



YOUNG MEADOWS

ROOTED

A SYSTEMATIC WALK
THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE

Volume 1

Genesis

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“For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s Field.”

2 Corinthians 3:9

When Paul wrote these words to a divided church in Corinth, he reminded them of the apostles’ identity, as well as theirs. The apostles were God’s fellow workers, and the church was the field of God called to be cultivated. In much the same way, Young Meadows is really God’s meadow, one that we pray will be continually cultivated.

At Young Meadows, we believe the means of that cultivation is found in our mission statement, as believers are engaged in discipleship in worship, community, and mission. We’ve summarized our mission through the phrase: Rooted, Gathered, and Scattered. We believe the cultivation of the church comes as believers are more **rooted** in the word of God and work of Christ, as they are **gathered** together in true community, and as they are **scattered** around the city and world in mission.

It is the prayer of Young Meadows’ leadership, as God’s fellow workers, that the next three years “plowing” through the whole story of Scripture (in Sunday sermons and these weekly times of personal devotion) might lead to a cultivation in the lives of our members, as well as the surrounding community. May your personal times of devotion through this guide further feed and fertilize your soul, so that being “*rooted and built up in Him,*” (Colossians 2:7) you might walk in Him.

Your Fellow Worker,
Jay Joye

A CHRONOLOGICAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Several years ago, Young Meadows made a shift in our children's Sunday School curriculum and began using "The Gospel Story for Kids." Our desire was to expose our children to the overarching story of Scripture that progressed through four major "chapters": Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. We fell in love with the curriculum as our children were taught to see the Bible, not as individual and disparate stories, but of one story, "the one true story of the whole world" with one grand hero, Jesus Christ, at its center. Our goal was that every child attending children's Sunday School classes would work through the Bible twice between Kindergarten and 6th grade. Our hope was that knowing the broad overview of the Scripture, as well as seeing Christ at the center, would lay the foundation for a lifetime pursuit of following their Savior.

Within the last two months we decided that it was time for our adults to have the same purposeful exposure to that overarching story of the Bible. We sensed that it was a perfect way to encourage personal discipleship. After all, "what is good for the goose is good for the gander." For the very same reasons, our prayer for Young Meadows is that congregants would join us on a journey through the Scriptures throughout the next three years. Our current plan is to cover the Old Testament during Sunday sermons over the next year and a half. Following those 78 sermons, we will shift to the New Testament for the next year and a half.

In addition to Sunday sermons, the leadership wanted to encourage daily times of personal devotion, as we journey through the Bible's arc together. These devotions will help to supplement and reinforce the messages heard on Sunday. There are two options for devotional reading. The first option is this guide that you hold in your hand. It is intended to be used by teenagers and adults during their personal times of devotion, as verses are assigned which will provide context and application. The second form is a devotional book that supplements our children's curriculum, which occurs in

two units: Long Story Short (Old Testament) and Old Story New (New Testament). Both devotional options are structured similarly. Days one through four will include a section of scripture to read along with a brief devotional thought. Day three, each week, connects that week's study to Jesus and the gospel. The focus of the Bible is Jesus. The fifth day each week, we will look at a passage from the Psalms or from one of the prophets to discover how the passage points forward to Jesus. In addition, there will be some training offered throughout the year on how to actually have a personal time of devotion through your scripture reading.

In the end, our vision is to see our church grow in its understanding of the whole story of Scripture and Christ's place (as well as ours) in it. Our prayer is that as we hear sermons during Sunday services, process those same messages during small group, continue to engage with accompanying scripture in our daily personal times of devotion, engage weekly in conversation with friends, or perhaps share regularly in times of family worship, that we will be more transformed- as we behold the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

"Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'"
Luke 24:44 (ESV)

All scripture references are English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Harps Crossing in Fayetteville, Georgia. The pastors and leaders of this church granted permission to Young Meadows to use and adapt this devotional geared to teens and adults. We hope to continue updating their devotional over the years, making revisions and even deeper connections to the hero of this great story of the redemption of the whole world. We intend to take full advantage of sermon discussion questions as well as small group discussion areas to further flesh out many of the texts included in this devotional.

Harps Crossing has led their church through the whole Bible twice since its inception, and continues to encourage their congregation to use this devotional to supplement Sunday's sermon.

WEEK 1 GOD CREATES THE WORLD

By Dennis Watson

The first book of the Bible is about beginnings. That is why it is called Genesis: it is about the beginning of creation, the human race, and the Hebrew race. It is the beginning of God relating to man and man relating to God. Genesis is the beginning; therefore, it is central to all of the Bible. It is about four major events: creation, the fall of man, the flood, and the nations. It is about four significant people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. With those four events and four people you have a good overview of the book.

Day 1- Read Genesis 1:1-2

The Bible never attempts to prove the existence of God. The opening words of Genesis presuppose the existence of God. The Bible presents God as having no beginning—He is eternal. He is *"the One Who was and is and is to come."* (**Rev. 4:8**) In His greatness, wisdom, and omniscience, He decided to create all there is. All things made were made by Him and for Him.

There are many things that are amazing about creation. One of those is how it is divinely crafted, sculpted, and engineered to sustain life. Things like the tides, water, planetary size and mass, just to name a few, are perfect to provide conditions for life, but the one that stands out that we enjoy every day is life-sustaining atmosphere. You can check out the Creation Evidence Museum of Texas website to read more, but below is a statement regarding the Life-Sustaining Atmosphere:

“It has been said of the Earth that ‘the existence of its inhabitants hangs upon a thin and delicate sheath of gas that envelops the planet like the skin of an apple.’” Though over 99% of our atmosphere (composed of 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, and 1% other gases) lies below 50 miles in altitude, it is still able to (a) provide the necessary oxygen crucial for animal and human respiration, (b) preserve acceptable temperature ranges while

avoiding life-threatening extremes of heat and cold, and (c) protect from incoming extraterrestrial debris and (UV) solar radiation.”

All of the created order raises a very interesting question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” There is something, all of creation, because an eternal God with no beginning and no ending created everything there is, out of nothing! Just look all around—everywhere there is something, and according to **Genesis 1:1-2**, it is all there because God made it!

The Bible presupposes the existence of God. These words lay the foundation for all that follows. God has, in His Word, provided what we need to have faith. **Romans 10:17** says, “*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*” There really is no proof for the existence of God, but there is a lot of evidence. The Bible is about God and His activity. Those who read and hear it come to believe with no proof. But that evidence and conviction comes from the Holy Spirit, by way of the Word of God in the Bible. The more you read and hear, the more you grow in faith. This time reading through the Bible will enable you to grow in your faith.

Give thanks to the Lord for the intricate design of His creation. Thank Him for making Himself known through His Word. Ask Him to enable you to grow your faith as you become more familiar with His Word.

Day 2- Read Genesis 1:3-25

How did He do it? How did God create the heavens and the earth? How did He make the universe with all of its many parts? He did it by His words. He spoke everything into existence. Seven times in these verses we read, “*God said.*” And with each of those He spoke something into existence—light, firmament, dry land, plants, sun, moon, stars, sea creatures, birds, and land animals. When He spoke all of these things into existence, do you think He called each animal into existence by name? **Psalms 147:4** says that He counts

the stars and knows them by name. Do you think He called each star into existence by name? Well, all things are possible with God!

That is amazing but one might say that man also creates things. Man has created computers, jets, and spacecrafts that have taken man to the moon and beyond. However, man really does not create: he builds at best, making things from existing things. When God created, He created 'ex nihilo', which means "out of nothing." God had no existing matter or "stuff" with which to make or build. He created all things from nothing.

You have to consider the majesty and power of God. His power and majesty are beyond our comprehension. Consider the universe. We read that He spoke into existence the moon, the sun, and the stars. But that can just go over your head if you don't consider the vastness of the universe. How many stars are there? God knows exactly how many there are! (**Psalm 147:4**) Scientists estimate that there are nearly one hundred thousand million stars in our Milky Way. Remember, He knows them each by name!

Give some thought to the power of the spoken word. Especially give thought to the power of God's Word. His Word spoken in the beginning brought all things into existence. His Word has brought new and eternal life. In the end of the temporary world He will, by His Word, make all things new (**Revelation 21:5**).

Thank God for His Word—spoken, living, and written!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Colossians 1:15-17

Day three of each week will be about connecting the week's devotions to Jesus. All of the scriptures point to Jesus and find their fulfillment in Him (see Matthew 5:17).

The Bible is about God. From the opening of Genesis to the last verses of Revelation it is about God. "The New Testament is in the

Old Testament concealed, the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed” (words attributed to Augustine Of Hippo, first century theologian). God has made Himself known as three-in-one. He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In the first three verses of Genesis we see God as the Father-Creator, the Spirit hovering, and in verse three God begins to speak and create by His Word—Jesus. Jesus is the Word. According to today’s passage Jesus is the invisible God made visible. Jesus was God in the flesh. Jesus was before all of creation; He was there when it was made and all of it was made by Him and for Him.

Jesus made all things and it is by Him that all things hold together. He sustains and maintains all things until all has been brought under His authority. He holds His own together until the time He finishes. He began a good work and will complete it in His time. Until then, we follow Him by faith. “Firstborn” denotes two things of Christ: He preceded the whole Creation and He is Sovereign over all creation.¹ Jesus was preexistent. He existed along with God, as God, before anything was created. He was also the “*lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (**Revelation 13:8**).

Remember, we will be connecting dots. We see Jesus in the beginning and throughout the Bible. Keep paying attention and be amazed!

Rejoice that Jesus is eternal and that He is the One who holds all things together, even when we think it is all falling apart.

Day 4- Read Genesis 1:26-31

After creating everything—land, plants, animals, sun, moon, and the stars, each time God said “*it was good.*” Then He created the crown jewel of all of His creations—man. He created man in His own image and said that it was “*very good.*” He created man, male and female. God saved the best for last. Unlike other creatures,

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

man could communicate with God, worship God, and have a relationship with God.

God says He created man “*in His image.*” What does that mean? Kings, throughout the ancient world, made images of themselves and placed them in various locations in their kingdoms. The pharaohs of Egypt, the emperors of Babylon, and the rulers of other empires used images of themselves as a way to display their authority and power. This custom of Moses’ day helped him understand what was happening when God called Adam and Eve, His image. Just as human kings had their images, the divine King ordained that the human race would be His royal image.

Put simply, the expression, “*image of God,*” designated human beings as representatives of the supreme King of the universe.²

Man as male and female were to represent their Maker and have dominion over creation for His glory. God’s plan was for the earth to be filled with His image bearers. Man is unique, not just another animal.

Realize how significant you are in God’s scheme. Thank Him for the privilege of knowing Him and being made in such a way to relate to Him.

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION- Read Psalm 1

The words in Psalm 1 describe the person we should all want to be. However, Paul spoke of what I can only think of as a tug-of-war in **Romans 7:14-24**. Paul could not attain this level of righteousness, so what hope is there for us? He wrote about wanting to do good and his inability to carry that out. Thank You Jesus, that in Your book You wrote about the struggle of humans with this sin thing.

² Holcomb, Justin S. (2013-04-30). On the Grace of God (Re:Lit: A Book You’ll Actually Read) Kindle Location 431). Crossway. Kindle Edition.)

Jesus is the only person to ever live what we see in Psalm 1. Jesus was man as God intended man to be. This is what we all aspire to but can only attain in Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life. He was pure and righteous in every way as a man. Your only hope of perfection is found in Jesus. He lived perfectly and righteously and God has, in Jesus, given us the perfection and righteousness of Jesus. Jesus became "*sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

Adam was the first man. In the Bible the word "firstborn" often carries this idea. He was the firstborn in that he was the prototype of man. God made the first man in His image to be the pattern for all who would come after him. Unfortunately, as we will see later, this pattern was spoiled by the fall and that pattern was passed on to all others born after Adam, except Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us "*in Adam, all die.*" But the same verse says that in Jesus all shall be made alive. The New Testament refers to Jesus as the second Adam, the firstborn of a new creation. Jesus is our only hope of ever being what God intended!

Thank God for His amazing grace and taking it upon Himself to make us whole since we are totally incapable without Him.

WEEK 2 GOD CREATES MAN

Chris Watson

Last week, we read about and saw how God created the world. From the sky to the stars, the animals and the plants, God made them all. While in Genesis 1 we see the creation of man, in Genesis 2 we will see a little more detail of that creation.

Day 1- Read Genesis 2:4-14

Can you imagine being able to create something out of nothing? That's exactly what God did when He created the world. Then, He took nothing but dust (v. 7) and made man. He can do that because He is God. It's hard for our finite minds to think of creating something out of nothing, but God did. At this point there was no rain in the land; everything was watered by streams or a mist (v. 6) that came up from the surface of the ground.

Notice in verse 7 that man's very life came from God. God was the One to give life to man. The same is true today. Our physical life depends on God, as does our eternal life. Did you wake up this morning? God allowed you to wake up; He kept your heart beating. Were you able to move around this morning? God allowed that as well. Anything good that we have comes from God (**James 1:17**).

God not only created man, He also gave him food to eat (v. 9). In other words, God provided for him. God provides for us daily in ways we recognize and in ways we don't.

Take time today to thank God for His creation and for creating you, as we see in **Psalms 139**. Also, thank Him for how He provides for you and takes care of you. Ask God to help you depend on Him for all walks of life and to trust Him always. After all, He is our Creator! Since God has created us, surely He will sustain us!

Day 2- Read Genesis 2:15-23

God put Adam in the garden with trees that were beneficial for nourishment and food. He also placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there. God told Adam not to eat of the tree or he would die (v. 17). He was given instructions from His creator, the very One that had breathed life into him. Adam could now choose to obey God and not eat of it, or eat of it and die. We know what he chose.

At this point the relationship between God and Adam was great. In fact, God allowed Adam to name all of the animals. Can you imagine that? There were literally hundreds of animals and Adam named them all. That must have been a fun job.

Notice that God put Adam in charge of the garden to “work it.” At this point, serving the Lord was enjoyable and pleasurable. After the fall, work became hard, tiresome, and mundane, as we see in Chapter 3. However, God tells us in that same chapter that whatever we do, to work for the Lord and not for man.

Thank God for the ability to worship Him, serve Him, and love Him. God desires for us to find our contentment in Him. Therefore, everything we do should be for Him. Ask the Lord to help you “work” for His glory and to enjoy Him always!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

In this passage, Jesus is also referred to as Adam, “*a life-giving spirit.*” We will look at this in future devotions, but like us, Adam messed up. He didn’t obey God, which was a huge problem that led to death and still does today. God could have left us like we were, in disobedience to Him, and He would have been just in doing so. However, His love for mankind was great, therefore He sent the second Adam.

The second Adam (Jesus) completely obeyed God, which was, and is, our only hope. Can you imagine living a life completely obedient to God? Jesus, the second Adam, did just that. Not only did He obey God, but He was 100% man and 100% God. This is beyond my comprehension.

Jerry Vines says, “Imagine Jesus Christ going into the temple and having a conversation with the teachers, when he was a 12-year-old boy. And, one of the learned doctors there strokes his beard, and says, ‘Son, how old are you?’ ‘Well,’ He says, ‘On My mother’s side, I’m 12-years-old, but on my Father’s side, I’m older than my mother and as old as My Father.’ You see, He was both God and man. Now, on His mother’s side, He got thirsty; on His Father’s side, He said, ‘I am the water of life.’ On His mother’s side, He got hungry; on His Father’s side, He took a little lad’s lunch and fed five thousand. On His mother’s side, He was homeless, and didn’t have a place to lay His head; on His Father’s side, He owned the cattle on a thousand hills. On His mother’s side, He wept at the grave of Lazarus; on His Father’s side, He said, “Lazarus, come forth,” and raised him from the dead. He was God in human flesh.”³ He was both God and man!

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” Jesus, as 100% God and man, became sin for you and me. An all-loving and holy God sent His son Jesus to fix our problem. What an incredible gift.

As you go about this day, thank God for sending the second Adam, His Son Jesus Christ. We did nothing to deserve it, nothing to earn it; He simply showed compassion, mercy, and grace to us. Live and now share it.

³ Jerry Vines: Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection, Who is Jesus?

Day 4- Read Genesis 2:22-25

God saw that Adam was alone. God was with him, but there was not a suitable helper for him. So God provided one! She would be the perfect partner for Adam, just how God had intended.

Technically, this is the first marriage that we see in scripture.

Marriage was and is God's idea. It's not man's idea, but God's. God determined that it would be between a man and a woman and the two would become one (v. 24). Like God placed Eve (**Gen. 3:20**) in Adam's life, He often places the person He has for us in our life; be thankful.

If you are married, thank God for your spouse! Be thankful for what God joined together and convey your love to them today. Don't take your marriage for granted and don't seek to just "get by" for another day, but enjoy what God has done. Think of ways you can show love to your spouse.

Maybe you are single, never married. Pray and ask if it be His plan that in His time He would provide you with that special mate. Seek to submit to His plan and time, waiting on the Lord.

Maybe you are widowed and you can thank the Lord for the memories you shared with the special person you had in your life. Be thankful for the times God gave you and thank God for placing that mate in your life.

Maybe you are divorced and God has taught you and healed you through what you have experienced, thank Him for being your rock. Maybe you still struggle daily, thank God that even in the pain your ultimate acceptance is found in Him and no one else. Take a look at **James 1:2-4** and ask God to "*make you complete, lacking nothing.*" Cry out to Him and cast your burdens on Him.

Wherever you may find yourself, thank God that He meets all your needs.

Day 5- Read Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah was a prophet. A prophet is one that is given divine inspiration and then speaks on the inspiration given. In Isaiah 9, Isaiah is given a divine word that Christ will be born. There were roughly seven hundred years from the time Isaiah made this prophecy to the time Christ was born.

God often revealed Himself to Prophets in the Old Testament to foreshadow Christ. In fact, Christ is all over the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. Prophecies like this, and others, can't be explained or made up, rather only evidenced as truth as we see the prophecies carried out. Many folks may want to dismiss the prophecies or say that they are happenstance. We know from the Word of God of prophecy after prophecy being fulfilled that all support the truth of Jesus!

Take some time to thank God for His elaborate plan of salvation that is demonstrated from Genesis to Revelation. In **Isaiah 9:6**, we see special names given to Christ such as "*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.*" Thank the Lord for how He has been these names for you. Thank Him for being in total control.

