar in **Ezekiel 16:8** where God speaks metaphorically regarding Israel, “*Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.*” God was the husband of Israel in this context. Ruth asking Boaz to spread his garment over her was not a sexual advance, but a request for marriage!

Note, however, Boaz had already come to and acknowledged her in Chapter 2. He had noticed her, taken care of her, kept her safe, and provided for her and Naomi. Now, because of his care and love, Ruth is presenting herself available for marriage.

Jesus has come to us. He has drawn us to Himself. Now we are to follow Him. We are to ask Him to save us and we are to enter into a relationship with Him. Ruth is us as the Church (a type) and Boaz is Jesus (a type). **Luke 1:68** says, *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come and has redeemed his people.”* God is our redeemer through Jesus Christ. He wants to know us; He wants to have a relationship with us. He wants to purchase us and He does this through His blood. The blood of Jesus redeems us; He is our Kinsman-Redeemer. Jesus is the bridegroom and, as believers, we are His bride, much like Ruth would become Boaz’s bride.

Thank Jesus for His redemption. We didn’t do anything to deserve it; we received it by grace.

Day 4

Read Ruth 4

What an incredible account! This last chapter is the culmination of everything that has transpired to this point. Apparently, there was another closer kinsman which first had to accept or deny the opportunity to buy the land and marry Ruth. Once he realized he might endanger his own estate in doing so, he gave Boaz the opportunity to marry Ruth.

Boaz married Ruth and purchased the land of Naomi. In this agreement, as the laws and tradition would have it, not only would he marry and purchase the land, he would also agree to take care of Ruth and Naomi for the rest of their lives. Naomi had lost her husband and both of her sons. She had gone so far as to ask folks to call her Mara because her life was bitter. She would not only receive money for her land and a husband for Ruth, she would also receive food, shelter, and in time, a grandson. This is God's redemption. Notice Verse 14 of Chapter 4, *"Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!"* Our Kinsman-Redeemer has become famous. Jesus has become Lord of all and we desire for Him to become famous throughout Israel. We desire for Israel to know the One true God through Jesus.

We can imagine that it cost Boaz a great deal of money to buy back all of the property. It was a huge purchase / investment. Jesus purchased us not with money, time, wealth, or property, but with His life. He gave His life so we could be with Him. He bought us back with His blood. Amazing!

As we close out Ruth, we see God provided an additional blessing. In addition to an incredible love story, He chose to open the womb of Ruth and she gave birth to Obed, the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David who is in the line of our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

I stand amazed. Who knew so much substance and truth could be in four small chapters? May you stand amazed with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, having been purchased with the blood of the Lamb!

Day 5

Read Isaiah 54:5-7

Isaiah compares God's people in sin to a woman who is in need of a redeemer. We are all in sin and apart from Jesus, we have no hope. Isaiah was written some 700 plus years before Jesus, yet through the divine words of God, Isaiah can pen this.

As the passage says, we sometimes feel deserted and distressed. This usually has less to do with anything God has done than our own sin, or sin, in general. We may take our eyes off of Jesus, we might be focused on other things, we might be in blatant disobedient sin and feel distressed and hopeless, but God is there. He is our redeemer.

If we are in Christ, we are told there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). We don't need to live in defeat and harbor continuous thoughts and feelings that we are letting God down. We have nothing to offer God and we have already let God down. Adam and Eve started it and we keep it going; our disobedience is the root of it. However, we have two choices; wallow in it or live in the redemption of Jesus Christ. Ron Dunn says, "If you are limping around on the crutches of feelings, throw them away and walk on the legs of faith." Let's face it, our feelings change like the winds and the enemy can use this to defeat us. However, we need to stand on the truth and the truth is, if I have put my faith in Jesus, then I am redeemed, I have been bought with a price, I am not the enemy's. I am a child of the King. From this, we can live by truth and not by feelings. It doesn't mean we won't fall or we won't be inclined to follow our sinful ways. It means when we do, we confess it, move on toward following God, and remember there is no condemnation if we are in Jesus.

Are you in Jesus? If so, you are not condemned because of Christ's love. We are compelled to follow and serve Him out of that love! Thank God for His grace and love!

WEEK 62 GOD HEARS HANNAH'S PRAYERS-----

-----Dennis

Watson

God led His people faithfully. However, they were anything but faithful. He had provided leaders for them—Moses, Joshua, and then judges who were leaders acting as kings. These were God's leaders to deliver the people from their enemies. Now we are about to move into a new period of Israel's history. They were about to receive their first king. In preparation for that first king, God raises up what could be called one last judge, Samuel, who would anoint that king.