Notes

Sermon Notes

WEEK 3 ADAM AND EVE DISOBEY GOD

By Dennis Watson

Did God create evil? No! A good and righteous God could not possibly create anything evil. However, God did create creatures, including angels, with the possibility of disobeying. If they could obey, then the option of disobeying had to be present. How would you have created man? If you made man anything but a robot you would have to create him with the choice to obey or disobey.

Unfortunately, this is one of those dots we have to connect which results in our disadvantage. *“In Adam all die”* (**1 Corinthians 15:22**). Sin’s results have been passed on to us.

Day 1- Read Genesis 3:1-6

Do you ever question what God has said? Perhaps you say something like Satan said, “did God really say...” Or maybe it is a little more subtle—“That is really not what He meant.” Satan put the question in the woman’s mind and opened the door for the hook to be set. The lure appealed to the lust or desire for the forbidden fruit. Satan then took it further after the woman got creative with what God said. She said God told them not to even *“touch it lest they die.”* The twisting of the truth often opens the door for people to disobey God. Satan even tells a half-truth (a half-truth is a lie)—“You will not surely die.” The woman and Adam did not immediately die physically. However, something died on the inside and eventually they did die physically. What died on the inside was the peaceful relationship they had enjoyed with God and each other.

The real appeal seems to be, *“You will be like God.”* Satan wanted the woman and Adam to begin to make their own determinations about what was right and wrong. All limitations were off and now the first couple could decide for themselves how to live and govern their own lives. The truth is, we are in no position to do such a thing. When people determine their own way, there is confusion

and chaos. That is not freedom. Look what happened to them. They became insecure and self-consumed, aware that they were naked and they tried the great "cover-up." Of course, their coverings were insufficient. How long would the leaves cover them? Not long at all!

Sin is appealing. When you focus on God and His plans and purposes, sin's appeal is lessened. When you focus on yourself and getting your own needs met, you tend to determine for yourself what is best for you. Suddenly sin's appeal is overwhelming.

As you pray today, ask for God to enable you to fix your eyes on Him and not on the things that pull you away. Make a decision to seek first God's plans and purposes.

Day 2- Read Genesis 3:7-19

The first couple had disobeyed God. The words of Adam in response to God's question, "*Where are you?*" was, "*I was afraid, I was naked, I hid myself.*" The peace and relationships they enjoyed were shattered. The relationship with God and the relationship with each other was impacted. They hid from God. The man blamed the woman. The woman blamed the serpent. Guilt, stress, and conflict became the new normal. They had enjoyed fellowship with God. Everything they needed had been supplied by Him. It was a perfect paradise; it was "*very good.*" But what was normal, peace and contentment, suddenly changed.

There was a new normal; but it was really a new "old" normal. Before they sinned against God, everything and every day was new and fresh. Now the new normal was characterized by oldness. Those things they enjoyed were now getting old. They lost the new life sensation. Before the fall, they were "bright eyed and bushy tailed." They were eager to learn and experience all God had made, but now there was something new characterized by oldness. Surely the sound of the Lord walking in the garden was not an unusual occurrence. Apparently, it was ongoing and regular. What had

changed? Adam and the woman had changed. They felt something they had never experienced—guilt. Their guilt caused them to hide from God. Guilt causes some ugly stuff! We begin to hide. When we hide, we need things to cover us up, things to help us hide. This is costly. We buy clothes, cars, toys, jewels, and other expensive things that we think will fix the longing. Because of sin, living became a burden and a struggle. Sin and death entered the world by one man—Adam (see **Romans 5:12**).

It was a terrible day when the man and woman—the pattern for all people—chose to go their own way. Today, we must realize the high cost of sin and turning away from God. The plague of sin is devastating, both now and for eternity. Give thanks to the God of grace Who did not leave us in that condition!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

Sin and its consequences are devastating and have been passed to all people born after Adam, except for Jesus. Jesus was not born in the line or family of Adam. Instead, He was born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not born of a man. He was born of the seed of the woman (see **Genesis 3:15**) and her seed or offspring, Christ, would crush Satan's head. Therefore, Jesus became the second Adam, the 'firstfruits' of a new creation. Adam was the original prototype and Jesus is the new or second Adam, the new prototype. Jesus is the prototype or pattern of a new creation.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
(1 Corinthians 15:22)

God has made it possible for us to get out of Adam's family tree and into Jesus' family tree! You see, it is not just our sins, or sinning, that is our problem. It is our heritage. Our heritage in the family tree of Adam is sin and death. There is an inheritance that comes in the family tree of Jesus that brings forgiveness, adoption, and eternal life. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed

to be born again. There must be a new birth that is from above. To be born again is to be born into the family of Jesus, the second Adam or the new prototype. Jesus is the firstborn among many to come after Him.

Connect the dots. Whose family tree are you in, Adam's or Jesus'?

Day 4- Read Genesis 3:20-24

The woman finally has a name. It was not until after the fall that Adam gave the woman a name. Literally, her name Eve means living. Adam had some hope in spite of the circumstances. Later, Eve would name her first son 'Cain,' which means '*from the Lord.*' Eve too, was confident in the future.

All of God's dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this act of disobedience by Adam and Eve.⁴ How would you define God's grace? It is God giving us what we do not deserve. His mercy is God withholding what we do deserve. Here we see the first instance of both God's grace and mercy.

Please don't miss this. It is very important for everything in the rest of the Bible. The Lord, in His mercy and grace, made adequate coverings for Adam and Eve's nakedness. They tried to cover themselves, but it was not adequate. God used animal skin. God Himself, took the life of innocent animals; making the first sacrifice. God took the initiative to cover man's nakedness, the guilt, stress, and conflict that came with it. The animals are substitutes. Later, in the history of God's people, He gives them the sacrifice system. In the sacrifice system, God provides covering for sin. All of this points to the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Jesus. Talk about connecting the dots!

Another expression of His grace is the removal of Adam and Eve from the garden. That might sound odd, but God protected Adam

⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

and Eve and all generations that came from them. He removed them from the garden and guarded the tree of life so that they would not eat from it and live forever in their sin! Grace! Mercy! God did not destroy the tree of life. Access to the tree of life is once again possible as we read in **Revelation 2:7 and 22:14**.

Thank God for His amazing grace by which He, in spite of our failure and sin, provides a way to live forever. Give thanks that God is on our side.

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION- Read Isaiah 9:7

The animal skins God provided to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness point to the sacrifices of Israel that will come later and to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In today's verse, Isaiah writes about Jesus some six hundred years before He was born. We know that this passage is about Jesus because the context is quoted in **Matthew 4:15-16**. He will not only be the One who would provide forgiveness for sin, Jesus will be the king that was promised in the Old Testament, who would sit on the throne of David. David was a good king who accomplished much and was a great warrior. However, David sinned. There were many other kings, both good and bad, in Israel. But, Isaiah writes that there was coming a king who would reign with justice and righteousness, not just for a period of years, but forever.

Justice means that He will reign with absolute fairness. There will be no escaping through a plea bargain or some slick defense. The law will be strictly fulfilled and satisfied. All unlawfulness, sin, and rebellion will be eliminated. When Jesus rules and reigns in eternity, there will be no lawlessness or sin.

He will also reign with righteousness. Jesus is completely righteous. The best way to think of righteousness is that He is in complete harmony with His purpose. The kingdom of God, over which Jesus will be king, will be perfect in every way. It will be

life as God intended. There will be no kind of unrighteous infringement. When Jesus rules and reigns, He will accomplish perfect peace. God will see that there will be no competition to His righteousness, peace, or justice.

Thank God for His righteousness and justice. Anticipate the glorious reign of the King of Kings!

WEEK 4 CAIN AND ABEL

By Chris Watson

Last week we saw how Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Unfortunately, their sin got everything going in the wrong direction, and this week we will see how it continued. Their sin affected others. We often think our sin only affects us, when in reality, most of the time it affects a multitude of people.

Day 1- Read Genesis 4:1-5

When we offer back to the Lord ten percent of what He has given us, it is known as a tithe. Anything we give above ten percent is an offering. Every Sunday we receive tithes and offerings as part of worship. God instructs us to give our tithes and offerings to Him. It is His anyway, He has just allowed us to steward it.

From this passage we can gather that Cain was probably a farmer and Abel raised animals. Abel brought the best of his cattle as an offering and Cain brought “*some of his fruits.*” Abel’s offering was “*from the fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock,*” the best of the best! Abel wasn’t giving his leftovers to the Lord; He was giving the best that he had, not just “*some of his fruits.*” We know they were the best, as the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering.

What do you give to the Lord; your first fruits or your leftovers? Do we spend time with the Lord only if we have time at the end of the day or do we give Him the best part of our day? Do we give our tithes and offerings only if we have some left over or do we give off the top? Pray and ask God to help you give to Him the best of what you have.

Day 2- Read Genesis 4:1-8

We know from yesterday that God looked favorably on Abel’s offering, but not on Cain’s (v.5). Cain didn’t do what was right by

offering some of the fruits instead of the first fruits. At this point, the Lord could see that Cain was getting angry that the Lord accepted Abel's offering, but not his. The Lord tells Cain, "*sin is crouching at your door: it desires to have you, you must master it.*" In other words, you can repent (change your mind, turn around) and make it right or you can continue in sin and continue to become angry.

James 1:13-15 says, "*Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*" What James is talking about here is the very thing that happened to Cain. Cain was enticed at first not to give his best offering to the Lord and he followed through with it, giving birth to sin. Instead of acknowledging his sin and turning around, he continued in his sin. Ultimately, sin gives birth to spiritual and physical death. Here, Cain's sin even led to the physical death of Abel.

Our choice to follow or not to follow God affects others; we see it in this story. Today, we need to take the time to acknowledge any sin in our life that is seeking to entice us and draw us away. Let us recognize it for what it is, repent, and follow the Lord. Ask God to examine your heart.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 4:9-12

Look at how far Adam's sin has now been passed. When Adam sinned, he started the dominoes and now sin affects every person born into this world. Adam's sin affected Cain and now Cain's sin will affect others. We were born into sin and we have also sinned. The truth is, even today, the choices we make affect others.

The scriptures show us that every person is a sinner; no one is innocent. Let's imagine for a minute that in your lifetime you have

sinned only once. The Bible tells us in **James 2:10**, “*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*” Oh no... that means if we have lied only once, it is like we have broken every law. If we have cheated even once, we’ve broken every law. You get the idea. This is not an excuse to live a life of sin, because we love God and we want what He wants.

All have sinned...except Jesus. That’s why Jesus is the focus of the Gospel, He is our only hope. We trust in what He has done, we put our hope in Him, not ourselves! Martin Luther says, “We attain righteousness through no works, no wisdom (of reason), no effort, no wealth, no honor. Many want themselves to be regarded as righteous because they know much, read much, teach much, or because they attain to high honors or do great service in the Church. But all this belongs to civil righteousness, which (for salvation) is rejected by God. We obtain the true righteousness by believing sincerely the promises of God, as we read in **Romans 4:3**: “*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him righteousness.*”⁵ We can place our hope in what He has done and we can live there, do you? If not, maybe today. If you have, thank Him that although you are a sinner you have been saved by His grace.

Day 4- Read Genesis 4:13-16

In verses 13 and 14, Cain recognizes that his punishment is great. He doesn’t necessarily ask God to forgive him or repent of his sin, but rather he is sorry for the consequences he is facing because of it. God could have killed Cain right then and there, but He chose not to.

I am sure we have all been like Cain. We have sinned against God and done something that is terribly wrong. We are not necessarily sorry for what we have done, but that we got caught or that it

⁵ Martin Luther, Commentary on Romans (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954). 148.

caused us some serious consequences. The problem in this case is that soon we will be right back to doing what we have been doing. We enjoy the sin that we were in and will return to it, if we are not asking God to change our heart and wanting to please Him. We can't change ourselves, only God can.

Maybe God has brought you out of a life-controlling sin that threatened to overtake you. Thank Him for saving you and that you don't have to live there anymore. Maybe there is something right now that you are struggling with, a sin that is "eating your lunch". Recognize that it is against God, that it hurts God, and it's not what He wants for your life. Tell Him that it is not what you want and that you want Him to take the place of your sin and you want to find contentment in Him only. Jesus told His disciples, "*And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."*" **Luke 9:23-24** We must die to ourselves daily, hourly, every second of every minute. Ask God to help you die to yourself daily and recognize that your only hope is Him! When we find ourselves immersed in Him and His goodness, we don't have time to be immersed in sin.

Day 5- Read Psalm 2:1-2

In this passage, David is speaking about Jesus approximately one thousand years before His birth. If you look at **Acts 4:25-27**, you also see this passage. In Acts, we see Peter and John reporting to other believers what had happened to them. The Sanhedrin, along with Herod and Pontious Pilate, were seeking to conspire against Jesus. This passage in Psalms is another place we see Jesus in the Old Testament.

Look around the United States today and the whole world. Now look at **Psalm 2:1**, "*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot*

in vain?” Do we see this happening today? Of course, all around us, on the news and right in our backyards!

May we, first as individuals, recognize our sin for what it is and realize we need the Lord and His forgiveness! Then, pray that we walk in step with Him on a daily basis! We need to cry out to Him for our nation and our world. Here are the words of a song that you may have heard and sung before:

Break our hearts O God, break our hearts
Break our hearts O God, break our hearts
For the sin in our lives, break our hearts
For the sin in our land, break our hearts
We cry out, we need Your hand
Come back to our land
We confess, we've lived in sin
Please show Your power once again.⁶

⁶ Break Our Hearts, Billy James Foote

Notes

WEEK 5 GOD CHOOSES NOAH

By Dennis Watson

The first eleven chapters of Genesis are foundations upon which all of scripture is built. If these eleven chapters are brought into question, the other major teachings of the Bible will also come into question. The flood has often been referred to as a myth. Jesus spoke of Noah and the flood (see **Matthew 24** and **Luke 17**). In His words, does it not sound like He is talking about a myth? No, it is not a myth; it is a biblical, historical account.

Man was out of control and every imagination of man was “*on evil continually*.” God, in His justice and righteousness, had to take action. That action was the flood.

Day 1- Read Genesis 6:5-8

Adam and Eve knew God, but sinned. Obviously, they taught Cain and Abel about bringing offerings to God. In the days of Seth, one of their younger sons, people called on God. However, by the time of Noah, no one was seeking after God and everyone was evil. God was sorrowful and repentant that He had made man. This was because of the evil depth to which man had plunged. It had gotten so bad that every thought of man was evil. God decided that He would destroy man, and not just man, but also every animal on the earth.

Since God is righteous and just, sin must be dealt with. Some people say that if God were a good God, He would not deal with sin so harshly. It is because God is good, just, and righteous, that He must deal with sin. However, a wonderful phrase is found in verse 8, “*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*”

The only way people can be saved from God’s wrath is through God’s grace (**Eph. 2:8-9**); but grace isn’t God’s reward for a good life. It’s God’s intentional love and unmerited favor. It is important not to read anything into the text. At this point, the focus

is not on the character of Noah, but on the grace of God. God's grace was freely given to Noah, his family, and all of us. God spared humanity, because of His grace given freely to Noah.

Noah was not the exception to "*all have sinned*" for he too, was sinful. But greater than man's sin is the amazing grace of God. We all need to give more thought to God's grace and less thought to our failures. Thank God for His saving grace!

Day 2- Read Genesis 6:9-22 and Hebrews 11:7

As we read previously, God, out of His grace, selected Noah. We must not get an unrealistic view of Noah. He was a righteous man and a man of faith, but he was also a sinner. The Bible teaches that there are none who are without sin and all have come short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23). God knew Noah could be a man of faith whom He could strengthen with grace so that he could be used by Him.

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars." **(2 Chronicles 16:9)**

God knew Noah and He strengthened him with grace. God told Noah His plans to send the flood and He gave Noah specific plans for building the ark. The ark would deliver Noah's family and preserve animals from the flood. Both passages today tell us that Noah went to work. God gave him the plan and without question, Noah went to work.

God knows each of us just like He knew Noah. He knows that we are all fleshly, sinful, and weak. He is not looking for superhuman people. No, He is looking for people who will seek Him with their whole hearts devoted to Him. He will provide the grace necessary

to do what needs to be done. Noah was not a super powerful man, but he had a mighty God.

Spend some time thinking about how you can make yourself more available to God. Thank Him for His grace that enables us to serve Him.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read 1 Peter 3:18-20

Remember that Jesus was with God in the beginning and all things were created by Him and for Him (**Colossians 1:16**). In **1 Corinthians 10:4**, Paul identifies the rock from which the Israelites drank as Christ. It has already been said that Jesus can be seen on just about every page of the Bible. In today's New Testament passage, we see that Jesus was actually doing the preaching through Noah. While Noah was building, he must have been preaching and warning the people who were imprisoned by their corruption and disobedience. Jesus is the Word of God, written and proclaimed. So this passage connects us to Jesus.

But if you look deeper, you can see the patience of God. Peter writes about the "*Divine Longsuffering*." God was waiting for the completion of the ark in order to save Noah and his family. Yes, Jesus was preaching through Noah. But it was imperative that God save Noah, because Jesus was also, you could say, physically in Noah. Noah could not be cut off because Jesus was one of Noah's great-far-off grandchildren! You can see Noah in the genealogy of Jesus found in **Luke 3:36**.

God's plans are amazing and not an afterthought. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). As you read the Old Testament you will see God's saving hand delivering people who in turn deliver others. If you are one of God's children, thank Him for delivering you. Rest assured you are not the end of the line. He saved you to save others! Because of Noah's obedience, he along with his wife, sons, and

daughters-in-law were delivered. Generations have been delivered as a result.

Trusting, along with obeying, has a far-reaching impact.

Day 4- Read Genesis 7:1-10

Wow, what a case of waiting on the Lord! God had given specific instructions to Noah about how to build the ark. He gave specific instructions about the animals to bring into the ark, “*And Noah did according to all that the Lord had commanded him.*” God spoke, Noah trusted and obeyed. Then God instructed Noah and his family to enter the ark. He told Noah that He would send rain on the earth in seven days. The rain would last for forty days and forty nights.

That must have been an incredible time of trusting, obeying, and waiting. Based on the timing of the birth of Noah’s children, some have calculated that the building of the ark took between twenty and forty years. So Noah built in obedience, trusted God, and did all that He said because he believed God. I don’t know about you, but I have some real difficulty trusting God consistently. Some days are better than others. However, in some instances, it is very important to know that clinging to God’s promises require obedience for us to experience His deliverance. It was not enough for Noah to simply believe, he had to “do” to build upon what he believed. Between Noah and God’s blessings, was obedience. He did what he did because he had faith in God and His promise to send the rain and to save Noah and his family. There was also an element of fear that motivated Noah. **Hebrews 11:7** says that it was godly fear which motivated Noah to build the ark to save his family. There was a twofold promise—there would be a flood and if Noah obeyed and built the ark, they would be saved.

God is faithful! He makes promises and He keeps them. The seeming delay of the fulfillment of those promises sometimes makes us anxious. But remember, God is not slack concerning His

promises and He is patient in not wanting anyone to miss out on His great salvation (see **2 Peter 3:9**).

Thank God for His promises and His timing. He is faithful and right on time!

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION-

Read Psalm 2:6-8 and Matthew 3:17

It is wonderful to find Jesus on almost every page of our Bible. We have already seen that **Psalm 2** is about Jesus. Similar wording to **Psalm 2** is found in **Matthew 3:17** where the Spirit of God comes above Jesus as He comes up out of the water after being baptized. Once again, hundreds of years before Jesus is born, God is telling us about His Son who would come to save. Connect the dots!

I am not sure what it meant to the people who read the Psalm in the day it was written and even in the days before Jesus was born. The intent was to let the people know that although rebellious people lash out against God, He is still in control and will accomplish His purposes.

God speaks and then the Son in heaven speaks. The Son says that His Father has said to Him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” Quite often, God allows us to listen in on conversations going on in heaven! But at the baptism of Jesus we are not listening in heaven; we are listening in, as that same voice, God’s voice, declares the same words. What those words must have meant to John the Baptist! What they must have meant to Jesus! They should also be a great blessing to us, as God gives us glimpses of His sovereignty. He is in control—always has been and always will be.

This week we have seen God’s judgment upon sin and, at the same time, His grace to deliver. Not only have we seen it in the event of the flood, but we have made the connection to Jesus. God has

judged sin in the crucifixion of Jesus but has also provided Jesus to deliver us from sin and judgment. Give thanks to God for His goodness to judge and deliver.

Notes

WEEK 6 THE RAINBOW OF GOD'S PROMISES

By Chris Watson

The Old and New Testament are full of God's promises! Unlike us, God always keeps His promises. Even when we think He is not "on time" or we begin to wonder, God always keeps His Word and we will see that this week with Noah.

Day 1- Read Genesis 7:11-16

I imagine Noah was often the laughing stock of those around him. As the word got out that he was building a boat because a flood was coming, more and more people most likely jumped on that bandwagon. Imagine the questions Noah faced from his friends and acquaintances. He was building a boat to save him and his family from something that had never happened before — rain, and lots of it. However, he trusted the Lord's words and followed what He said. He was believing the Lord for something that he could not see.

Hebrews 11:1 says, *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* Can you imagine what Noah must have felt when it finally started raining? He probably had mixed emotions! He was most likely very thankful that the Lord had used him to save his family [and the human race] through building an ark. However, he was probably also sad as the whole earth was about to be flooded! The one thing we know about Noah is that he trusted God, even when he didn't understand it all.

Noah had assurance that God would keep His promise. Do you? Are you confident that the Lord keeps His promises? I am sure Noah was hoping and trusting that the rain was coming. What are some things that you have trusted the Lord for lately? How have you seen Him work? What are you trusting the Lord for now? Whatever the case, we can trust these words in **Proverbs 3:5-6**, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own*

understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Day 2- Read Genesis 7:17-8:5

Perhaps there's times you can remember where it rained and rained and just seemed to never stop. Maybe you even experienced the trial of surviving a local flood. However, this was nothing compared to what Noah and his family experienced. Can you imagine rain for forty days and forty nights? After that, it took almost half a year for the water to go down.

In total, it was almost a year during which water covered the earth. God kept His promise to destroy the earth and to save Noah and his family, along with the animals. Verse 24 of chapter 7 tells us that the earth was flooded for one hundred and fifty days. What would have gone through your mind during that time? I wonder what went through Noah's mind. He knew that God had been faithful in this promise, but waiting is often the hardest thing to do. Cooped up in a huge boat for months, with every animal ever created...wow!

Isaiah 40:31 tells us to "*put our hope in the Lord.*" The word "hope" can also be translated "wait." So those that wait or hope in the Lord... have the promise that their strength will be renewed. Noah listened and waited for instructions on how to build the ark. He then built it and when he was finished, he waited on the Lord to tell him when the time had come, to fill it. In this passage, he is now in the ark waiting for the Lord to let the water recede.

We often find ourselves waiting on the Lord. Scripture tells us that our ways are not His ways nor our thoughts His thoughts. God's timing and answers are often different than ours. But this waiting isn't a passive waiting. It is an active waiting where our trust is in God alone. Our focus is on God in prayer that He must be the one to work! Whatever you may be going through today or working through, ask God to help you trust Him and put your faith in Him

alone. May your prayer be, “God, I want to be on Your timetable not mine.”

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 8:6-9:1

We see the Gospel all the way back in Genesis. Marty Machowski says, “The ark is a picture of the ways Jesus saves us from God’s punishment. Noah was safe from the flood in the ark and we are safe from God’s holy anger in Jesus.”⁷ It’s so neat to see the foreshadowing of Christ in the very first book of the Bible.

Upon leaving the ark, Noah and his family were told to be fruitful and increase in number. Because of the faithfulness of Noah in trusting God, the earth would be populated again. Think about it. You and I are here today because Noah had faith in God! Ultimately, we are here because of God’s mercy and love. But Noah put his faith in God and ultimately two of his far off grandchildren, Joseph and Mary, had a baby that changed the world forever.

God had mercy on Noah just like Jesus has mercy on us. Noah chose to believe God and it changed the world, literally. There is great comfort to see that God will use whoever He chooses to bring about his redemptive purposes. God used an ordinary man to preserve the human race through a mighty flood. We see in the story of Noah that God will accomplish his plan of redemption. God’s glory will fill the earth. Today, we need to ask the Lord to help us follow and believe Him the way Noah did, trusting Him completely. In the end, our only hope is to trust Jesus, the friend of sinners. If you are saved, ask the Lord daily to save you from yourself. Ask Him whom you might need to show the mercy of Jesus to, so they too, can live.

⁷ Marty Machowski, *Long Story Short* (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010). 34.

Day 4 - Read Genesis 9:8-17

One day while driving with my family I saw one of the most beautiful rainbows I had seen in a long time. It looked to be a full rainbow all the way across the sky. It was beautiful. Today, scientists will tell you all of the things that make up a rainbow and why rainbows are there. Don't get me wrong, I believe scientists are great and have much to offer. However, we don't need a scientist to tell us how and why rainbows appear; we have the Word of God.

As we know, the rainbow is God's promise that He will never again flood the earth. Every time we see a rainbow we can think of this promise. We see God's promises throughout scripture. Some of God's promises are conditional and some are not. For instance, we recently looked at **Proverbs 3:5-6** where we are told to trust in the Lord and in all of our ways acknowledge Him and He promises He will direct our path; He will lead us where to go. This is a conditional promise. Promises like this require something of us before we receive the fulfillment of the promise. However, we also have unconditional promises, such as God's promise to never flood the whole earth again. No matter what happens and no matter what mankind does, we can depend on that promise.

Today, think of some of the promises we see in scripture. Take some time to go through your Bible and read through some of these promises. Thank God for His promises and that we know they are true, because they come from the Truth - Jesus!

Day 5- Read Psalm 2:10-12

All peoples, with the exception of Noah and his family, were destroyed in the flood because of their disobedience to God. All the people were wicked and followed whatever path they wanted to. Today we often follow what we want, but because of God's grace we know our sin is covered. This is not a license to sin; it is

the grace of God. We acknowledge our sin and seek to follow the Lord and get on the right path.

We are all accountable to God. **Psalm 2:10-12** says even the kings, presidents, and leaders are accountable to God. Scripture tells us that the Lord is the King of Kings; there is no other higher than Him. **Galatians 3:28** confirms that we are all equal at the foot of the cross; no one is greater, no one is less.

Whether you are a business owner, factory worker, lawyer, custodian, or salesperson, may you acknowledge today that you are accountable to God and follow Him. While we are also accountable to our spouse, kids, family, employer, etc., we are first and foremost accountable to God.

Today, take the time to pray for those in leadership: President, Congress, Senate, Governors, Commissioners, etc. Instead of getting an attitude about any of these officials, pray for them. Ask God to help them see Christ for who He is and acknowledge that all are accountable to the King of Kings. Ask the Lord to draw the hearts of those in such positions to Himself.

Sermon Notes

WEEK 7 THE TOWER OF BABEL

By Dennis Watson

Adam and Eve sinned, but God clothed them and promised to send the world a Redeemer. Cain killed Abel, but God sent Seth to carry on the godly line. The Sethites intermarried with the godless Cainites, and God had to wipe the earth clean with a flood; but Noah and his family believed God's Word and were spared. After the Flood, the descendants of Noah's three sons repopulated the earth. But the new beginning with Noah eventually led to one of the most arrogant revolts against God recorded anywhere in Scripture.⁸

Day 1- Read Genesis 10:1-10

Noah's family, his sons, and grandsons obeyed God's command to multiply and fill the earth. It is from this point that the earth was populated with the nations. Seventy nations are listed in Chapter 10 of Genesis: fourteen from Japheth, thirty from Ham, and twenty-six from Shem. There are seventy nations in the genealogy of Noah.

What we find here is not a typical pure genealogy. This is a genealogy plus an atlas and a history book. It is not a complete listing. Edom, Moab, and Ammon are not mentioned, although they were important in biblical history. The fact that there are seventy nations listed may be theological. There were seventy in Jacob's family when they went to Egypt and Jesus sent out seventy disciples to preach the Word.

So seventy is important and may teach us several things theologically. Jehovah God is the Lord of the nations. He is the God of history and He is in control. All nations belong to the same human family. We are all of one blood. *"And he made from one*

⁸ Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place," Acts 17:26

God has a purpose for all nations to fulfill. The account in **Genesis 9:24-11:32** tells us that God's chosen nation was Israel.

Beginning in **Genesis 12**, Israel takes center stage in what follows. God also used Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Media-Persia, and Rome to accomplish His purposes regarding His chosen people. God can use pagan rulers like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, and even Augustus Caesar.

It is the desire of God that all the nations would know and worship Him (see **Psalm 66:1-8** and **Psalm 67**). Jesus commissioned His followers to go into the whole world and make disciples. God made the world and all the nations of the world and desires that they know Him.

God is in control. History is His story. We look at the Bible not as a collection of random stories for lessons on how to live. Rather, it is the unfolding story of God's redemption of His creation in Jesus Christ. We have seen God giving direction to His creation. It is a wonderful thing to know that He is directing the affairs of history to accomplish His purposes.

Day 2- Read Genesis 11:1-9

As is often the problem, here we see people making the choice to pursue their own plans and totally ignore God. In **Genesis 9:1**, God instructs Noah and his sons to "*multiply and fill the earth.*" It appears there may be a problem in chronology, but 11:1-9 probably explains how the arrangement in chapter 10 came about.

The author of Genesis often goes outside the chronological order to arrange the material thematically.⁹

The believer who is seeking to follow the Lord often has a tug-of-war. We want to do right but, as Paul said, evil is right there. We always struggle with doing God's will. Here, however, there appears to be no acknowledgement of God. They knew what they wanted to do and were determined to do it. Pride is usually associated with independence and disobedience. Humility, on the other hand, is associated with trust and obedience.

The danger here is always with us—making something else more important than God. The people forgot about God, they got caught up in themselves, and instead of making God's name great, they set out to make a name for themselves.

It is not always easy to recognize the grace and mercy of God. We sometimes misinterpret what He does as harsh and mean. When He removed Adam and Eve from the garden it was His grace and mercy. When He sent the flood, it was His grace and mercy. Here, when He scattered the people and confused their language, it was once again His grace and mercy. God was forcing them out to do what He intended, fill His creation with His image-bearers. He made it necessary to do what He had told them to do. God judges and gives a new beginning.

Since you have been saved, how many new beginnings do you suppose you have had? For me there have been many—daily! Give thanks for God's kindness, grace, and mercy!

⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Revelation 7:9-10

What a contrast! There was a scattering at the Tower of Babel. In the passage in **Revelation 7:9-10** there is a gathering. God scatters and God gathers. Man was created in the image of God and was made to worship God. God's intention was that His glory would fill the earth in His image-bearers. But because of sin's impact we also see God's scattering of his people be a form of discipline at times like when Israel and Judah are scattered in exile later in the OT. But even in these punishments, we see God is scattering His people to ultimately bring the nations to Him. He is scattering His people to be witnesses of His glory among the nations. In the end God will gather people from all nations, tribes, and languages, to worship Him. The Lamb in this passage is Jesus. He is the Lamb of God because He gave up His life on the cross as a sacrifice for sin.

For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord! Psalm 117:1-2

God's ultimate goal is that all people will praise and worship Him. We were made to worship and praise. The only true object of praise and worship is the one true God. Jesus was God in the flesh—in human form.

Jesus is the rallying point. As people come to Jesus there is a coming together. In the eternal Kingdom of God there will be no divisions. All people in Jesus will be gathered together.

Jesus is the One who will bring all scattering to an end. Jesus is our salvation and the salvation of the whole world. Our hope is in Him. We have been commissioned by Jesus to take the gospel message to the whole world.

Give thanks to God for the coming gathering. Join Him in inviting all people everywhere to come to Jesus.

Day 4- Read Deuteronomy 28:63-68 and 30:1-3

God gave a warning to His people after the Tower of Babel experience. Many times He told them that if they disobeyed He would scatter them. However, He also encouraged them by telling them that if they obeyed and followed He would gather them; they would be His people and He would be their God.

All of **Deuteronomy 28** is about curses and blessings. God told the people there would be curses for disobedience and blessings for obedience. As you read these words, perhaps you can think of times in your own life that you actually reaped what you sowed.

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7-8

We are blessed to have this vantage point! We can see the scattering at the Tower of Babel and the scattering of the people of God (Israel) on several occasions. As we are able to look back in history now and with the New Testament, we see that God's scattering of Israel/Judah ultimately served the purpose of God's people being a blessing to the nations the way God intended for them to be. And from this scattering, God is gathering people to Himself today by faith in Jesus Christ. Since we have this vantage point we can see how God scatters and gathers. God will break the barriers and in Jesus Christ bring people from all nations, tribes, and languages together united in Christ to sing His praises.

Give thanks and praise for the hope we have because of God's promise that He will bring us all together in Christ. It is God's plan that all nations and all tribes praise Him in all languages.

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION- Read Isaiah 1:1-31

From where we have been in Genesis and other supporting passages in the New Testament, Psalms, and the prophets, we see that people are sinful and accountable to God for their sin. From the earliest pages of the Bible we see that sin brings death. God calls people to acknowledge their sin and turn to Him in repentance for forgiveness.

In this passage in Isaiah we see that the prophet was looking way out in the future. He said that there would come a day when God would wash the people's sins away and make them spotless. In this context, God is bringing a court case against His people. First, He convenes a court case and brings charges against His people (2-4). Second, He presents His case and finds them guilty (5-15). Finally, God gives His people the opportunity to repent and be forgiven (16-31). He tells them there will come a day when He will wash them clean.

In **Revelation 7:14** we read about a group of people who have had their sin stains washed "*white in the blood of the Lamb.*" This is clearly Jesus the Lamb of God. God provided for the sin stain to be made white.

In the Gospels and the New Testament, we see the solution to the age-old problem of sin is the atoning death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the tomb. In this passage and many others in the Old Testament God gives prophetic words that there will come a day in which He will deal with the sin problem. God will take the initiative to do what we are powerless to do.

Don't you find it amazing to see the unity of the whole Bible? The Bible is an amazing book. In reality it has one author—God, Himself. Give thanks for His Word to us.

Notes

WEEK 8 ABRAM AND GOD'S PROMISE

By Chris Watson

You have probably seen or heard the commercials for things like Ancestry.com where you can go and find out all about your family from grandparents to many generations before them. Folks have found out that they have some pretty big families. However, they probably don't compare to the family that we will read about this week when we look at Abram, as he would later become the father of many nations.

Day 1- Read Genesis 11:27-32

Abram was another person that God used. Like Noah, Abram was an important part of God's plan. If you read **Genesis 11:10-26** you see the account or genealogy of Shem (one of Noah's sons) all the way to Abram. There are many people listed in these verses by name and others listed only as "*other sons and daughters.*" Either way it took all of these generations to get to Abram just as it took many generations to get to us. We know all about Abram's life and we will be reading about it over the next few weeks. Can you imagine billions of people reading about you and your genealogy this many thousands of years later?

Most likely, billions of people won't be reading about us in hundreds of years, although it is possible. Even if not, we need to ask God if we are being faithful with the time that we have. Whether or not we make the history books we need to ask God whether we are following Him and His footsteps. I imagine the folks many years before Abram had no idea the influence Abram would have and how God would use him. However, I can also imagine that many generations before Abram had an impact on his life. What about you? Are you being obedient to the Lord? Are you following God's ways like Abram? Like Abram though, we fail and we stumble along the way of being God's people. But the story

of God's people is to stumble well, with eyes turned to the heavens with faith in Christ alone. What legacy are you seeking to leave in your life, your family's life, your friends' lives? How are you seeking to make the name of Christ known in the lives around you? Ask the Lord to help you be a faithful follower. Who knows how it might impact others. May all who come behind us find us faithful.

Day 2- Read Genesis 12:1-9

At some point in our lives we have all offered or been offered the advice to, "trust God." Trusting God is simply taking to heart that God knows best and He will do His best. It is recognizing and resting in the very character of who God is and that He is actually in control. We need to lay everything before Him and follow, wherever that might be. It is simply trusting God's plan. We read in this passage that Abram did just that.

Can you imagine Abram hearing the words of God telling him to leave his country? What do you think our response might have been if those same words were given to us? I believe that most people who have moved, though probably not all, have known where they were going, having an end destination in sight. God told Abram to leave his country and go "*to a land that I will show you.*" Now that is faith, trusting that God knows best and believing He will do what He said.