Samuel was called to fill many different roles: judge, priest, prophet, counselor, and God's man at a turning point in the history of Israel.⁹

Day 1

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-11

God heard and answered Hannah's prayer and gave her a son who would be mightily used of God. Both Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, were faithful to God. Every year they traveled to the temple to make sacrifices. Hannah was obviously a prayer warrior. Elkanah was a good husband who really loved Hannah, but he was somewhat of a "normal" husband when he said in **1 Samuel 1:8**, "*Am I not better to you than ten sons?*" I laugh every time I read this. He was sincerely trying to comfort his wife. What an over-inflated ego! As part of her prayer, Hannah made a vow that if God would give her a son she would give him to the Lord for his whole life. Hannah was praying not just for a son, but for a son that would be used for God's purposes, praise and glory. As humorous as Elkanah's statement was, perhaps there was much truth in it. Because of Hannah's grief, she was missing out on the blessings God had given.

⁹ Life Application Study Bible

What do you do when you have “*bitterness of soul*?” Bitterness of soul is a hurting and longing in your heart which is brought on by something you want or something you feel you deserve. Hannah desperately wanted a son, but did not have one. Hannah simply prayed. She poured out her heart and her request to God, seeking the only One who could provide the answer. She wasn’t angry and she wasn’t upset. She was desirous of God to give her a son. There is a great lesson to learn here. Do not give in to your hurts or longings. Don’t allow them to control your life. Pray and leave it to the Lord.

Hannah was a prayer warrior and her son Samuel would be, as well. What causes deep hurting and agony for you? Pray and pour out your heart to God.

Day 2

Read 1 Samuel 1:11-23

There was a quick change that took place for Hannah. Her whole demeanor changed. The priest Eli saw her praying and assumed she was drunk. After assuring him she was not drunk, he prayed for her and told her that her prayer would be answered. She went away from the experience encouraged and “*her face was no longer sad.*” There was a quick change and that change came because of prayer. Prayer does change things. More importantly, prayer changes people.

The Psalmist writes, “*My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him.*” **Psalm 62:5 (NKJV)**

Hannah’s expectation was from the Lord. She looked to Him and He answered her prayer. I believe as she prayed, her priorities were reordered. As she prayed for a son, she came to realize it was not a son for herself that she wanted. She wanted a son, but now it was her desire to give him to the Lord. She got more than she bargained for. She found herself twisted together with the plans and purposes of God! One of the meanings in the Old Testament for “wait” is “to be twisted together.” It is not a case of passively waiting for God to do something, but it is, as we see here with Hannah, getting caught up in what God is up to.

Pray and seek God’s kingdom and will. Cry out for answers to your prayers in keeping with His purposes and plans. Who knows, you may find yourself twisted together in what He is up to.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Samuel 1:24-2:2

Hannah prayed a prayer of rejoicing after giving birth to Samuel and then presenting him to the Lord. The words of Hannah in her prayer sound much like the words of Mary after she was told she would give birth to Jesus (see Luke 1:46-47). Both Hannah and Mary spoke of God's salvation. They both rejoiced that God had allowed them to bring special sons into the world. Here is one of those places of very significant "dot connecting." God answered Hannah's prayer for a son and she gave him back to God to serve Him all his life as a priest. This son, Samuel, would be the one God selected to anoint David as king of Israel. David would be the king, who in many ways, would save Israel from their enemies. Mary would give birth to the King, Jesus, who would save people from their ultimate enemy—sin. Now the other area of "connecting dots" is that Jesus would be the King who would eternally reign on David's throne. Wow! What a blessing for us today to see the amazing unfolding of God's plan.

How much did Hannah know? Did she know when she spoke of a king (1 Samuel 2:10) that she was allowing God, through her, to write history in advance? (Remember that is what prophecy is.) You see at this time, Israel had no king! They had never had a king up to this point.

Both Mary and Hannah were used by God to bring God's deliverer into the world. The Bible is not just a book of literature. It is not just a book of history. It is God's revelation of Himself and His plan. When people seek Him in sincerity and honesty, He will be found. God gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud. Search His book to know Him and you will!

Day 4

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-21

You cannot outgive God. Hannah prayed for a son, she had a son and she gave him to God to serve alongside Eli, the priest, when he was probably around three years old. She received what she sought after and then gave it away. However, God blessed Hannah and Elkanah with three additional sons and two daughters. Again, you cannot outgive God. Anything you give to God will bring back a far greater blessing.