God promised to bless Abram and make him into a great nation. Wow! As we read in God's Word, we are given many commands and instructions from the Lord. We are often given promises for following God and His Word. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in many ways and one of the ways is through His Word. Pray today that you will fully trust God. Pray that you will believe God and His Word and follow it. We often want to know "God's will" for our lives. Knowing God's plans and directions start with trusting Him through His Word. Are you trusting Him? What we read in His Word today, let us take to heart!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Galatians 3:26-29

Go back and read **Genesis 12:2-3**, then look at **Galatians 3:26-29**. If you are a believer in Christ, then you are one of Abraham's offspring. How neat is that? God used Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, to be a blessing to others in the Old Testament. However, he wasn't the one doing the blessing; he was simply the instrument or vessel that God used to bless others as we see in Genesis 12:3.

The link between Abram and us is Jesus. "Jesus is the one who fulfilled the promise God gave to Abram to bless the nations."¹⁰ All who have faith and have put their trust in Jesus are Abraham's far off grandchildren. There are hundreds of years between Genesis and Galatians and Abraham was long gone when Galatians was written. However, we see the obedience of Abraham in the New Testament, including **Hebrews 11**.

What is the promise that we have today in Christ? It is Salvation. **Romans 5:1b-2a** reads, "*we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.*" We have peace with God, meaning that we have the gift of God and eternal life and heaven only through Jesus. We also see in **Romans 15:13**, "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*" We have the gift of an ongoing relationship with Christ. He walks and talks with us. It's not just about going to heaven, although that will be great. It's also walking in tune with Him while on this earth.

¹⁰ Marty Machowski, Long Story Short (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010). 44

Today, thank God for the promise of Salvation that comes only in Jesus. Ask Him to show us how to enjoy His presence daily, wanting to walk in step with Him.

Day 4- Read Genesis 12:10-20

Abram has just left his home to follow God wherever He would lead. Abram is looking like nothing could stop him and that he would follow and trust God no matter what. However, in **Genesis 12**, we see Abram begin to go backward.

While Abram obviously trusted God to lead him, at this point in time he didn't trust Him with everything. As we see in verse 12, he was fearful that he would be killed if he was honest with the Egyptians. So instead of being honest and telling them Sarai was his wife, he said she was his sister. Wow! This great hero of the faith who just trusted God enough to leave his home and go to a land God would show him, is now lying. One moment he is trusting God and the next he is cowering down in fear.

Wait, this sounds familiar... it sounds like me. What about you? One moment we know God is in control, He is on our side, He will fight for us, and we have nothing to fear. The next moment we are clinching our hands, stressed out, drowning in worry, and even sometimes trying to "help God," as in Abram's case. Much like Abram we find ourselves a mixed bag of trust and doubt, faith and unbelief. If Abram was dependant on the strength of his faith for God to work he would be without hope. Yet, isn't it good to know that God was still faithful to Abram, although he didn't trust God at that moment, and that He is faithful to us in the same way today?

Day 5- Read Psalm 4

As you might know, David wrote many of the Psalms that we have in our Bible. David was called a man after God's own heart. However, even David knew that there was only One that was truly righteous and was God.

In Psalm 4:1 David calls out to our Creator, "*O my righteous God.*" Just what does it mean to be righteous? We could spend a lot of time here but basically it means to be without fault, blameless, and holy. Are you righteous? **Romans 3:10** says, "*None is righteous, no, not one.*" Well, I guess that pretty much says it. Even the most holy person you know is not righteous. That's why we need Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that "*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" What an exchange - unrighteousness for righteousness, unholiness for holiness. From mired with sin, to perfect. Today, you and I can still call out, "*O my righteous God,*" and know that God is there for us; we can know that He has taken our place at the cross through His Son, Jesus.

Thank God today for His righteousness, realizing that you did nothing to deserve it, you could only ask for and receive it. Recognizing you were a sinner, you trusted Him to take away your sins. If you have done this, thank Him for your salvation; spend some time basking in His free gift. If you haven't, get alone with God and ask Him to speak to you. Be honest with Him about your need for what only He can give, His righteousness, for we have none on our own.

Notes

WEEK 9 GOD MAKES A COVENANT WITH ABRAM

By Dennis Watson

Have you ever been out on a clear night when the stars seemed so luminous and abundant? Did you ever try to count them? It doesn't take long to realize that trying to count them is impossible. When God told Abram to count the stars, His point was to tell him that just like he could not count the stars it would be impossible to count all of his descendants.

Day 1- Read Genesis 15:1-6

Abram had just returned from two very significant experiences. He had rescued Lot from the hands of attacking kings. He also had a very special encounter with Melchizedek, the King of Jerusalem. In that encounter, Abram recognized Melchizedek as his spiritual superior and gave him a title. His name, which means “king of righteousness,” signifies that he is God’s representative. It seems that many times, especially right after a very significant victory, there is a spiritual tug-of-war.

Abram had a vision “*after this*” in which the Lord spoke to him. God tells Abram that He is sovereign and will bless Abram in an incredible way. Abram struggles with this because he has no children. Abram and Sarai, his wife, are getting old—past the time of having children. The tug-of-war is a simple one, that had been repeated time and time again. Abram knew what God had said, but at the same time, he saw the way things really were. Reality and the promises of God did not seem to go together and it did not appear things were going to happen as God had promised. God tells Abram again that He will bless him. God takes Abram outside and tells him to look at the stars and count them if he can. Of course it could not be done. God tells Abram that his extended family in the future would be as numerous as the stars. Abram was going to have children, and many far-reaching grandchildren. By the way, you and I are far-reaching grandchildren of Abram. We

have been grafted into Abram's family. Paul says we have been adopted through Jesus Christ.

What was it that really connected Abram to God? Verse six says that "*Abram believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*" Righteousness was not following a law or rule. What made Abram right with God was the fact that he trusted. In trusting God, God credited to Abram righteousness or regarded him as righteous. To be righteous is to be in right standing with God.

What are some ways you are trusting God right now? What are some ways in the past where you have taken God at His word? Trusting Him links us to Him.

God has a plan and nothing, not even being old and past the time of having children, can hinder His plan. When you have the tug-of-war going on, remember God is faithful and can never be anything else. Don't allow what you see to distract you from the promises of God!

Day 2- Read Genesis 15:7-21

A covenant is a commitment on the part of one person to do something without regard to the other's behavior. A covenant is stronger than a contract. It is a very serious promise. God made a covenant to Abram to give to Abram's descendants the land on which he was standing.

There was a way in ancient time of confirming a covenant. Animals would be killed and cut in two pieces and the two individuals would walk between the dead animals. By doing this they were saying, "If I break my part of our bargain I should be killed just as this animal was killed." That made it a very serious promise. They confirmed the covenant with a vow that if they did not each live up to the agreement of the covenant the violating party would be put to death. However, in this case only God passed

between the animals. He put Abram to sleep and by Himself confirmed the covenant. The covenant is one-sided because God knows man is not capable of keeping it. God took the initiative to make and confirm the covenant.

The whole idea of salvation is God's. He has taken the initiative to provide what we need. In this account we see that God made the covenant, God established the terms and He confirmed the covenant by placing the whole thing on His own shoulders. Even through the many years of history God's people have been unfaithful, God has kept His promise.

Give thanks to God for His amazing and enduring commitment to us!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Romans 4:13-25

Paul wrote to believers in Rome and explained that God's salvation was through faith and not through the law. He used the account of Abraham trusting God to show that even from the earliest of times God's plan was faith, not law. All of the people outside of Israel have no hope of being born Jewish or keeping the law as necessary to be a child of God. In reality, that was never God's plan. He told Abraham that all of the people of the world would be blessed through him. According to Paul's explanation in today's passage, God never intended for people to be brought into His family through physical birth or by keeping the law perfectly. Instead, from the beginning it was through believing and trusting God. The hope is found in the promises of God, not just knowing the promises, but trusting in His promises. God's plan of taking away Abraham's sin and our sin is the same. God's plan was to use a descendant of Abraham to save His people. From our vantage point we know that descendant is Jesus. Everything in the Bible points to Jesus.

Paul explained that Abraham trusted God even when it seemed hard for him to believe. Jesus is the far-reaching descendant of

Abraham who came to make us right with God. It is through Abraham's family that Jesus our Savior came into the world. If we place our faith in Jesus as Abraham faithed (believed) God, we too, will be made right with God. Here it is again. God has taken the initiative; He established the terms of salvation and He confirmed it not with the death of animals but with the death of His own Son, Jesus.

What an amazing connection. Through Abraham's descendants God has brought salvation to the world.

Day 4- Read Genesis 15:13-15

Right in the middle of this account of Abram and the covenant, we get an early preview into another historical account of God's activity in the lives of the descendants of Abram. Everything in the Bible is connected to the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The chapters which follow those, 12-15, are also significant in establishing the family of Abram, and then the Hebrew people (Israel). You cannot really get a full understanding of the Hebrew people without the historical event of the Exodus. Although God was going to make Abram's descendants into a great nation they were going to face some major struggles. Perhaps the greatest of those struggles was the slavery they experienced for four hundred years in Egypt. God tells Abram that He will judge Egypt and deliver the people in an incredible way. The event was the Exodus, and God's deliverer was Moses.

God knows all things in advance. He tells Abram things that were going to take place much later. Again, we sit in an amazing place to see how many years in advance God told this to Abram. We get to read it and know the rest of the story. God is in control! Even in events that are difficult God has not taken a vacation. He is directing the affairs of history and accomplishing His plan and purpose. We get to know the rest of the story up until the present. However, God has told us of other events which have yet to take place. If He has been faithful in the past, He will be faithful in the

future. There will come a time when we will experience the full “rest of the story.” In the meantime, enjoy the ride, even this one through the Old Testament.

Give praise to the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever!

Day 5- Read Psalm 6:1-4

David the Psalmist expresses his desperation for God’s mercy. He recognizes his own need to cry out to God for salvation. This is not the normal word for mercy. This is the Hebrew word ‘hesed.’ It means “loving-kindness.” The word brings together three meanings—strength, steadfastness, and love. All three are combined to describe God’s activity for sinners. David asks for God to save him for the sake of God’s loving-kindness. This is clearly a call for the salvation of God motivated by God’s love. It brings to mind:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
(John 3:16)

Abram believed God’s plan and he was blessed and became a blessing. Against impossible odds Abram and Sarai became parents. He became connected to God because He believed God's plan. David cried out to God for His loving-kindness. In essence, he was asking God to send Jesus.

We are saved the same way Abram was, and the same way David sought salvation. We are saved by trusting in God’s plan. God’s plan for us is to receive by faith, Jesus Christ as the one God sent to die for our sins. Have you received God’s salvation? If not, this is the day of salvation.

If He has saved you already, take time to give thanks to Him for His great salvation.

WEEK 10 GOD GIVES ABRAM A NEW NAME

By Chris Watson

What's in a name? A whole lot. In scripture we see many names of God, like Jehovah Jireh and the Great I Am. So a name can mean a great deal. This week we will see that God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which literally means "father of a multitude."

Although there was a lot of time between the original promise and the renaming of Abraham, God would still follow through on His promise.

Day 1- Read Genesis 16

It had been over twenty years since God had promised Abram children and he still had no children. Twenty years - that's a long time. As Americans, we are often impatient, so imagine waiting twenty years for something that was promised to you.

Sarai was upset and frustrated that she was still childless and decided to take matters into her own hands. As we see in chapter 16 and even later, this caused huge problems. Instead of refusing a second wife and putting his hope in the Lord, Abram went along with the plan. I am sure at this point Sarai thought she was "helping" the Lord and getting what she wanted, but as we see, it just made things worse.

God still fulfills His promise, but now many problems were manifesting themselves because Abram and Sarai took things into their own hands! Have you ever found yourself taking things into your own hands because you thought God was too slow or He wasn't working things like you thought He should? Today, ask the Lord to help you trust in Him when things are going well and when things feel like they are falling apart. Ask Him to help you trust His promises and not take things into your own hands, no matter the time frame. Remember, Abram and Sarai waited over twenty years for the promise that God had given them and He was faithful.

Day 2- Read Genesis 17:1-6

Abram and Sarai had just taken things into their own hands. They had just sinned and seemed to have messed things up. So we might expect God to chastise and punish them. However, in the very next chapter we see God fulfilling His promise.

He doesn't give them what they deserve; rather, He keeps His promise. This is another one of those unconditional promises that we see in scripture, that regardless of what Abram and Sarai did, God was going to keep His promise. Remember, last week we saw that God was the only One to walk between the animals when the covenant was made with Abram. God, being all knowing, knew that Abram would fail. However, He kept His promise. Not only was He going to keep His promise, as we will see in a few chapters, but He expands it. Instead of making Abram the father of one great nation, God tells Abram he would be the father of many nations and that kings would come from Abram's children. To match this bigger promise, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, which means 'father of the multitude' or 'father of many'.¹¹

I can and often do mess things up. Like Abram, I often want to take things into my own hands. But when I do, God is still faithful to carry out His plan and purpose. His plan will not be thwarted, but He does allow us to be a part of it. Are you willingly a part of God's plan? If so, are you following Him? Ask God to help you be a part of His plan and be thankful that He uses you.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 17:6-8

Reread this passage. There is one word in particular that points forward to Jesus through God's plan. What is it? It is everlasting! As we know, Jesus gives everlasting life. As a kid and, sometimes, even as an adult I have caught myself trying to get a grasp on

¹¹ Marty Machowski, Long Story Short (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010).

eternity (everlasting). I sometimes lie in bed trying to wrap my mind around it. It will never end. Never! Forever and ever we will be with God, we will see those believers who have gone on before us, including the heroes of the Faith, and it will never end.

Most are familiar with **John 3:16** that reads, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” It’s simply believing that we are sinners, knowing there is nothing we can do to fix it and trusting in what Jesus did on our behalf. What an incredible love.

Abraham lived and died before Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection. However, he believed God, he put his hope in Him, and trusted His Words and promises. Machowski says, “When Abraham trusted in God’s plan he trusted in Jesus.”¹² As you go throughout your day today thank God for salvation through Jesus; be thankful for everlasting life with Him. Also, ask Him to help you trust Him today, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Day 4- Read Genesis 17:9-27

Can you imagine being Abraham and now Sarah? They were both in their nineties when a son was born to them. They were old enough to be great-grandparents and they were having a child. How bizarre is that? If that were to happen today it would be all over the news, and rightfully so.

However, this shouldn’t have been news to Abraham and Sarah as they had been promised over twenty years earlier that they would bare a child. God reminds them of the promise and that Abraham would be the father of many nations. We might wonder what was going through their minds from the time the original promise was made, until the birth of their son! We see here Abraham even laughed as he thought about a woman as old as Sarah having a

¹² Marty Machowski, Long Story Short (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010).

child. He obviously knew if this was going to happen, it was going to be a divine act of God.

This covenant that was made with Abraham was carried out through a sign (v. 11) and that sign was circumcision, which we will see in other parts of the Old Testament and even in the New. Even before Sarah gave birth, Abraham entered into the covenant and was trusting God to do what He said. What faith. This was something only God could do and Abraham was fully trusting Him in it and following the sign of the covenant.

What is happening in your life right now that only God can do? What are you trusting God for? What are you laying at His feet and trusting in His plan and perfect will? Like Abraham, fully trust the Lord and believe His plan will prevail.

Day 5- Read Psalm 7:6-11

In Psalm 7:8, David asks the Lord to judge him according to his righteousness and his integrity. However, in **Isaiah 64:6** we read, *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.* So do we have righteousness of our own or is it like filthy rags?

David knew he was a sinner, and although David lived way before Jesus, he was trusting in God's plan to take away his sins. Therefore, David in and of himself was not righteous; he was an unrighteous sinner just like the rest of us. The only way he could say those words was because he was trusting in God's righteousness.

Salvation is basic and easy to understand, yet it's so complex. All sixty-six books of God's Word have salvation woven through them. Just think of salvation as an exchange. It's an exchange from evil to God's goodness, sin to perfection, bondage to freedom, death to life, and hell to heaven. Wow! How incredible! We can't earn salvation; we have no righteousness on our own. God knows

my heart, thoughts, and attitudes, and He is still working on me. However, when He looks at me He doesn't see my sin, He sees His Son's blood that covers my sin. This is the only hope that I have, and it is the only hope that you have.

When David says in **Psalm 7:8** to judge him according to his righteousness and his integrity, he knows he has none apart from God. You and I have none apart from Jesus. Thank God for the exchange of salvation and share that gift with someone today.

Notes

Sermon Notes

WEEK 11 THE LORD APPEARS TO ABRAHAM

By Dennis Watson

This week we are dealing with a case of “Guess who’s coming to dinner.” The Lord and two angels appear to Abraham and Sarah (apparently as ordinary men) and somehow, Abraham was able to recognize this was the Lord God Himself.

Day 1- Read Genesis 18:1-8

Abraham and Sarah both have new names and have been living a long time with the promise of God. He had promised them they would have a very large family that would become a great nation. They had been waiting about twenty years and as yet, there is not a single child. Both Sarah and Abraham are now very old and beyond the time of having children. Three men come to their home and Abraham immediately recognizes that one of them is the Lord God, Himself, in human form. We do not know how he recognized that it was the Lord, but God has a way of revealing Himself. Abraham greets the three guests, enthusiastically inviting them to stay for a meal.

The visit was not due to Abraham’s invitation but because the Lord chose to visit him and Sarah with a message and a miracle.

I sometimes forget or lose sight of God’s promises. When promises are not fulfilled immediately it is easy to shrink back into a kind of faithlessness. This can become normal for many believers. Delay does not mean failure! God keeps the promises that He makes. Abraham and Sarah had gotten into a routine and were living with the anticipation of passing on their inheritance to their servant. The time of the actual fulfillment of the promise of a son was twenty-four years!

Be careful not to lose sight of the promises of God. Remember His track record. He is faithful.

Day 2- Read Genesis 18:9-15

Abraham and Sarah had waited twenty plus years for the fulfillment of God's promise for a large family. Now God appears to Abraham to remind him once again of the promise and to tell him the time will be soon for him and Sarah to have a son. Upon hearing these words Sarah, in another room, laughs because she knew both she and Abraham were way too old to have a child. So the words of God were like a joke to her, after all she was eighty-nine years old! The Lord asks Abraham why Sarah laughed. Sarah denied laughing although she did.