As Samuel grew before the Lord, Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were corrupt evil men. The passage says they did not know the Lord. They did not honor the ways or the things of the Lord. Even as priests, they cheated people and did not honor the sacrifices the people brought. They were also immoral. Eli confronted them, but offered no discipline or correction. He just let them go. This was the atmosphere in which Samuel was raised. He grew in stark contrast to the two corrupt sons of Eli. The two sons of Eli would experience the consequence of their sin.

Samuel learned from the earliest of times to love the Lord. Do godly parents have godly children? Not necessarily. Eli was a godly man and, apparently, a loyal and faithful priest. However, his sons were pretty perverse characters. He sought to tell them what was right, but he did not discipline them. Even Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, were corrupt and did not follow their father's faith.

Seek to lead your own children to follow the Lord and then be faithful to always pray for them.

Day 5

Read 1 Samuel 2:10 and Revelation 6:10

The last part of Hannah's prayer is prophecy. Remember that prophecy is God writing history in advance. There are two very significant statements in Verse 10. Hannah speaks of "His king." At this point in Israel's history, there was no king and there had never been one. yet Hannah speaks of a king. Long term, I believe she was speaking of Jesus. Short term, I believe she was speaking of the king her son Samuel would anoint—King David. The other thing to make note of is the words, "*His anointed.*" This is the word for Messiah in the Hebrew. This verse is loaded with meaning and significance. Hannah was talking about things which she knew little about. However, she was boasting in the Lord and speaking things which are encouraging to us because we see Jesus! What an amazing glimpse into the plan of God for a king and, later, The King.

In the passage in Revelation, the martyrs are crying out asking how long it will be before the judge will come and avenge their deaths. Hannah proclaimed the coming King who would ultimately come and bring true justice for all. Like I said, this is some serious dot connecting, but it reminds us who really is in control of history.

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV)

Thank God for giving us written revelation of His plan. The roots of His plan go way back in history, but even further back into the time before time!

Week 63 GOD CALLS LITTLE SAMUEL-----Chris Watson

Up to this point we have seen God bring Israel out of their sin by various means, including the people He would use for His purposes. This week we will see God call and raise up Samuel to direct His people to get back on track or stay on track and follow Him.

Day 1

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 27-36

Verse 12 tells us that Eli's sons were wicked and the rest of the account goes on to prove it. The priests were permitted to have some of the meat for themselves and their families and, as we see in Verses 13 and 14, it was to be taken while the meat was being boiled. Whatever they pulled out with a fork was theirs. However, Verses 15-17 tell us the priests were not following God's plan and were taking whatever meat they wanted before the offering part began. We know from Verse 29 they were taking the best part of the animal and then giving what was left to the Lord as an offering. In between the verses we read today, Eli verbally slaps them on the hand, but that's about it!

Notice the consequences for their sin in Verses 30-34. They were pretty harsh, but understandable. They were treating the offering with contempt and taking the best for themselves. In essence, Eli and his sons were honoring themselves more than God by taking the best.

Have we ever done this? Have we given God the end of our day when we are burnt out from the day's activities? Have we taken the offering that belonged to the Lord and used it for what we needed and then given Him what we had left over, if any? Have we ever taken the best for ourselves and then given God the leftovers? Unfortunately I have. Have you? This is not what God desires. He wants all of us and He wants our best. When we give

Him our best, it shows we are all His. God can and will use a heart like this for His glory. I don't want to give God my leftovers; I want to give Him my best, my everything, my all. When we are obedient in this, God is glorified!

Eli's sons were not following God's plan when it came to the offerings and sacrifices. They were being selfish with the focus being on them and what they wanted. In fact, when they sinned, they didn't even recognize their sin and turn away; they, most likely kept practicing these ungodly acts. Their hearts were not on the things of the Lord! When we sin and we know we are wrong and feel bad about it, this is conviction and it is a good thing. The scary thing is when we sin, continue in sin, and are not convicted. May we be aware of our sin, but more aware of our need to turn to God and His plan. May our minds, hearts, wills, and emotions be on what He wants, for when we do this He will direct and guide us.

Day 2

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-14

Chapter 1 speaks of Hannah's desire to have a son but she was unable to conceive as her womb was closed. Not only that, but her rival provoked her and made jokes at her not being able to have children. Hannah prayed and sought God and said that if the Lord would give her a son then she would give him to the Lord and no razor would ever touch his head (1:11). The Lord heard and answered her prayer and gave her a child, Samuel. She then dedicated him (1:28) and his whole life was given over to the Lord. We also know from Chapter 2 Verse 26 Samuel grew in stature and in favor with the Lord and men.

In today's passage, Samuel was sleeping when the Lord came to him. However, the first three times he didn't know it was the Lord. He thought it was Eli. In 1 Samuel 2:7, the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him, meaning God hadn't shown Himself to Samuel yet. Once Eli realizes what is going on, he tells Samuel the Lord is trying to speak to him. Samuel goes back and then answers, "*Speak your servant is listening.*" The Lord tells him all He is going to do with Eli and his family because of their sins. Remember, Eli's sons treated the sacrifices with contempt and took the best part for themselves and didn't follow God's plan. To make matters worse, Eli ate the part that they kept for themselves. 1 Samuel 3:13 tells us that it was the sin of the sons, but also of Eli. It tells us Eli failed to restrain them. However, Eli could have done something. He could and should have pulled his sons from serving as the Lord's priests until they acknowledged and repented of their sin.

At this point, it is conveyed to Samuel what will happen to Eli and his family because of their sin, because of Eli's lack of leadership and because no move was made to recognize the severity of sin. God often puts us in places of leader-

ship with our families, workplace, church, and community. Sometimes it's hard, as in the case of Eli. He somewhat rebuked his sons, but not to the point these ungodly men would no longer be serving as priests. He apparently didn't do anything to really stop them and it affected his family for the long haul, as we will see.

What about us? Are there things in our lives we need to repent of? Are there things we know are clearly not of the Lord or clearly not in God's plan? Or, something maybe even harder; is there something going on in the lives of our child(ren) and we know it is wrong? Maybe we have been like Eli and we have told them to stop, but we haven't taken action to help them see the seriousness of their sin and to help them see and turn from it. Or, maybe you have someone in your life, like a spouse, co-worker, or friend and as a believer, you need to lovingly share with them the choices or decisions they are making which are destroying their testimony and maybe even their families and their lives! It's not easy, but God may have us in a place to lovingly, but in truth, confront a brother or sister in the Lord. However, before any of this ever happens, it needs to be bathed with prayer, time in the Word, and with clear direction from the Lord. **James 5:19-20** says, "*My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*" Is there willful, disobedient sin in your life? Confess it and deal with it. As we deal with this, God has then called us to lead and instruct our families in a way that is God-honoring, may we take this seriously. May we desire to see those closest to us following God and seeking Him.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Samuel 2:35-36 and Hebrews 7:20-25

1 Samuel 2:35-36 can be a picture of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Again, we see Jesus clearly spoken of and portrayed in the Old Testament years before He would be born. Look at Verse 35 again. God is speaking and He said He will raise up for Himself a faithful priest. He would raise up a priest during that time, but He would also raise up Jesus in years to come. It was God's design and plan to send Jesus as a faithful priest. Notice the word faithful. Jesus wouldn't be like the other priests who would die or who would give in to sin and their selfish ways, like Eli's sons. Jesus has remained and will remain faithful as the perfect priest and, as Hebrews says, the One who intercedes for us. He is our only hope and our go-between between us and God, and our only way to heaven.

What would Jesus do? Whatever God wants Him to do. Jesus was sent to do the Father's will and He did. Therefore, we are to follow the example of Jesus. It's vitally important we grasp and understand Jesus as the go-between, between us and God. We have nothing to offer Him. No person is good enough, not one. If we were to compare Billy Graham with the worst sinner we could come up with, there would still be nothing to offer Him. We know these people live totally different lives, but they have one thing in common, sin. You see both lives, apart from Jesus, have no hope here and no hope of heaven. In **1 Timothy 1:15**, Paul tells us, "*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.*" Scripture also tells us that if we have broken one of God's laws, it is like breaking all of them. Meaning, we are 100% guilty.

Without Jesus we have no hope. He is the faithful priest, the go-between for us with God. Today, be grateful for

His promise that wipes away our sin so we can know God and we can live with Him forever. If we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, when God looks at us, He doesn't see sin, He sees the blood of His Son. Halleluiah!

Day 4

Read 1 Samuel 3:15-21

‘Although Eli had no power to change the hearts of his sons, he could have prevented their ministry before the Lord, but he “restrained them not.” He wanted to be kind to them but it was a false and mistaken kindness. A reasonable correction would have saved them from ruin. Eli had no need to be harsh and severe, only firm and decided in the matter of obedience. Eli was twice warned that judgment would overtake him and his sons but such warning was lost upon him. He dearly loved his sons and could not take action against them.’¹⁰

The words God gave Samuel would come true and the sin of Eli’s house would never be atoned for or forgiven. The responsibility would lie on the sons and on Eli, as they would not acknowledge and repent of their sins.