Sarah had certainly been told by her husband about the promises of God. But since the wait had been so long she had pretty much given up. We need to be careful about being too hard on her. God in His mercy did not punish Sarah, He kept His promise. God knew that one of her far-off grandsons, Jesus, would die on the cross to take away not only our sins, but Sarah's, too.

Many, if not all, of God's promises seem impossible. Just giving consideration to what has happened so far in Genesis seems impossible. As we think about the rest of what we read in the Bible and what is prophesied to come, it all seems impossible. However, God gives Sarah a very important reminder, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And, of course, the answer is "No!"

One of the blessings of reading and studying God's word is that the more we read and study, the more faith is produced in us. *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Romans 10:17

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Luke 1:26-38

You will notice that both Sarah and Mary had similar situations. They both received an announcement that they would have a child. They both were in positions in which they could not become pregnant without a miracle. Sarah was too old and Mary was very

young and not yet married and had not yet known a man, which was her way of saying that she was still a virgin. Both ladies received a message; God said that He could do anything! Nothing is too hard or impossible for Him.

There are no limitations on God! He has a plan and He will carry it out. His plan included giving Abraham and Sarah a son in keeping with His promise to make Abraham into a great nation. Neither Abraham's nor Sarah's age was an issue. God made a promise and He was the One to make it happen. He would not be hindered. The promise was to come through Abraham and it did.

The same was true with Mary. She was a virgin. God was determined to send His Son Jesus into the world to bring salvation. He was also determined that Jesus had to be born not of man. Jesus was not born in the line of Adam. He was not born of the seed of man. He was the new or second Adam. Not a new version of the old but an entirely new creation.

It is a blessing to know that nothing can thwart the plan of God! God makes promises and nothing will cause Him to not follow through on His promises—NOTHING!

Thank God that there is no one like Him who makes and keeps every promise meticulously.

Day 4- Read Genesis 18:16-33

When we are praying for others we are doing the very thing Jesus is doing right now. Jesus is always interceding for us (**Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25**). In the passage today Abraham prays for the people of Sodom. He definitely had a personal interest because his nephew Lot and his family were living there. God told Abraham that He was going to Sodom to destroy it because of the evil that was there.

Do you think Abraham was a little pushy and, maybe a little arrogant? In **Luke 18:1-8** Jesus told His disciples a parable to teach them that they “*should always pray and not give up.*” Abraham was praying for the deliverance of the people of Sodom. We should not be critical of his persistence but we should model it. Too often we give up in our prayers. We grow weary or feel like we should not bother God. He has asked us to pray and tell Him what we want and what we need. This is especially true when we are praying for others. Abraham prayed with vision—let there be fifty righteous, forty-five righteous, forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten. He was praying with vision that God would find at least ten righteous people and then for the sake of those ten, save the entire city. Apparently, there were not even ten righteous in Sodom.

Thank God for answered prayer in your own life. We sometimes pray and receive and never bother to give Him praise and thanks. Keep a prayer list and be vigilant. Do not give up. No one is beyond God’s reach.

Day 5- Read Psalm 8

Psalm 8 is a Messianic Psalm. It is called a Messianic Psalm because it is quoted in the New Testament in direct reference to Jesus Christ. Jesus makes reference to it in **Matthew 21:16**, rebuking the religious leaders because they told Jesus to silence the children because they were singing praises to Him. If the religious leaders knew scripture they would have known the children were fulfilling scripture.

Paul quoted from Psalm 8 when speaking of Jesus’ resurrection declaring that God had “*put everything under His feet*”

1 Corinthians 15:27. In **Hebrews 2:5-8**, the quote is a direct reference to Jesus.

Long before Jesus was born David was singing praises to Jesus. He was declaring that He would come and have dominion and bring salvation. It is no wonder that the Psalmist would open and close

the song with the words “*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth.*” Once again, from our perspective (our perch, so to speak), we should be singing praises to His excellent name.

The Bible is made up of sixty-six separate books written by forty different authors over a period of more than a thousand years. It is an incredibly integrated message system. When you read and study it you should be amazed that the real author was from outside time and space. God authored it through men but He is the true originator of the message. Give Him praise for who He is and what He has done!

Notes

Sermon Notes

WEEK 12 GOD RESCUES LOT

By Chris Watson

God uses many things to speak to us, like the Holy Spirit and His Word. Sometimes God speaks to us and directs us how we should go (**Prov. 3:5-6**) and other times He gives us warnings of where not to go. He oftentimes gives us discernment on situations we might be dealing with. In the situation we will look at this week, God used angels to save a man and his family.

Day 1- Read Genesis 19:1-14

The people of Sodom had the attitude of let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. They were doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, and however they wanted. This place was so wicked and perverse that the Lord was going to destroy it.

We remember that the Lord destroyed the whole earth because of the wickedness during Noah's time. Now we see He is going to destroy one city because of their wickedness and their desire to do things their way. The people of Sodom forgot God and were living however they wanted.

For the people of Sodom this didn't happen overnight, it happened one sin at a time. Scripture tells us that the enemy wants to kill, steal, and destroy. **James 1:13-15** says, "*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*" As believers we must recognize sin for what it is, repent of it, and move on. It's when we continue in the sin that we find ourselves in a huge mess.

Today, if there is any willful sin in your life be honest before the Lord. Call on Him to give you strength over that sin. More

importantly, focus on Him; the more you focus on Him, the more likely that the sin(s) will take care of themselves.

Day 2- Read Genesis 19:15-16

Cars are built today with warning lights and signals that will light up on the dashboard if something is wrong. Often these lights indicate a problem and allow a person the chance to take the car to a mechanic before a more serious problem occurs. However, some folks might ignore it, forget about it, not have the money, or just not have the time or make the time to take it to a mechanic.

Lot was given several warning signs that there was something terribly wrong. What went on at his house the night the angels stayed was one warning. Then in this passage, the angels straight up tell him to get his family and leave or they too, will be swept away when the city is punished. Most would think that would be all that was needed to get out of town, right?

However, verse 16 says, “*he hesitated*” (NIV). For whatever reason, he didn’t respond to the angels’ warnings and didn’t leave when instructed. Thankfully though, scripture tells us the angels took them by the hand and literally led them out. God was truly showing His mercy and kindness to Lot and his family.

Most likely we have all had people in our lives that have grabbed us by the hand, physically or spiritually, and led us out of harm’s way. Can you think of a time the Lord used something or someone to lead you out of an area of sin or evil? Did you go right away or did you need some help? We often need people to grab us by the hand and lead us. What about you? Are you being like the angels and helping others get out of harm’s way, flee the scene of evil and sin, and lead them to Christ? Thank God for those who may have grabbed your hand and led the way. Ask the Lord for you to be that person for someone else.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read 2 Peter 2:6-9

Came to My Rescue, a song by Hillsong United says, “I called, you answered and you came to my rescue and I, I wanna be where you are”. This summer while at the beach, a family from another country was playing in the ocean and was totally unaware of the rip current. Moments later they began struggling and two lifeguards had to be called to help them out. They were unaware of the dangers of the rip current, but by the time they got out of the ocean, they were well aware.

There are times we are in need of rescue and realize it, as the song above says. There are also times we are not aware but we are still in need. God sent angels to let Lot know he needed to be rescued. It was literally a matter of life and death. Without God speaking to and rescuing him, he would have been wiped out also, as we see in **Genesis 19**.

We are all like Lot, whether we know it or not; we need to be rescued and we need Jesus to rescue us, because He is the only one who can. If you have called on the name of the Lord to save you from your sin and put your trust in Jesus, then you have been rescued. While salvation takes place in a moment we need to be saved from ourselves and the snares of this world every day. Thank God for saving you and ask Him often to save you from yourself and from this world and ask to walk in Him. We can't do it alone. Our only hope is in Christ! Is your hope in Christ? Is He your only rescue? If not, call on His name today to rescue you. If you already have, share the rescue with others.

Day 4- Read Genesis 19:16-29

If we obey God there are often blessings to follow and if we disobey, there are often consequences. We see this in scripture and we see it in our own lives. Can you think of times when you have

disobeyed God and it has cost you? Can you think of times when you have obeyed God and you have seen His blessings?

Oftentimes we think our own choices and decisions affect only us. We know that's not true. For example, Adam and Eve's decision to disobey started the chain of sin that we still wrestle with today. Thankfully, through Jesus, God has broken the curse of sin and death.

We may often categorize sin as either little or big sin, as if there is such a thing. From scripture we see that sin is sin, no matter what it is. There may be different consequences with sin, but it is still sin. In today's passage we see that Lot's wife chose to disobey God and it cost her, it cost her life. Of course, that affected Lot and his daughters. God used the angels to tell Lot and his family not to look back and if they did, they would be swept away (v.17). The consequence of disobeying what God said was very straightforward here. Yesterday we looked at the warning signs. This is not so much a warning sign as it was a command to flee and not look back, or else.

We can speculate as to the reason Lot's wife looked back. What we do know is she turned into a pillar of salt because she didn't obey. In scripture, we see all kinds of commands and ways we are to obey God. The greatest is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The truth is, if we are focusing on loving God with all we have, all the other commands, including loving our neighbor, will come as a result of that. Take some time today to think of promises that come with obeying God and also consequences of disobedience. Ask the Lord to help you to obey Him at all times, not looking back but pressing on.

Day 5- Read Isaiah 42:1-3 and Matthew 12:18-21

We have seen several prophecies fulfilled in the first twelve weeks and here we come to another. We see Isaiah's prophecy in

Matthew which is, of course, talking about Jesus. Sin is in the world, yet God is Holy. You and I are sinners; scripture tells us the wages of our sin is death. It would be bad if the news stopped there but we can thank God it doesn't! Verse 21 of **Matthew 12** says the nations will put their hope in His name (Jesus). Jesus is our only hope.

In God's eyes, we are either forgiven or unforgiven. There is no choice. If we have put our faith in Jesus as the only way to have our sins taken away and realize our desperation for Him, we are forgiven. As we see in scripture, we will also continue in the faith knowing Jesus is our only hope. By placing our faith in Jesus our sins have been paid in FULL. If we haven't placed our faith in Jesus, then we are unforgiven and we will pay the price for our sin, death and eternity apart from Christ in hell.

Christ brought salvation, grace, and mercy and we see it in verse 20. It's very important that we understand verse 20 to help us get the context of the passage: "A bruised reed shall he not break. The reed, a hollow cylinder, if bruised has its strength destroyed. It thus becomes the symbol of the bruised spirit. The tender Savior will not break, but heal. Smoking flax/smoldering wick. The wick of the lamp that had ceased to burn clearly. The violent would put it out and fling it away. The Lord does not use such violence with those disciples who give forth some light, even if it is imperfect. Till he send forth judgment. Till he shall sit in power and triumph on the throne of judgment."¹³

Verse 20 reiterates again that our only hope is in Jesus. As **Psalms 145:8** says, "*The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*" Today, may we bask in His love if we know Him and share it with others. If we don't know Him, maybe today is the day of salvation for you. Call on the Lord.

¹³ Johnson's Notes on the New Testament. The Gospel According to Matthew.

Notes

Sermon Notes

WEEK 13 ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

By Dennis Watson

It took a while, but God kept His promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son. The two sons, Ishmael, born of the slave woman, and Isaac, born of Sarah, brought conflict into the home. Ultimately Isaac, the son of promise, was the son through whom God brought the ultimate blessing to the world—Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Day 1- Read Genesis 20

Abraham, like all of us, was imperfect. It is often our thinking that the people who served God in the Bible were perfect. That was not so! What made Abraham great was not his exploits but his great God! In this account in **Genesis 20** Abraham appears to be the ungodly man while King Abimelech shows himself far more upright than Abraham. Abraham, due to his lack of trust and dependence upon God, feels compelled to lie to the king and say that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife. As is often the case we forget that a half-truth is still a lie. It was a half-truth, because she really was his half-sister. But most importantly, she was his wife. His intention was to deceive to protect himself. God is our protector.

God is the one who makes us appear to be great. Look what God did. He warned the king in a dream that Sarah was a married woman. In doing so, God protected the king, Sarah, and Abraham! How many times has God protected you? God is faithful, period. I like to say that with the period because we want to say, “God is faithful, even when we aren’t.” Just forget the last phrase and rejoice in His faithfulness.

Just trust God enough to tell the truth and leave the outcome to Him. He can handle it and then we are free to be honest. This was the tug-of-war of trust. Abraham needed help with his unbelief. He

believed the worst, the things that would probably never happen, and then he lived dishonestly.

Day 2- Read Genesis 21:1-7

“And the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken.” That is how the last part of verse 1 reads. God is a promise-making and promise-keeping God. Although a period of more than twenty years had passed, the promise of a child became a reality. And one thing was sure—God was the one who accomplished it! There was no room for any person to claim credit. **Romans 4:19** speaks of Abraham’s body and Sarah’s womb being as good as dead. God can bring forth life out of deadness! Only God could be credited with a man of one hundred years old and a woman of ninety years old having a child!

Sarah and Abraham knew it. A sweet lady told me once, “I love it when God tickles me.” That statement made me laugh. Isaac’s name means laughter. For sure, every time Abraham and Sarah called Isaac’s name they were reminded of how God “tickled them.” By this time most people their age were grandparents and great-grandparents.

We have a “double tickle” on this one. We can join Abraham and Sarah in the amazement of having a son at their age. We can also rejoice greatly that God reached way out and brought as one of the blessings a far-reaching grandson of Isaac, Jesus Christ the Son of God and Savior of the world!

Give thanks to God for His incredible plan to bring salvation and to show His greatness in the impossible!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read 1 Corinthians 1:28-31

I believe that there are no great people, only a great God. Any greatness that any person may achieve is because of the way God made them. Just think of some of the people who have been

labeled great. Just think if they gave glory to the One who made them and gave them the ability they had. God made it clear that Abraham and Sarah were mere recipients of His greatness. They had no claim to fame in the whole thing.

The same is true for us who have been made children of God through Jesus Christ. We have no claim on the glory of that. Ephesians 2 tells us that our salvation is by grace through faith and we are not to boast as if we had some hand in it. It is entirely a gift of God and it is from His glory and for His name's sake.

Whatever you have that you consider to be great and wonderful blessings, give thanks and credit to God. In doing so we come full circle; He blesses us so that He can bless through us. When you take credit you break the circle. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Is there something in your life you have taken credit for and have failed to give thanks and glory to God? Begin now to give Him praise and glory for the many incredible blessings He has given you.

Day 4- Read Genesis 21:8-21

Sarah and Abraham had plotted to help God out by making sure that Abraham had a son. We read about this in Genesis 16. The result of their unbelief and sin was the offspring of Abraham and Hagar. Ishmael was born and is called in **Galatians 4:23** the son of the *“bondwoman according to the flesh.”* Isaac, on the other hand, was called the son of the *“free woman through promise.”* You can imagine the tension this brought to the household. Not only was there sibling rivalry, but Sarah was jealous and wanted Hagar and Ishmael sent away. She was making sure that Ishmael had no place in the inheritance that was to come to Isaac.

God took care of Hagar and Ishmael, providing for their needs. He also promised to make Ishmael a great nation. In Genesis 16 it is said that Ishmael would be *“a wild man and his hand shall be against every man.”* The conflict is obvious. Isaac was born as a

result of the promise. Ishmael was born as a result of man's fleshly decision, one of the promise and the other of the flesh. This tug-of-war continues today. Israel and her friends have been in conflict with the descendants of Ishmael ever since. Each of us finds a more personal tug-of-war going on in our own lives, the conflict between the spirit and the flesh.

Thank God for His faithfulness to accomplish His purposes. In the middle of conflict, jealousy, and struggle, it is easy to forget that God is still in control. When you face such times, be still and know that He is God.

Day 5- Read Zechariah 6:9-13

Just about every one of the fifth day of the week's devotion gives us the great opportunity to see that we are looking at the Bible from an incredibly privileged position. What a position! Don't take for granted that we get to read prophecy and then we get to see so much of it fulfilled. The events told about in the Bible sometimes appear random. They are not random. We need to approach the Bible with the understanding that it is the record of God's unfolding plan. Our part is to connect the dots.

God gives the prophet Zechariah a symbolic crowning which pictures the coming of Jesus Christ to reign on the earth. J. Vernon McGee says that the name of the three captives means "robust, God's goodness and God knows." When you put the three together with the crowning, not of a king but a priest, the symbolism is clear. God knows that through His goodness He intends to put His king on the throne and He will do it in a robust and powerful manner. The prophet uses a code name "*Branch*" for Jesus.

Jeremiah 33:15 and Isaiah 11 use this code name connecting Jesus to the family line of David. Jesus will be God's King on the throne of David.

King Solomon, King David's son, built the first temple out of stones. Jesus builds a temple out of living stones, the people He

saves by His death and resurrection. Today all believers together form the temple of God.

Give thanks to God for the “*Branch*” out of Jesse and David. Rejoice that you are in that connection!

Notes

WEEK 14 ABRAHAM IS TESTED

By Chris Watson

We have all had tests in our lives. Growing up we took tests, but most often we knew what we needed to study to understand what we had been taught, so we could do well on the test. However, there are tests that may catch us off guard, tests in our day-to-day life that really make us think and put our faith God. This week we will look at one of those tests.

Day 1- Read Genesis 22:1-8

Abraham and Sarah waited many years to have their son Isaac. They were both joyous to see God's promise of a son fulfilled. They trusted the Lord and He was faithful. But as we read today, the son they had waited on for years, was to be sacrificed! Wow! I wonder what must have gone through Abraham's mind? What would have gone through yours?

Notice at the end of **verse 5** that Abraham told the servants, "*We will come back to you.*" He didn't say I will come back, but **we will come back**, implying Isaac would be with him. In verse 8 he also said to Isaac that the Lord would provide the offering. Abraham was truly trusting God in that situation. However, Abraham was back and forth. A few chapters back he didn't trust God to care for his wife, but now he trusts Him to care for his son.

Abraham may remind us of ourselves. We, at times, fully trust God with everything and have no worries, yet at other times, we are not trusting at all. Isn't it nice to know that God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, as we see in scripture? We can throw ourselves on Him and His promises and know that we can trust Him.

This is a great way to live, as we depend solely on God. It reminds us that God is everything and we can truly trust Him. Ask God,

whatever may come your way, that you will pass the test and trust Him.