Accountability is a good thing! Every person needs accountability. Every person needs someone to hold their feet to the fire, to lovingly ask them the tough questions. Someone who will let them know when they are headed in the wrong direction and with whom they can pray, encourage each other, and walk through life. It is dangerous for any man or woman to not have someone to hold them accountable. We are all accountable. As a husband, I am accountable to my wife. As a father, I am accountable to my children. As a Pastor, I am accountable to God’s church and my co-workers. I have listed several to whom I am accountable; they make sure, by God’s grace and love, I stay between the lines.

As a follower of Jesus, when I get off the path, I don’t need someone to slap my hand and tell me to stop: I need someone who will lovingly but sternly care enough to share with

¹⁰ www.biblegateway.com, all men Bible

me face to face. Who is holding you accountable? It is Jesus to whom we are ultimately accountable. Our lives need to be lived in response to His love. However, we need others in our lives to love us, pray for us, encourage us, and direct us so when we begin to step off the path, we don't get too far. Who are you holding accountable and who is holding you accountable?

Day 5

Read Psalm 94:1-4 and Acts 17:30-31

Jesus is our judge! Not only is He our judge, He has offered us the opportunity to go free by the grace and love which was given at the cross. At the final judgment, our only hope will be what we did with Jesus! What have you done with Him? Have you acknowledged Jesus today as Lord and Savior? Have you confessed your need for salvation through Jesus, and followed Him? If not, why not? If so, what are you doing with Jesus?

2 Corinthians 5:20 tells us *“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God.”* As believers, we are Christ’s ambassadors and God is using us to share the love of Jesus with others. How is He using you? Who are you actively sharing Jesus with? In the end, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. God wants to use us to share the truth with others, the truth that they need to be reconciled to God and the only way is Jesus. As Acts 17:31 says, God will judge the world and what we have done with Jesus will determine how we and others will be judged.

If you have been on a mission trip, you knew why you were there. You were there to share Jesus! Guess what? Our life is an ongoing mission trip. If you are a believer, you are to love God and to love others all of the time. We are here to show Jesus to our spouse, children, grandchildren, families, church, co-workers, classmates, etc.

Let us not be satisfied with knowing Jesus, but may we follow His commands and share the truth of Him with others!

I believe it has always been God’s plan for the kingdom of God to be within the hearts of His people. The promise of The Coming

King (Jesus) was not to be One who would rule from a physical throne, but from the throne of the hearts of men and women, boys and girls. As we move into Week 63, we come to another transition. The people of Israel want a king. They want to be like other nations. True exceptionalism was not for this people. They were to be under God's rule, but they chose to be under man's rule. God gave them what they wanted. However, this is still within God's plan. His plan is to establish the One True King. This is the One who would be King of Kings and would have an eternal kingdom. We wrap up this part of biblical history with Israel still under God's lead through the judges and we are about to embark upon the line of kings which will lead to King Jesus.

WEEK 63 THE GOD OF ISRAEL CANNOT BE CAPTURED

-----Dennis

Watson

This week, we encounter a problem that faces God's people—substituting form for substance. This can be called superstitious idolatry. The Israelites believed they had experienced defeat because of the absence of the ark. Then, they believed they would be victorious because they had it. Well, it didn't work for them. God is the One who provides, not a good luck charm, not even the religious kind.

Day 1

Read 1 Samuel 4

Too often, God's people fail to seek His will and direction in prayer before they proceed. Israel went into a battle with the Philistines. However, they did not seek God's direction before going to battle. Then, after experiencing a major defeat and 4,000 were killed, they asked, "*Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?*" (**Verse 3b**) They really didn't ask God, nor did they seek to understand they had made a wrong decision. Instead, they decided on their own they needed to have the Ark of the Covenant, believing it would save them from their enemies. There is no "it" that saves. God is the One who saves and delivers. They had turned the ark into a good luck charm and retrieved the ark and brought it to where they were. They had a great celebration because they assumed it would give them victory. For a moment, when the Philistines heard the clamor of the celebration, they were fearful. However, they got themselves together, attacked the Israelites and killed thirty thousand soldiers including Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. With the ark in their possession, they were no better off; they were worse!

A man ran to tell Eli what had happened. He told him four things:

- 1) Israel had fled
- 2) Many had been slaughtered
- 3) His two sons are dead
- 4) The ark had been captured by the enemy

At the news, Eli also fell over dead! The judgment of God was on the house of Eli because of the corruption of his two sons. The judgment of God was on the Israelites because they were not seeking Him, they were really practicing superstitious idolatry. Young Samuel received this message early on and shared it with Eli as prophecy from God of coming judgment.

The sadness was not over. The wife of Phinehas, one of Eli's sons, went into labor and delivered a son. She named him Ichabod, which means "The Lord has departed." Then, she too, died. What a sad day! This was fulfillment of the prophecy given to Eli through Samuel in Chapter 3.

We need to avoid any kind of superstitious idolatry. Only the Lord can protect and save us. We do not need good luck charms. Not even the Bible is to be something we use in a superstitious manner. Ask the Lord to enable you to look only to Him. He alone can deliver.

Day 2

Read 1 Samuel 5

The enemy of the Israelites, the Philistines, thought they had done a really good thing. They had captured the ark. Like the Israelites, they thought it would somehow bring them good fortune. They set it beside a statue of the false god, Dagon. The next day the statue had fallen over. They set it up again, but the next day, it had fallen again, now its head and hands had broken off. The hand of the Lord was against them because they had taken the ark. The people of the town of Ashdod, where the ark had been taken, got tumors and many of them died. They figured out it was because they had the ark. So, they sent the ark to another town called Gad. The hand of God was against Gad, also, so, they sent it to Ekron. The ark had become a “hot potato” that no one wanted.

The Philistines were idol worshippers! The Israelites were just as wrong to treat the ark as a good luck charm. The Philistines simply added it to their many idols. God judged them for it. Their false god statue was totally helpless, as all false gods are. The people made the statue and then had to help it up. God was punishing the Philistines in keeping with His promise to Abraham. God told Abraham that He would make him into a great nation, and He would bless anyone who blessed Israel and curse anyone who cursed Israel.

Our God is the only true God. All false gods are idols made by men. Thank God for His greatness and power. Look to Him not as a rabbit’s foot or a genie in a lamp. Look to Him as your Heavenly Father.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Samuel 6:1-16

The Philistines believed God was punishing them because they had captured the ark. It started out in the town of Ashdod, then it was moved to Gad. The last town it was taken to was Ekron. The only thing they wanted to do was get rid of it. The big question was, “What shall we do and how shall we send it away?” They wanted to send it back to the Israelites. They decided that when they sent it away, they should not send it away by itself. They made five golden tumors and five golden mice and put them in a separate chest beside the ark in hopes this would bring about healing for them. Then the question was how to send it away. They devised a test. They would put the ark on a cart to be pulled by two milk cows which had calves that would be kept in a pen in Ekron. If the cows came back with the ark they would conclude that the bad things that happened were just coincidental and it was not the hand of God punishing them. If the cows kept moving to the Israelite land then they would know that God’s hand had been against them.

The cows did not return to their calves, but went to Beth Shemesh. Obviously, God showed Himself to the Philistines by leading the cows back to the people of Israel. The people of Beth Shemesh celebrated when the ark arrived. They understood that with God clearly leading the cart to them, He was returning to Israel.

Thank the Lord for returning to Israel and showing His mercy and grace.

Day 4

Read 1 Samuel 7:1-11

Finally, the ark came to Kirjath Jearim where it remained at the home of Abinadab. The people of Israel were coming to realize it only represented the presence of God and it was not a good-luck charm. About 20 years had passed before the people of Israel turned away from the false gods. They were broken and sorry for their idolatry. They were ready to return to the Lord. Samuel told them they must put away their false gods and idols if they were truly turning back to the Lord. He also told them to confess their sin and turn fully to the Lord. Chapter 7 marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry to the people. The people turned to the Lord and Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed for the people. This is what they had left out previously. They had not sought the Lord. Previously, they thought they had something which represented the Lord in form, but they did not seek Him. Church attendance, Bible reading and prayer, along with other "good" things are no substitute for a real and ongoing relationship with God. Samuel interceded for the people and offered a sacrifice of a lamb for them. The lamb that Samuel sacrificed pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God. God gave the people of Israel a victory—the first in a long time. Samuel put up a stone in that place and called it Ebenezer, which means "the Lord has helped us." It was a reminder of God's help and deliverance. It would be a reminder of the past and an encouragement for the future. The people experienced true revival.

Just before you come into the front doors of our worship center at Harp's Crossing Fayetteville, you see a pile of stones with a fountain. This is our Ebenezer. It reminds us of God's provision in building the worship center without debt. It reminds us of the past and will encourage us in the future that He is our help and provider.

Return to the Lord if you have turned from Him. Give thanks that He is faithful to hear us and send revival.