Note: Today's passage was a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus! We were to die for our sins but God provided another sacrifice, His Son, Jesus Christ.

Day 2- Read Genesis 22:9-14

After reading this passage place yourself in Abraham's shoes! Can you imagine? We often think of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his son, but we don't think much about Isaac. Can you imagine what must have been going through Isaac's mind? Was he looking for a way of escape? Was he looking to run away? From what we know of the story we don't see any of this. Would those thoughts have been running through your mind?

What we do see is Isaac trusting his father. Isaac knew that his father, Abraham, was a God-fearing man. We have to assume, even at Isaac's age, he knew his father trusted God in everything. Therefore, Isaac trusted his father. Even when it didn't make sense, he trusted.

This reminds us of the relationship between Jesus and the Father. We know from the New Testament that as Jesus' death got closer, and even on the cross, He asked the Father if there be any way that this cup could pass from Him, then to do so. But His next words were "*Not my will but yours be done.*" Jesus trusted His Father. He knew what was to come; He knew the Father's plan. Although it would hurt Jesus to the point of death, He was willing to obey the Father. Incredible! Because of that obedience, you and I can have eternal life today, we get to spend eternity with God!

Thank Jesus today for being obedient to the Father; thank Him for taking your punishment! Ask the Lord today for you to obey Him in everything, just like Jesus, even when it seems impossible.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read 1 John 4:9-10

As we saw from yesterday's reading, God provided a ram to be sacrificed instead of Isaac. Don't you know Isaac was grateful?

In 1 John, we see God provided another sacrifice, Jesus! Jesus was the one that would pay for our sins, the only hope of eternal life. Jesus became our substitute! What was meant for us, because of our sin, God put on Jesus. Read through the verses below while thanking Jesus for being our Savior!

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

John 1:29 *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Romans 3:25 *Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*

Romans 5:8 *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

1 Corinthians 15:3 *... Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Hebrews 2:17 *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

Hebrews 9:28 *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

1 Peter 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

After taking some time to meditate and think on the scripture, thank God for His sacrifice and know that because of Him, we can truly live!

Day 4- Read Genesis 22:15-19

The Old Testament is full of real life accounts of people who either disobeyed or obeyed God. Thankfully, Abraham was one that obeyed God. Because of his obedience, the Lord tells him that He will bless him. His descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. God also tells Abraham that all nations will be blessed because of his obedience. It was a huge step of obedience for Abraham to take, offering to sacrifice his own son.

Like Abraham, we have the choice daily to obey or disobey God. Those choices not only affect us, but those around us. In Abraham's case, it affected millions upon millions. Because of Abraham's faith, nations were blessed. What about You? Who is blessed because of your obedience to the Lord? Your spouse? Your kids? How about your employer, your friends, or your coworkers? The list could go on and on.

Following God's plan is huge! It has incredible blessings, not only for us but those around us and often those that are not near us. It can affect people that we may never know about. Ask the Lord today to help you obey Him in everything, realizing that you are not only obeying the Lord, but your obedience is also affecting

others for the good. Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts, attitudes, and desires today, and be willing to follow wherever He may lead.

Day 5- Read Psalm 5:11

We see in this verse that the Lord is our refuge! A refuge is a place of shelter in times of danger. **Psalms 46:1-3** says, *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”*

God is our only refuge or rescue! He is it. As we face times of uncertainty, doubt, loss of job, family problems, relationship issues, and the like, God is our refuge. In times of uncertainty and in times of danger, we go to Him. In times of health, prosperity and certainty, we also go to Him. God is our Father, a loving Father that will direct us and do what is best for us. We go to Him.

God, through Jesus Christ, has become our refuge. You and I were in great danger; we were under God’s judgment. We were condemned to hell and eternity apart from Christ. We had no hope on our own; we had no hope. But God, rich in mercy sent His Son, Jesus, to be our refuge, our hope, our shelter. As you go throughout your day, thank God that He is our refuge. He is our constant refuge and we can go to Him with whatever we are facing and know that we are secure.

Notes

Sermon Notes

WEEK 15 GOD PROVIDES A WIFE FOR ISAAC

By Dennis Watson

In **Genesis 24** we come to a major break in this second division of Genesis. The first division (chapters 1 – 11) deals with four great events. The second and final division, (chapters 12 – 50) deals with four outstanding individuals. Specifically, in **Genesis 12-23** we have Abraham, the man of faith. Now in chapters 24-26, we have Isaac, the beloved son. There are three great events in the life of Isaac, and we have already seen two of them. The first was his birth, and the second was his being offered as a sacrifice by Abraham. The third is the obtaining of his bride. They say there are three great events in a man's life — his birth, his marriage, and his death — and that he has no choice except with the second one, marriage. Sometimes a man doesn't seem to have much choice in that connection either, but, nevertheless, these are the three great events in a man's life.¹⁴

Passing it on! God keeps the process of putting His plan into experiential reality rolling along. He now takes the next step in growing and extending the family of Abraham. This part of the historical account includes finding a wife for Isaac.

Day 1- Read Genesis 24:1-9

What a strange way to find a mate! It was time for Abraham's special beloved son, Isaac, to get married. So Abraham commissioned his most trusted servant to go and seek out a mate for him. The instructions were very specific. He was not to go to the Canaanites to find a wife but to Abraham's country and family. It was also important that once he found the right young lady, he was to bring her back to where Isaac was. He was not to take Isaac back there. The servant, most likely Eliezer, swore that he would do as Abraham had assigned.

¹⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Today we think this was a strange way to find a mate, an arranged marriage. Can you imagine what people in that day would think about our “modern” method? We rely on feelings, looks, or likes and dislikes. Our method is almost on a whim, which includes “love at first sight.” However, Abraham’s method was thought through and based on God’s plan. Isaac was not to marry one outside the faith nor was he to live in an ungodly place. God cares about who His people marry. It is a big deal and should be based more on purpose, goals, future plans, and visions, rather than on looks and romance. This is a pretty big love story. However, it was not a case of boy sees girl, but a case of dad seeks a bride. Make sure you enjoy this love story because you are a result!

If you are not yet married, but hope to be, pray for God to lead you to the right person. Be specific and include that the person know and love God and share in your purpose to serve Him. If you are a parent or grandparent, pray for your children’s future mates.

Day 2- Read Genesis 24:10-14

Praying and watching is a very exciting thing! Abraham’s servant had been commissioned to go to Abraham’s country and family to find a wife for his son, Isaac. The servant took that commission seriously and headed out on his mission. I believe he headed out hopeful and certain that God would lead him. After all he has seen a man of faith, his master Abraham, experience God’s blessings and miraculous provision. He knew how God had provided a son for his master and his wife, when they were both way past child bearing age. He had probably seen and heard about God’s provision when Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son and yet God provided the sacrifice. The servant had watched a faithful man live his life in response to God’s word and promises. I believe he ventured out with great confidence because of his master’s faith. He was in the wake of Abraham’s faith! Now it was his turn to ask of God and see God’s miraculous provision.

The servant went to Abraham's country and to his people. Then he prayed a very specific prayer asking for God to grant him success. He then got even more specific, asking that God give him a sign. Make sure you read this because we are often hesitant about being specific in our prayers. The servant was specific because he was on a mission for his master. He was asking that God grant him success on behalf of his master, Abraham. He was praying in keeping with his master's will and God's will. For this reason, he was both bold and confident.

Is there something you need to pray specifically about with both boldness and confidence because you are in agreement with God?

People are watching you and how you follow God. What are they learning? Is their confidence and boldness in the faith growing because of yours? Ask God to enable you to trust Him more. There are people who need to ride for a while in the wake of your faith.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 24:15-28

Prayer is a wonderful blessing that God has given us to bring requests before Him. One of the things that will feed a person's prayer life is answered prayer. Talk about answered prayer! Even before the servant finished his prayer, Rebekah came up in answer to his specific request. The servant then watched as the answer to his prayer continued to unfold before him. After she filled her pitcher, the servant ran to her and asked for some water to drink. She gave him a drink and then, in keeping with his prayer, she offered to provide water for his camels also. Then God, as He often does, did more than the servant could have asked or imagined. He discovered that she was a relative of Abraham! God had answered the servant's prayer, and then some!

Immediately, the servant worshipped God and gave praise and thanks to Him for leading him to his master's family. God knows what we need even before we ask (**Matthew 6:8**). When a person is walking with God according to His will, he prays right in line

with God. The whole thing came full circle. The servant was following his master's instructions. His master, Abraham, was following God's plan for his son. The servant found himself in the unfolding plan of God to bless the whole world. That plan was God's plan to bring Jesus, the one through whom the blessing would come. It is great, as best you know how, to live in the middle of God's will.

As we read this biblical account, looking back through the Gospel account of Jesus, we know how important this romance and ultimate marriage was. God knew and provided beforehand the answer to the servant's prayer. After all, God was at work to bring the Savior of the world through the family line of Abraham, through Isaac. The servant was on a Jesus mission and had no idea!

Are you seeking to live your life in the middle of God's plan? I want you to know that when you are in His plan and on mission with Him, there is a whole lot of wow to be experienced!

Day 4- Read Genesis 24:29-67

God is by far the best matchmaker of all! Just consider Adam and Eve and now this with Isaac and Rebekah. This is an incredible love story—written by God Himself. The servant goes to the household of Rebekah and tells her family what happened.

He recounted the whole thing from the beginning. He started with his master, Abraham, sending him on a mission to find a wife for his son Isaac. Next he told how God had led him to the well and his prayer. He told them that even before he finished praying, Rebekah showed up. He told them of God's leading right up to the moment. When Rebekah's family heard the account they had nothing to say except that this is from the Lord, you can take her with you to be Isaac's wife.

How could they possibly have responded any other way? God had orchestrated the whole thing. Each of them—the servant, Rebekah,

and her family—could only agree with God and submit to His leading. Isn't it great when a plan of God comes together and we get to be in on it? What an amazing thing to be in on what God is doing!

In my thirty-six years at Harp's Crossing I have seen God unfold some amazing things, things that all we had to do was show up and trust Him. When it was finished there was nothing to do but give God praise and thank Him for letting us be in on what He was doing.

Anytime we are following God and seeking His will we get to see what only He can do. The servant was merely following his master's instructions. His master was seeking to follow God. They all got the blessing. The day came for the first encounter between Rebekah and Isaac. What an incredible moment. Here we are thousands of years later blessed by this divine romance and eternally blessed by another.

Look around you and see what God is doing. What are you doing to join Him in the unfolding of His plan for others? We just saw an incredible account of people following God and obeying Him. The impact of which has continued for thousands of years! Just think when you follow and obey Him, the impact can last for thousands of years and into eternity! Don't miss out!

Day 5- Read Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:1-9

It is an amazing thing to see the prophecy in **Zechariah 9:9** describe exactly the event of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The rejoicing that was prophesied and took place is because God's Son, Jesus the Savior of the world, was coming to Jerusalem to do what He came to do. Jesus came to die on the cross and then be raised from the dead to accomplish God's perfect will.

Jesus was born as a descendant of Abraham. It is through Jesus that the promise of God, given to Abraham that all of the world

would be blessed, was accomplished. It is a case of connecting the dots, and there are many dots. In today's passage **Zechariah 9:9**, a prophecy was given regarding a king riding a donkey. In the ancient Near East when a king came in peace he rode a donkey. So when Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem, before His crucifixion, He rode a donkey representing His humility. When He comes again, He will be riding on a steed proclaiming victory and sovereignty. Matthew quotes the **Zechariah 9:9** passage and applies it to Jesus.

As we celebrate the promise and its fulfillment there are still other dots yet to be connected. In **Revelation 19:11** Jesus comes riding not on a donkey but on a white horse. This is not the ride of humility but the ride of conquering. If the prophecy of **Zechariah 9:9** was fulfilled literally then we can anticipate the one in **Revelation 19** also becoming a glorious reality! Again we are in a great place to see the promise, fulfillment and anticipate other promises to be fulfilled. We live between two glorious rides!

Thank God again for the perspective we have. Anticipate the next ride Jesus will take!

Notes

Sermon Notes

WEEK 16 JACOB AND ESAU

By Chris Watson

We have all made some quick and rash decisions in our lives and then later realized that the decision we made was definitely not the best choice. There may have been heavy consequences to pay for such a decision. This week we will see a rash decision made and then how it went downhill from there.

Day 1- Read Genesis 25:19-23

Our God is omniscient, which means He is all knowing. There is nothing that God doesn't know! Isn't that incredible? God knows what each of our days will hold. He knows what will happen with any and all situations we are facing, He knows everything. This is obvious as we read our passage today. Rebekah is worried about the "jostling" going on within her. She inquires of the Lord and He makes known to her what it means.

I would imagine that Rebekah is startled by what the Lord tells her. It most likely was not the news that she was expecting. Rebekah had the choice to either take the Lord at His word and trust Him, or not.

Today as we hear from the Lord, or as we face circumstances and God reveals Himself to us, we have that same choice. We can trust His plan, although we may not understand it, or we can not trust it and take things into our own hands. Ask the Lord to help you to trust Him today, no matter what the situation.

Day 2- Read Genesis 25:24-28

Isaac's favorite son was Esau and Rebekah's favorite was Jacob. Before the story goes any further we see that favoritism was going on. Later in the New Testament, we read that favoritism is

forbidden, that we are to love and show grace to all (**James 2**). However, we see in this story that favoritism is alive and well.

We have all shown favoritism at one point or another in our life and probably still do from time to time. We usually do it when our priorities or focus becomes out of whack. When our focus is loving and worshiping Jesus, it is harder to show favoritism. In **Revelation 2:4**, the people were guilty of forsaking their first love, Jesus Christ! They had put other things and people in Christ's place and now things were totally out of control.

Unfortunately, it's often easy to show favoritism; it comes naturally. We are drawn to people who are often like us, but that doesn't mean that we have to show favoritism. As you begin or end your day, ask the Lord to help you not show favoritism, but more importantly, for Him to remain your first love. Ask Him to help you focus on Him, not to become focused on other things and get off course. Today, may we fix our focus on Jesus, so when we are tempted to show favoritism, we can be reminded God loves and cares for all. May we be reminded that we are to do the same.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Romans 9:8-15

Yesterday we read how the older son of Rebekah's would serve the younger. This was totally opposite of what normally took place. Normally the first born was the one who was served. So why did God do this? We see the answer in today's passage, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*" In other words, it didn't matter to God who was born first; the older would serve the younger as God said.

This goes to show us that we are not saved because of how smart we are, who we are, how much money we have, who we know, or who knows us, but rather because of God's mercy. Marty Machowski says, "In the end God wanted everyone to see that his

people are saved by our faith in God alone, not because of when we were born or because of anything we do.”¹⁵

It doesn't matter whether you are the first born or last, oldest or youngest, richest or poorest, it is God's love and mercy that saves us.

If you have received God's free gift of salvation, thank Him. Thank Him that He gave it although you didn't deserve it, doing nothing to gain it, just receiving it. You have been saved from sin, from the enemy, from hell, from yourself, and you have been saved to Heaven, God, and eternal life. If you don't know Christ, recognize you are a sinner, and that you are lost and hopeless without Him. Acknowledge that God sent Jesus to take away your sin and also restore your relationship with Him. Put your faith in what He has done for you.

Day 4- Read Genesis 25:29-34

Remember that God told Rebekah that Jacob, the younger son, would rule over the older son? In Isaac and Rebekah's time, the firstborn son was given something called a birthright. It basically meant that upon the father's passing the oldest son received the wealth and property of his father and was also in charge of leading the family. So how could this be that Esau was the firstborn and yet Jacob was to be the one who would be served?

We see the answer in the passage today. We see God's plan unfolding. God uses the foolishness of Esau and his rash decision, to start the process of Jacob being served by Esau. That obviously wasn't Esau's shining moment. We have even heard sermons on the foolishness of Esau. While that may be true, we see that God used it for His plan.

¹⁵ Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 84

God knew Esau would sell his birthright. He sees all things. God knows our past, present and future, before any of them came to be. Be thankful that God knows everything, He sees everything, and He uses everything. Take some time to thank Him that He uses all, and tell Him that you want to be in His perfect will.

Day 5- Read Psalms 19:7-14

There is a song that we sing by Keith Green that says, “There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God’s own Son, Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One, Thank you oh my Father, For giving us Your Son, And leaving Your Spirit, ‘Til the work on Earth is done”.

Psalms 19:14 ends with, “*O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer.*” Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. Redeemer means that Jesus is our Savior, rescuer, and deliverer. He is our only hope.

God bought us back, or redeemed us, through the precious blood of Jesus. Think of that for a minute. Your only hope of eternal and holy living is Jesus. Your spouse can’t redeem you, your kids can’t redeem you, your best friend can’t redeem you, nor can anything or anyone else for that matter. The only thing that redeems us is the blood of Jesus. That’s why, to most, Jesus’ death on the cross is so horrific and yet so beautiful at the same time. The death and judgment that was on us was put on Jesus. When we put our faith in Him, and in what He has done to take away our sins, we are saved and redeemed.

Take some time today to thank God for being your redeemer through Jesus. Let Him know that He is the only hope that you have. While He gives us many blessings and gifts, the greatest thing He has given us is salvation through Jesus. Recognize that the greatest thing you have ever been given is Jesus Christ!

Sermon Notes

WEEK 17 JACOB'S LIE

By Dennis Watson

Keep in mind that we are moving through the historical account of God establishing Himself a nation of special people through whom He will bless the world. We have already seen that God is faithful! Man, even at his best, still depends on God's faithfulness. Man is sinful and subject to weakness, frailty, and personal struggle. We have already seen that Abraham, although a godly man, was far from perfect. The human weakness of Isaac and Rebekah is really seen in their showing of favoritism with their two boys. We looked at this last week. This week we look at another one of our fathers of faith— Isaac and his big lie.

Day 1- Read Genesis 27:1-4

It has been said that it is not as important how you start as it is how you finish. That is a challenge for us all—to finish well. Isaac made many mistakes but really got on a roll at the end of his life. He put himself ahead of the Lord. Isaac, the man who meditated and prayed in the fields at evening, and who petitioned God on behalf of his wife, wanted only one thing: a savory meal of venison. Instead of seeking to heal the family feud that he and his wife had caused by their selfish favoritism, Isaac continued the feud and destroyed his own family. He disobeyed God's command. He set out to bless Esau instead of Isaac. He lived by his feelings. He was blind and bedridden. You would think he would seek God's help, but instead he depended on his senses—smell, touch and taste.