Day 5

Read Isaiah 52:10 and Luke 2:25-32

The people made a huge mistake in looking for a thing, the ark, to save them. They were being superstitious. We must be careful not to confuse form with substance. The Israelites failed to see that the ark only represented the presence and power of God. It was not the actual power and presence of God. This week we saw that the enemy of God, the Philistines, were fearful of God because they had seen how He had saved Israel from the Egyptians (1 Samuel 6:6). In Isaiah 52:10, we read that God would reveal His salvation through Jesus to all people. This was prophecy, history written in advance. In Luke 2:30, a man by the name of Simeon holds the baby Jesus and declares, "*My eyes have seen Your Salvation.*" Connect the dots. God is in the salvation business. The Egyptians had seen God save the Israelites out of bondage. The Philistines had seen God save the Israelites from the Egyptians and had heard of His saving them. At Jesus' birth, Simeon says that by seeing Jesus, he had seen God's salvation.

Often times when believers are going through a tough time, they say "It doesn't work," referring to their walk with God. What is the "it" they are referring to? To be a Christian is to have a relationship with God. No relationship is about "it" working.

If you have received Jesus, God's Son, who died for your sins and was raised again, you too, have seen His salvation firsthand!

God never wanted His people to look to a thing, like an ark, or to a man, like a king or prophet. His ultimate goal is for His people to look to Him. How is your relationship with God?

Week 65 Israel Demands a King----- Chris Watson

Sometimes we want what we want, we want it now, and we will not listen to anyone. This is where we find Israel this week. Even after God, through His servant, told the people they didn't need a king, they still insisted and so they got what they asked for. We will see this week and in the weeks to follow, it wasn't exactly the best decision they ever made.

Day 1

Read 1 Samuel 8

Israel wanted a king! When Samuel did not give them the answer they were looking for, they insisted anyway. Not only did Samuel not want them to have a king, neither did God. A king would reign over Israel, but now was not the time. Deuteronomy 17:14-15 tells us that God would appoint such a king and he would come from the line of David. Of course, Jesus would be Israel's king in time, but this was speaking of David.

“This request was, of course, out of order. It was true that prophecy had long before intimated that Israel would one day have a king (Genesis 17:6,16; 35:11; 49:10), and God had made provision in the law for the appointment of a king (Deuteronomy 17:14,15). Because of the law of the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:2) that time had not yet arrived in God's plan for a king for Israel; therefore, the plea by the elders was presumptuous. It could not wait on God's time. However, as is true of all evil, this presumptuous cry by the elders to Samuel for a king came with some arguments to try to justify their request even though their request was out of order. The elders presented to Samuel a fourfold argument for why Samuel should accede to their plea for a king.”¹¹

¹⁰ Keith Fordham, “Change of Government” adapted from John G. Butler

We read in Ruth 4:18-22 the 10th generation would be David. David was to be the king, but the people jumped the gun. “Finally God in judgment granted Israel a king and gave Samuel the unpleasant task of making Israel a king. Samuel had to lead Israel in making the difficult transition from one form of government to another. The results of this change of government, in which Israel got their way instead of following God’s way, brought much grief and many problems not only to Samuel but also to all Israel.”¹² In two weeks, we will see that God chooses a king in His time and in the manner in which He chooses.

Instead of the people trusting God and listening to the words Samuel spoke concerning what would happen if they were to have a king, they didn’t care and insisted. They wanted what they wanted. Some might ask why God would allow this if it wasn’t His plan. It was His permissive will. In other words, He would permit it and allow the people free will to make their own choices. We see, though, they would face some very tough times for doing things their way and wanting what all the other nations had, a physical king. In demanding a king they, in essence, were rejecting God.

Let’s not take things into our own hands and insist we want or need something without seeking God’s direction and plan. It may not be God’s plan or, as in this case, it just might not be His timing. Whatever the case, seek Him and His ways! Remember, if you are seeking God with all you have you won’t have to wring your hands asking, “Am I in God’s will?” For if you are seeking God and Him alone, you are in God’s will.

¹²Keith Fordham, “Change of Government” adapted from John G. Butler

Day 2

Read 1 Samuel 9

1 Samuel 8 ends with the Lord telling Samuel to give the people a king. In this chapter, we see the process taking place. We see the Lord's providence at work here. God's providence simply means that He is in control and He directs all things. The God who created all things, directs everything like a director leads an orchestra.

We see God orchestrated the seemingly lost donkeys of Saul's father so Saul and Samuel would meet up and, in the end, Samuel would anoint Saul. The Lord used something like lost donkeys to bring this process together.

God can and will use anything; we have already seen this in the first few books of the Old Testament. God's providence is alive and well. He can use seemingly large and small things to get our attention, pull His plan together, or just remind us that He is in control.

How have you seen God's providence at work in your life? Maybe the family you have, the place you live, the church you are a part of, the job you have, etc. Don't just think on all these things today, but share at least one of them, telling someone how you have seen the hand of God at work in your life. Perhaps at the time you were aware God's providence was at work or maybe you didn't notice it until later. Thank God for His divine plan and that He is always in control. Be thankful He can and will use even our foolish decisions as a part of His plan, though obedience is what He desires!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Samuel 10:1-8

Even though Israel wanted a king for the wrong reason and they were rejecting God, God could still work this for His good. Remember Israel is God's chosen people. Remember from Genesis 12 that God, beginning with Abram, was going to make them into a great nation. In the first few verses of Genesis 12, God tells Abram he is the one that will begin the process of making Israel into a great nation!

God often uses us in spite of ourselves. This is true in the account of the anointing of Saul. Although it was not the right time and the people wanted a king for wrong reasons, God would use their foolish choice, in spite of the Israelites. God would use Saul as the new king to defeat the Philistines and save His people. In spite of their wrong choice, God was in control.

We can make some "not so great" choices and decisions, but God can still use them. This is not to say we can make willful, disobedient choices and still walk step in step with God. That is contradictory to God and His Word. However, God can use even our "not so great" choices for His purposes. Israel was God's chosen people and, although they often experienced consequences for their sin by going in front of God or not doing things in the right time, God was still in control and was still navigating things.

Samuel anointed Saul as a sign of his kingship. Acts 4:26 speaks of God's Anointed One who is Jesus. The ultimate king is Jesus and He is God's anointed. He is God's man. He is the way, the truth, and the life. While Israel was looking for a human king to give them what they wanted, Samuel knew that God was their king and was to be their focus.

Today, let us look to Jesus as our king, our ruler, our guide, and our comfort. We are not to trust in men, presidents, kings, or rulers, but in the Name of the Lord, Our God! May we follow Him out of love and obedience as we walk step in step with Him. Let our trust be in Jesus today.

Day 4

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27

In today's account, we see God's providence at work again. He knew Saul was to be king. The people were casting lots to choose the king, but God was ultimately in control of this process. We don't cast lots today to make our choices. Rather, as believers, we seek counsel from God and His Word.

In Verse 27 we read that some troublemakers began to question the choice and many were asking how Saul could save them. They didn't even bring the king gifts, as was customary. Do you find this interesting? The people had just asked for a king. We read in Chapter 8, they had been warned what would happen if a king was given to them. Yet, not much later, we have some of those same people questioning how Saul was going to save them and they were already causing trouble.

We often reach and grab for things we desire and want. Many times, we know we shouldn't want or desire these things, but we do. Instead of seeking counsel from God and His Word, we go after what we want. Then soon after getting what we desire or want, we often realize it wasn't really what we wanted after all. The grass wasn't greener on the other side and we desire to go back or change course. May we always seek God first. Seeking God and His ways is not only right, but it can save us from a lot of pain, regret, heartache, and undoing. Sometimes we think we desire or want something when we really don't or it is obviously contrary to the Word of God. Today, let us seek God and His Word. We don't have to cast lots to make a right decision or to follow God. To know Him, we need to read His Word and communicate with Him through prayer. May our focus be on God and our choices be in line with His Word.

Day 5

Read Daniel 9:24-26

This prophecy contains a lot, but in the end, it's all about Jesus. You might remember some time back, we went through a Sunday night study that dealt specifically with end time prophecy, specifically, this prophecy. We see first there will be a day when sin will come to an end. Can you imagine that? We can only imagine it because we have never experienced it. All we know is sin. We know there will be a day of no more sin, no heartaches, no sickness, no wrecks, no need for hospitals, policemen, or security because all sin will be removed. So the prophecy first speaks of a day where there will be no sin.

It also speaks of a day where righteousness will last forever. Not only will there be no sin, but there will be a day where only excellent things abound, the things of God. God's goodness will be all around and it will reign and prevail.

This prophecy also speaks of the Anointed One who will come in that day and rebuild Jerusalem, God's city, where His people will live. This is God's Anointed One, Jesus. He is the only one that can do away with sin and bring forth righteousness. Even Daniel, years before Jesus, was prophesying about Him.

Jesus is everything! He is our hope. He is the reason we breathe, not to mention the reason we can breathe. He is our hope for victory and freedom from sin and our hope for a relationship with God. He is our only hope to heaven and our hope day by day. Thank Jesus for being our hope!

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