Isaac had gotten old and was ready to experience the last things of his life. He was frail, blind, and near death. He had one last request. Isaac asked his favorite son Esau to go hunt and kill a wild animal and prepare for him a meal. After the meal it was Isaac's plan to bless Esau, his older son. He planned to do this although he

knew that God had said that it would be the other way around. The older would serve the younger.

Family feuds, even church feuds, continue when following and serving God is abandoned. It is an ugly thing when God's people make choices and decisions based not on God's plan and will, but on their own preferences, opinions, likes, and dislikes. Isaac had lost sight of his place in God's plan. Pray that you will stay on His track and finish well.

Ask God to enable you to become less focused on your own likes and dislikes and to enable you to seek what is best for His Kingdom.

Day 2- Read Genesis 27:5-17

Faith is living without scheming; and faith means obeying God no matter how we feel, what we think, or what might happen. The obedience of faith was the secret of Abraham's life (**Heb. 11:8**), but the absence of obedient faith brought trouble to the home of Isaac and Rebekah.¹⁶ Too often, like Isaac and Rebekah, people think they need to assist God. So they add to their faith some trickery of their own. The need is for innocent obedience. Innocent obedience is obeying God without manipulating or trying to control people or circumstances. God does not need our help. He desires our obedience.

Conniving: there is not a better word for what is going on in this family. Isaac and Rebekah connive to make sure what they want to happen, does happen. Remember that Rebekah's favorite son is Jacob and Isaac's favorite is Esau. Isaac has already plotted to bless Esau. Rebekah is listening in on the conversation when Isaac asks Esau to go hunt and prepare a meal for him, and then he would bless Esau. Rebekah had to respond with her own scheme of

¹⁶ Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch

deception. Both parents disregarded what God had said and set out to do things their own way.

Have you ever tried to help God? How did it work out for you? One of the sweetest places in the world is the place of innocent trust and obedience. Innocent trust and obedience involves knowing what God wants and lining up your life accordingly and leaving the rest to Him.

Ask God to enable you to innocently trust and obey Him. Evangelist Mike Gilchrist taught me, “Stop trying and start trusting!”

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Acts 3:12-15

In today’s passage Peter is preaching. It has been about eight weeks since Jesus had gone into heaven after His resurrection. During Peter’s message he refers to God as “*the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*” In light of our study this week we saw that God chose Jacob rather than Esau through whom to pass the blessing. The first three to receive the blessings of God were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God knows all things. He knows all things possible and probable. We do not know why God chooses the way He does. However, we do know that God is good and He is faithful. Whatever He does is based on His goodness and faithfulness.

The promise came through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There were many others along the way after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but the ultimate focus was Jesus so that the promise would not be limited to a nation or race. He chose for Himself a man and a nation. The ultimate plan was to bring His son Jesus into the world through that family and through that nation. When we read the Bible we see the unfolding of God’s amazing plan. In our thinking it took a long time and is still not finished. God is not slow but patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance and that with God a thousand years is like a day gone by (**2 Peter 3:8-9**).

Thank God for allowing us to be recipients of His blessings of salvation and grace. Rejoice in the time in which we are blessed to live and have this perspective. Thank God for His amazing plan to redeem and make all things new.

Day 4- Read Genesis 27:19-40

Is it possible for that which God saved us from to also be able to undo what God has done? In Jesus, He saved us from sin. It is not possible for our sin to undo what God has accomplished through His great salvation. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (**Romans 8:39**). Our perfect God will accomplish His perfect will perfectly in spite of our failings.

Remember that God told Isaac and Rebekah that Jacob the younger brother would be the heir. What was going to change that? Nothing! Nothing Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, or Jacob, would do would change what God had decided. What they did, however, caused a whole host of family issues that really continue to this day. Have you ever been envious of what God has given someone else and wanted it for yourself? How often are we striving and conniving to get God's blessings or what we believe to be the blessings we deserve? Family and church feuds are often brought about because people are squabbling for position instead of working hard in the position God has given.

Have you ever cheated? Have you ever felt that you needed to fight back? Can you do what is right and leave the rest to God? This is called trusting God. Had Jacob and Rebekah left the details of working out His plan to the one who made the plan, they would have missed a lot of unnecessary drama. So much of the drama and struggles we experience are brought about when we try to help God accomplish His will. God's purposes cannot be thwarted (see **Isaiah 14:27 NIV**). Trust Him unequivocally and depend on Him to make it happen. Innocently obey Him. "*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,*" **Colossians 3:23**.

Determine to do and be your best for God's glory and leave the rest to Him.

Day 5- Read Jeremiah 23:5-6

Once again we see the term '*branch*' used by a prophet. In this context, it is clearly linking someone in the future to the family tree of King David. This is the code name for Jesus: the person in the future in the line of King David. Jesus will be a king in the line of David who will reign "*wisely and do what is just and right.*" The prophet Jeremiah is saying that a king in the family line of David the King, was going to come and He would not only be King, He would also have a very special designation. In Hebrew the name is "Jehovah Tsidkenu." It means the "Lord is our righteousness." He would be righteous which means He would be totally without sin. He would also come and bring righteousness. In **2 Corinthians 5:21**, we read that in Jesus we become God's righteousness. King Jesus would come and take away sin and then make us righteous or sinless, like He is!

How serious is God about righteousness? The plot of the biblical message is that ultimately righteousness would be the rule of the day forever. The plan finds its fulfillment in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the King. The ultimate fulfillment is when King Jesus returns and establishes His reign of justice and righteousness. He will reign and righteousness will prevail because the One who is righteous will prevail.

According to **Colossians 3:3**, we are "*Hidden with Christ in God.*" That truth coupled with **2 Corinthians 5:21**, "*we become the righteousness of God in Him*" tells us that God makes His children righteous through the new birth. The whole of the Bible points to this, Jesus is the King of righteousness and in Him we become His righteousness.

Give thanks for the fact that in Christ you are His righteousness.

WEEK 18 JACOB'S DREAM

By Chris Watson

This week we will see Isaac bless Jacob again, this time willingly. Remember, Jacob was originally going to be served by his older brother, but then Rebekah took things into her own hands and it became a mess. This week the mess continues to unfold but God still uses it. As you read this week's devotions be reminded that our choices affect many other people.

Day 1- Read Genesis 27:41-28:9

We all have trust issues, and it seems that Rebekah had them as well. Remember that Rebekah had been told by the Lord that Jacob would be served by Esau in **Genesis 25:23**. The word she received was literally from the Lord. If Rebekah had trusted the Lord in this, much of what we read about in these last two chapters might be different. But it is not. Instead, today we read about how Jacob is fleeing for his life because of the trick he played on his father and brother with the help of his mother.

However, even in this mess, God's plan is still being carried out. We see Isaac, in a sense, willingly reissuing the blessing which includes the blessing of Abraham in verses 3 and 4. So the blessing of Abraham is now to be carried through Jacob, and as we will see later, through his twelve sons that we read about all throughout the Bible.

A song you may or may not be familiar with says, "In His time, in His time, He makes all things beautiful, in His time, Lord, please show me everyday, as You're teaching me Your way, that You do just what You say, in Your time". The promise had been made previously to Abraham that his descendants would be as the stars in the sky, and today we read this continuing to be carried out. We see that God will keep His promises and while we may think it takes Him too long, it is always in His time. He will even use that which the enemy meant for harm. Thank God that everything is in

His time and that He is never late, always on time. Also, thank Him that what the enemy means for evil, He can use for good!

Day 2- Read Genesis 28:10-17

In the Old Testament, we read how God often spoke through dreams and visions. He can still do this today if He chooses, but we know it took place in the Old Testament as we have several instances recorded. In his dream, Jacob hears God speak to him and tell him that his descendants would be many. God said He would give him the land that he was on and God also promised to see this promise through! We also read that when Jacob woke up, he was afraid. We can imagine why: the God of the universe had just spoken to him and promised him what He had offered Abraham.

We remember that Jacob had deceived his father with the help of his mother and now was running for his life. In the dream, God didn't come to him and tell him what he had done was wrong, although it was. He didn't tell him how he would be punished, but rather He told him how he would be blessed and how he would bless others. This is more proof that God's overall plan will not be thwarted. God's promise to Rebekah that Jacob (the youngest son) would be served by the older is beginning to unfold. Although Jacob's family, with his help, is definitely causing problems, God's plan is still being carried out. His promises are remaining true.

Take some time to thank God that His plan is the best. Tell Him that although we often mess things up, His plan remains perfect. Thank Him for keeping His promises. Take some time to thank God for His grace and be thankful His plan always prevails!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read John 1:43-51

It is exciting to see the Old and New Testament connections. We see one in today's reading as John refers to Moses and Jacob in

John 1. The Old Testament is always pointing to Jesus. Sometimes we see it clearly and other times it may be a little tougher to see.

Verse 51 of John 1, talks about the angels of God ascending and descending. We also know of this in the OT from Jacob's dream. Jesus Himself is the stairway, Jacob's dream was pointing to Jesus. Jesus is the only way to God and the only way to heaven.

John 14:6, says that *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

It is incredible that **Genesis 27 and 28** are connected with **John 1** and **John 14**. This again goes to show us how the dots are connected in the Old Testament to the New Testament and how the old is made new through Jesus.

As you continue to read through the Old Testament, be on the lookout for the connections to the New Testament, they are everywhere. Take time to thank God for His Word and the Truth that is in it. Thank Him for using His Word to speak to us and to show us the way, whether it be the Old Testament or New.

Day 4- Read Genesis 28:18-22

Lord willing, we can all see how God has worked and is working in our lives! There are times in our lives where we have, what some might call, a "God moment." Jacob had one of these in **Genesis 28**. God promises to bless him and to watch over Him. This is important as we remember that Jacob was basically fleeing for his life.

God made these promises to Jacob and now Jacob wants to show his thanks to God. Setting up pillars was often how the people of Canaan worshiped false gods. This is what Jacob knew to do, so he sets up a pillar to God. Except he wasn't using it to worship and thank other gods, but to worship and thank the One True God.

In essence, Jacob is thanking the Lord in this way because of His promise to bless and watch over him. Jacob is setting up a remembrance of how God spoke to him and how He would continue to use him. This was a turning point in Jacob's life! Have you ever experienced a "God moment" in your life: a time where God spoke to you, either through His Word, prayer, or someone else, and you knew it was God? Maybe today you remember that moment or that time when God spoke and worked in your life. Thank God for working in your life but also thank Him for always working on us, making us into what He wants us to be. Our only response should be that of Jacob's, thankfulness and gratitude!

Day 5- Read Isaiah 11:1

Hopefully we are beginning to see just how much the Old Testament is important to the overall story of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament always points to Jesus, and this is true in the passage we read today! We read of another of the Lord's prophets, Isaiah telling of what is to come. He was telling us of Jesus and it would be hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus.

This verse talks about how the Branch, Jesus, will bear fruit or good deeds. If you read the rest of **Isaiah 11**, you see some of that fruit! **John 15: 5** says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* We know from the Gospels that Jesus did many great things while on the earth. From healing to raising the dead, but most importantly, He died for our sins. He was simply doing the Father's will. **John 15:5** speaks of how if we are in Him, (we trust in Him for our salvation), we put all our hope in Him and follow Him, that we will bear much fruit. This means as we follow Christ, we will look more and more like Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit that Galatians speaks of is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are some of the "fruit" that believers will bear.

Today, take some time asking the Lord to help you abide in Him; to be one with Him. We don't produce fruit, He does. The fruit comes from being a part of the tree; Jesus Christ. Today may we love Him, know Him, read His Word, and trust Him, for apart from Him we can do nothing.

Notes

WEEK 19 JACOB AND RACHEL

By Dennis Watson

When you are in love time does not matter. Well, how would you feel about seven years? That is how long Jacob worked to be permitted to marry the girl of his dreams. However, at the end of those seven years, he was deceived and did not receive the girl of his dreams, but her sister. He would work another seven years to get the girl of his dreams as his wife.

Day 1- Read Genesis 29:1-14

Jacob had to run for his life from his brother Esau. Isaac sent Jacob away with the blessing willingly after having been deceived. Esau was outraged and made a vow to kill his brother. The trip from Beersheba to Haran was about 500 miles—traveling 25 miles a day, the trip would take three weeks. On the journey, God repeats to Jacob the promise made to Abraham and Isaac. It is clear that God is leading the way. Once again, be reminded that no plotting of man can prevent God's plan.

After weeks of travel Jacob finally arrives at the hometown of his mother. He arrives in Haran at a well. God has led, but the leading continues. God has led him to the region of Rebekah's family. If that was not enough, Rebekah's niece Rachel shows up at the well to water her flock of sheep. Jacob gets so fired up he moves a massive stone from the well's opening so all the shepherds can water their flocks. He greets Rachel and tells her who he is and how he has come to be there. Rachel gets so excited about what was happening that she leaves her flocks, runs all the way home, and tells her family what had taken place. Her father Laban goes to the well and invites Jacob to their home.

Here we see another romance in the making. God is at the center of it all. He has led and orchestrated His plan to accomplish His purposes. His plan was to bless the whole world through Abraham and his family—Isaac and now Jacob. Still connecting the dots!

God is in the details. Thank Him for how He accomplishes His purposes so faithfully and for allowing us to be encouraged by it! Realize that you too, are part of that plan as it continues.

Day 2- Read Genesis 29:15-20

When Jacob left his father Isaac's home in Beersheba, he left in a hurry. Therefore, he left empty-handed—he had no money. When he came to Laban's home and met Rachel he wanted to marry her. Having no money, he could not pay the normal bridal money to marry Rachel. Instead he made a deal with her father Laban. The deal was that he would work for Laban for seven years and that would serve as payment to have Rachel to become his wife. So he, with great anticipation of the blessing of marrying Rachel, faithfully worked for Laban those seven years. The time was nothing to him because of his love for her.

Jacob got lost in his labor because he was working for something; something more than a paycheck. He was working for his life, his life companion and their future. He was not concerned with just finishing his time or getting in his hours. It was all about his life, his vision and his future.

Too often people view their job as only a means toward a paycheck. The goal of each day becomes to make it until quitting time. Simply punch the clock at the beginning and punch it again at the end of the work day. Jacob learned a valuable lesson and we can learn from what he learned. A job is more than the means to a quick paycheck. A job is a way to make a life. We should be more concerned with making a life, than in making a living. Jacob saw those seven years as making a life.

Thank God for your work and ask Him to enable you to see your work as a means to making a life, not just a living.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 29:21-35

Little did Jacob know what was coming his way! He was blindsided by one of his own tricks. A Biblical principle was about to come to bear on Jacob—you reap what you sow. Jacob cheated his brother out of his birthright and then stole his blessing when he deceived his father, Isaac. Jacob’s name even means ‘deceiver.’ Jacob had cheated and deceived, now it was coming back on him.

Laban had made a deal with Jacob that he would give his daughter to Jacob as his wife, if Jacob would work for him for seven years. After the seven years, the day of the wedding came. However, Laban deceived Jacob and gave him his older daughter Leah, as his wife instead of Rachel. Jacob was shocked and angered and asked Laban, “Why have you deceived me?” Laban tells him that the normal practice is for the oldest daughter to marry first. Jacob agrees to work for another seven years so he could have Rachel as his second wife. So he married Leah then Rachel.

With the passing of time came children. God has ways of accomplishing His purposes even though people scheme, connive, cheat and deceive. Leah had sons and one of those sons was Judah. Jesus was born as a descendant of Judah. In fact He is called the *“Lion of the tribe of Judah”* (**Revelation 5:5**).

Do you see the thread of God’s plan and purpose? It flows through the Bible. It all points to Jesus. Everything God does has its meaning and destiny in Jesus. Thank God for His faithfulness in accomplishing His purpose in spite of man’s foolishness. Keep your eyes open as we read the Bible to see the “Scarlet Thread” of redemption that flows through the Bible.

Day 4- Read Luke 3:23-28

Genealogies can be very boring, except when you are paying attention and connecting the dots. How many times have you read quickly through a genealogy or just skipped it all together? As we

go through the Old Testament, you may get to the point where the genealogies come alive. Luke spells out the family tree of Jesus, and you can see some of the people we have been looking at in Genesis. Adam, Seth, Noah and Shem, we have seen in our study. The ‘stand-outs’ for where we are now are there—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and now, Judah. When you read these genealogies in the Bible you get context and see that God has been, all along the way, working out His plan with precision. The names are not there just for a list, but to help us see the unfolding of God’s plan. The Bible is not random but deliberate.

A few years ago I was given a subscription to Ancestry.com. I really enjoyed researching my family tree and coming to realize that many, if not all of my ancestors, my parents, grandparents and great grandparents, were followers of Jesus Christ. Perhaps that is not the case for you, but if you are a follower of Jesus then you have had influences from other family trees that have shed the light of the gospel on you. No man or woman is an island. We do not live for, and to, ourselves alone. We have been influenced and we influence. We have spiritual family trees as well as our bloodline family trees. You, too, are a significant branch in someone’s spiritual family tree. God never sees an individual as the end. He sees each of us as dear to Him, but also as a link to others who are dear to Him. It is so very important that we realize we have a very significant role to play in the lives of others for generations to come and for eternity.

Ask the Lord to enable you to see those around you as part of your spiritual family tree both coming and going.

Day 5- Read Micah 5:2

It is an amazing thing to read in the Old Testament, the prophet Micah’s prophecy regarding the coming of the Messiah. The prophecy was pretty specific. Seven hundred years before the fulfillment, Micah says that out of the family line of Judah, in the little town of Bethlehem Ephrathah, one to be Ruler in Israel would

come. He would be from of old and from everlasting. There is only one person who could possibly have fulfilled this prophecy—Jesus. The prophecy was specific. There were two Bethlehems so the prophet was careful to designate which one—Bethlehem Ephrathah. After seven hundred years, with so many intervening events, there was little likelihood that one in the line of David could be born in Bethlehem. It was almost entirely out of the question. The odds were against it. There were no members of the family of David living in Bethlehem any longer.¹⁷

We have looked at the prophecies and the account of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem for so long that the remarkable nature of it has grown dull. However, we are talking about 700 years and a specific place and a specific family line! That is amazing! For us, we can look back and observe the connections: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, eventually David and, finally Jesus the Messiah of God. The people to whom Micah and the other prophets wrote, anticipated the coming Messiah. We have the blessing and privilege of seeing the connections right up to today. We also, like the people of the Old Testament, get to live in anticipation of the coming again of the Messiah.

Enjoy the look backward and live with anticipation of what is yet to come. It is all there in your Bible!

¹⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Notes

WEEK 20 JACOB FLEES FROM LABAN

By Chris Watson

This week we will read that Jacob did just about everything Laban had asked of him. He had done his part. However, Laban still wanted Jacob to stay. Jacob agreed to stay for particular wages that we will read about today. We will see God's plan continue to be played out this week!

Day 1- Read Genesis 30:25-31:9

Jacob had worked for Laban for 14 years in exchange for marrying his daughters, Rachel and Leah. Now he wanted to go home. However, Laban wanted him to stay, so he did, in exchange for all the animals that had spots or streaks.

But as we see in verse 35, Laban didn't play by the rules. It was if Jacob had no shot at getting any of the animals he wanted, because Laban had tricked him. But God gave Jacob wisdom, and in the end Jacob ended up with much more than he could have expected. Laban didn't do things God's way, he didn't keep his word and hold up his end of the deal. But God blessed Jacob as we see in **Genesis 31:9**, because God was the one who provided Jacob with the livestock.

Here we see a continuation of the promise given to Rebekah in chapter 35. A promise that Jacob would rule over his brother. God's plan all along was to bless and use Jacob for His glory, and here in this passage, we see the continuation of that plan. No matter what we face or what we go through in our lives, if we are God's children we can be assured that God will take care of us. It may not be how we envision it, or how we dream it, but we can place our hope in God and know that He is always in control of all things, all of the time! Take some time to thank God that He is always in control.

Day 2- Read Genesis 31:10-21

Remember **Genesis 28:13-15** says, “*And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”*”

In today’s passage we see the beginning of the promise that God made to Jacob in **Genesis 28:15** beginning to take shape. Jacob was headed home to the place that God had promised him. God protected Jacob and had him leave while Laban was away.

Here we see God keeping His promises. He promised to be with Jacob and watch over him and He did. He promised to bring him back to the land of his fathers which He did. God always keeps His promises, praise the Lord! As humans, we often break our promises and it often gets us in trouble. However, God is a promise keeper and we can always depend on His Word and the promises that we read there. Take some time to thank God for the promises that He has made. Thank Him that He is faithful one hundred percent of the time.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Matthew 2:13-16

Watch the news or turn on the radio and it doesn’t take long to realize our world is evil, really evil. If you are like me, you might wonder can it get any worse? While it is true that evil is all around us, it was also prevalent in the time of Christ.

Yesterday we read how God appeared to Jacob in a dream and told him to flee from Laban. Today we read a story where Joseph is

spoken to in a dream and told to escape to Egypt. During this time Herod reigned and he was very evil. His desire was to kill Jesus. When Herod couldn't get his way and was outwitted, he gave the command for all boys in Bethlehem two years old and under to be killed. This is evil at its finest, a dictator giving orders to kill all male babies.

However, even through all this evil, God's plan was not to be thwarted. Even in the evil we see in the world today, God's plan will carry on. It has and it will. We know that Jesus would be sent during this time and years later Jesus would die to save us. Even as Christians it's sometimes hard to see or know what God may be doing at times. Thankfully it's not necessarily our job to know what He is up to, but rather trust Him in it. Ask God to help you trust Him in whatever you may be facing. While the situation might look bleak, thank Him that He is in control and He still knows and controls the big picture.

Day 4- Read Genesis 31:22-55

Laban was now hot on Jacob's heels! He was angry that Jacob had left, especially without saying anything. In addition, Laban felt that everything that Jacob had really belonged to him. God, through another dream, spoke to Laban and warned him to be careful in what he said.

We can imagine and also see in reading today's passage that Jacob was probably nervous and anxious when Laban caught up with him. However, God's promise must have still been somewhere in Jacob's mind that God would allow him to return home safely. Even in the trials and difficulties that he was facing in being hunted down, he could trust in God's promise.

The good news is we know how it ends! **Revelation 22** tells us that Christ is coming soon and He will come to take His followers with Him. Although between now and then we may face difficulties, trials, temptations, and hard times, we know how it ends. God will

protect us and keep us till the end. Jacob knew no matter what happened God would see him home. We can rest assured, that as believers, no matter what happens Christ will see us home. Take some time to thank God that regardless of the circumstances we can depend on His promise that He is coming to take us home!

Day 5- Read Psalm 3

In **Psalms 3** we see David fleeing from his son, Absalom! What a sad and terrifying time this must have been for David. Through chapter 3 though, we see how David puts his hope and trust in the Lord even when his very life was in danger! Most likely, most of us do not fear for our own physical life, we don't have anyone on our heels trying to kill us. However we should still be able to relate with the words of David. For instance David says, "*You are a shield around me, O Lord*" and "*from the Lord comes deliverance.*" Like me, I am sure you can relate to these statements. Our God is not only our shield, but He is our deliverer. If we are caught in a lifestyle of sin and destructive habits, the Lord can deliver us from this. If we are facing a situation that may be difficult to grasp or understand, we can put our trust in the Lord and He will guide and direct us (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).

Our physical life doesn't have to be in danger for us to cry out to the Lord! We need to cry out to the Lord daily, many times a day, asking Him to help us follow Him and His ways. Truth is, God has never let us down. Oh sure, our ways are not His and His ways are not ours. While at times we may want things to be different, we can still trust Him knowing He is in control. I am sure David didn't want to be hunted down by his own son. His life was in danger, but he put his hope and trust in the Lord. Ask God to help you put everything you are into everything He is!

Sermon Notes

WEEK 21 JACOB'S WRESTLING MATCH

By Dennis Watson

The favor or the grace of God is inexhaustible. There is no end to His kindness and His grace. However, we can rebel and be disobedient and obstinate, finding ourselves detached from His grace. It is always available but He does not force it on us. Jacob has left his father-in-law and is heading to the home of his father, Isaac. It has been fifteen years since he ran away from home because of his brother Esau's threat to kill him. He is about to meet up with Esau and God gives him some reassurance.

Day 1- Read Genesis 32:1-2

It has been 15 years since Jacob left home; most of that time he spent at the home of his father-in-law, Laban. He now has two wives—Rachel and Leah, eleven sons and one daughter. It was time for him to leave his father-in-law and go to the home of his father, Isaac. He did not leave on the best of terms with his father-in-law but that had been resolved.

God had made a promise to Jacob that He would be with him and would protect him (**Genesis 31:3**). When Jacob ran away from home, due to the threat of Esau, he had a dream as he travelled to the home of Laban. He had a dream about angels. In that dream, God encouraged Jacob (**Genesis 28**). His response to seeing the angels was to call the place “Bethel” which means house of God. Then God gave him encouragement with the angels. In today's passage once again Jacob is fleeing, this time from Laban. He is about to have an encounter with Esau, his brother, who according to his last words wants to kill him. So he is desperately in need of some encouragement. He again encounters the “*angels of God.*” And, once again Jacob gives the place a name—‘Mahanaim’ which means “God's camp.”

Jacob was in a time of great distress. He had run away from his father-in-law. He was going home, however, he was about to meet

up with his brother Esau. God is so gracious to give us little reminders of His presence with us. He has promised to always be with us. Pay close attention. He is with you and there are reminders. Don't miss them and don't discount them.

Give thanks for God's presence and His subtle reminders.

Day 2- Read Genesis 32:3-21

What would you do, or what have you done, when you had to meet up with someone who had been talking about you behind your back? Were you out for revenge? Were you fearful of the meeting? Jacob was about to meet his estranged brother for the first time in fifteen years. Their separation at that time included a threat by Esau to kill Jacob. As you can imagine, Jacob was really concerned about the encounter. So he made a plan, he prayed, and then he divided his family into two groups. The plan was to send several groups of animals as gifts for Esau. His was trying to soften Esau before they met. He prayed and reminded God that He had promised to be with him and make him into a great nation. He asked God for deliverance from his brother.

In his prayer he said several things. First, he reminded God that he was obeying Him in returning to his country and relatives. He was saying, "God, this trip is your idea." Good place to begin—with a reminder that he was obeying God's instructions. Second, he acknowledged God's blessings on him in spite of his obvious unworthiness. When Jacob left home he had only his staff and now he was returning with wives, children and great possessions. Third, he prayed for God to save him from his brother. Although the struggle with his brother was his own fault, he asked God to deliver him from the consequences. That is what salvation is all about. We ask God to save us from the mess we have created. Then Jacob reminds God of the promise to make him into a great nation with many descendants.

Give thanks to God for His undeserved blessings; which are all of His blessings. We are blessed in spite of ourselves. If you have never done so, ask Him to save you as Jacob did.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 32:22-32

Jacob had sent his family on ahead and was alone for the night. It was when he was alone that an angel of God came and began to wrestle with him. I have to wonder, was the wrestling match really necessary or was Jacob just that stubborn? I know that for me, I often need to be hit hard to hear what God is saying to me. Many of the God-life lessons are learned through the hardest of times. It is then, that like Jacob, we are more prepared to hear from God.

They wrestled all night and Jacob continued to struggle. The angel touched Jacob's hip and caused it to go out of joint, and then the angel asked Jacob to let him go. Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The angel asked Jacob's name although I am sure he already knew it. He just wanted Jacob to say it so he could be reminded that his name means 'deceiver.' Then the angel gave him a new name—Israel. The new name means "Prince of God." What a change from one who deceives to one who is a Prince of God. Jacob, now Israel, had a new identity!

Now how does this connect to Jesus? This is what could be called a theophany or an appearance of Jesus. After wrestling with the angel Jacob, now Israel, called that place Peniel, which means "face of God." He called it that because as Jacob said in **Genesis 32:30**, "*I have seen God face to face.*" This was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. In the Old Testament, Jesus was prophesied to be Immanuel which means "God with us." John says of Jesus that "*God became flesh and dwelt among us.*" Jacob had an experience with Jesus and in doing so he was changed forever.

Jesus has come to abide with us forever. We are never apart from God. He wants to bless you. How badly do you want His blessing? When was the last time you sought Him as Jacob did?

Day 4- Read Genesis 33:1-11

Imagine the anticipation Jacob must have felt. He gets up from an amazing encounter with the Angel of the Lord and what does he see? Esau and four hundred men coming in his direction! That often happens to me. Not four hundred men, but a gripping fear. Right after a high spiritual time there comes what I think is an attack, only to discover that it is not an attack but a blessing! Jacob got his family together in groups and headed them in Esau's direction. Jacob himself ran on ahead and bowed down before Esau. To Jacob's surprise Esau ran to him and threw his arms around him and kissed him. It was obvious that what Jacob had feared did not come to pass. Instead, he discovered that his brother had forgiven him and the rift that had severed their relationship had been healed. Esau was curious about all of the droves of animals and all the gifts. He asked what they were all about and Jacob tells him they are a gift. Esau graciously declined, but Jacob insisted.

Esau had already forgiven Jacob but now Jacob receives it. God is faithful to keep His promises. He had made a promise to Jacob (now Israel) that He would be with him and protect him and prosper his offspring. God showed Himself faithful on Israel's behalf.

Have you ever experienced a time when you came face to face with someone you thought was your enemy, only to discover that they had forgiven you; all they had remaining for you was grace and kindness. Forgiveness is a powerful thing! In fact, it is a major theme of the Bible. It reaches all the way back to **Genesis 3**. In **Genesis 3**, God covers Adam and Eve's nakedness. Also in **Genesis 3**, God gives a hint of the conflict that will exist between

the seed of the woman and the serpent. God had, from the earliest of time (and beyond time), plans to forgive or cover man's sin.

Proverbs 10:12 says, "*Hatred stirs up strife but love covers all sins.*" Jesus atoned for our sin. He covered it with His blood. If Jesus is your Savior, He has forgiven your sins. Since that is the case, isn't there someone you need to forgive?

Day 5- Read Zechariah 10:3-6

The people of Israel had been carried off into exile and were now returning. This is the time when Zechariah started his prophetic ministry encouraging the people to spiritual renewal. He was also motivating them to rebuild the temple. He did this by telling them about the coming Messiah and God's plan for their future.

George L. Robinson has called the Book of Zechariah "the most messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological of all the writings of the Old Testament."¹⁸ That is to say, that Zechariah had much to say about the coming of the Messiah.

In today's passage of prophecy from Zechariah, we have another dot connecting opportunity. Zechariah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says that there would be one who would come from God through the tribe of Judah who would be "*the cornerstone.*" In the New Testament Jesus is called the cornerstone and the "*stone...the head of the corner.*" It is obvious that the writer of Zechariah was writing about Jesus, although he did not know it. But New Testament writers knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy.

A corner stone was both a foundation stone and a stone for alignment. In **Ephesians 2:20-21**, Jesus is the stone upon which the living stones are built, that is the church. But a corner stone

¹⁸International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956, 5:3136

also lined up two joining walls. Jesus brought the two covenants together in completion.

God was not concerned ultimately with building a physical temple, but a living temple, built with living stones and built upon a living foundation—Jesus. So here we continue to see Jesus in the Old Testament and brought to light in the New. He did come from the tribe of Judah. He is the cornerstone. He is the foundation of the spiritual house God is building (See **1 Peter 2:5**).

Jesus is the focus of the Bible.

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” **1 Peter 2:4-5**

Make sure you do not miss Him!

WEEK 22 JOSEPH'S DREAM

By Chris Watson

Where is your trust? This week and next we will see that Joseph trusted God in some adverse circumstances, even when it wasn't easy. Over the course of several years God used Joseph because He was willing to follow God's plan and His ways, and trust Him instead of his own plan and ways.

Day 1- Read Genesis 35:1-7

You might remember in our earlier readings (**Genesis 28:18**), that Jacob built a pillar to God and called the place Bethel, meaning house of God. In our passage today, Jacob is now instructed to build an altar to God at Bethel. Earlier Jacob promised God he would make Him his Lord and God if he would protect him and bring him safely home.

Jacob is now beginning to follow through with what he promised. He tells his people to get rid of the foreign and fake gods and build an altar at Bethel. Jacob realized that God was true to His Word, and there was no other God than the One True God.

If we are honest, we are often like Jacob's people, and we trust and put our hope in other "gods." It's most likely not a statue or something we "formally" worship, but maybe something like our house, money, car, job, or relationships. It's our security. For Jacob and his people, their security was their foreign gods. But this day they would put those away and not worship them, they would worship the One True God. Of course, houses, money, jobs, etc., in and of themselves, are not evil, but when we worship them or put them in place of God, they become like a god. What or who in your life have you placed as your security or god? Lay that before God today and tell Him you want to trust Him with everything in your life.

Day 2- Read Genesis 37:1-4

Parents often raise their children the way their parents or guardians raised them. This is not always the case, but it is generally true. Sometimes though, we might say something like, “I would never do this or that with my child. My parents did that and I will never do it.” Either way we often follow what was modeled for us.

In today’s passage we see that Jacob loves Joseph more than his other sons. But wait, haven’t we already seen something like this? We have -- remember Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob? Now we would think that Jacob would have learned from this, but he didn’t. In fact, Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers, and it caused huge problems that we will look at in the days to come. However, God still used this situation.

One of the biggest problems it caused was envy from the other brothers. Verse 4 of today’s passage tells us Joseph’s brothers couldn’t even speak a kind word to him they were so envious. **Galatians 5:21** makes known to us that envy is a sin. If not dealt with properly it can hurt a lot of our relationships with others. It is good to go before the Lord with any envy that may be in our hearts and ask Him to work on our hearts. As we will see later in our devotions, envy taken too far can cause a lot of damage. Place any envy you might have before the Lord today. Ask Him to take it and for Him to work on your heart!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 35:9-12

In today’s passage we see Jacob’s name being changed to Israel. If you watch the news these days, you see a lot of things going on in and around Israel. Not only would Jacob’s name be changed to Israel but this would be the name of God’s Chosen people.

Israel actually means “*he struggles with God.*” Israel many years later would still struggle with God as they would worship Him one moment and then worship idols the next. Even in this, God was

still holding to His promise. The promise that was given to Abraham and Isaac is now given to Jacob (Israel) in that He would give him the land that was promised to those before him. God had kept His promise that started with Abraham and was now passed down to Israel.

All this is a continuation of the promise of the One who would take away the sins of the world, the ultimate King of Israel. God changing Jacob's name to Israel was part of His plan. It is so encouraging to read the Old Testament and see God's plan unfolding from the beginning! As you continue to read through the Old Testament, ask God to help you see the connections and link them to Jesus! There are so many connections, and we have seen some already. Thank God that even long before Jesus was born to Mary, His plan was being orchestrated, even before time began.

Day 4- Read Genesis 37:5-10

Joseph's brothers were not exactly his best friends since he was their father's favorite. So we know from the account, and also from what our own reaction might be, that telling the brothers about the dreams he had only made them hate him more, as we see in verse 8. Joseph could have kept the dreams to himself if he had wanted to, but as a part of God's plan, he relayed them to his brothers and his father.

If you are familiar with the account of Joseph you might see how these dreams may have been encouraging to Joseph, especially in light of the things he was about to face. God was possibly showing him that even in difficult times, He was still in control and would take care of Joseph even though he didn't know what was to come.

Has God ever given you a word that seemed maybe strange or not right for where you were in your life? You wondered maybe if it was for someone else or maybe you just heard wrong. However, as time went on you realized that God gave that word for you and was preparing you for what was to come, you just couldn't see what

was coming. I think we see God doing the same thing here. He was preparing Joseph for what was to come and the dreams that he had, that were from God, were a sign of what was to come.

Take some time to thank God when He speaks to you. While you may not understand it all now, He may be getting you ready for things to come and you need to remember the word for later. Thank God that He speaks to us through His Word, prayer, and others, and seek to hear His voice today.

Day 5- Read Genesis 49:1-2 and 8-10

God revealed His plans to Jacob and passed them onto His sons. Marty Machowski says, “Jacob tells Judah that the scepter will not depart or leave Judah. That means that Judah will always have a king. The scripture also says that all the different peoples of the world will be obedient to him, he will be the ruler of all nations. Jesus is the king Jacob spoke about who sits on heaven’s throne ruling the nations. Jesus will rule on his throne forever.”¹⁹

God is using Jacob not only to bless his sons but to tell of things to come. This passage, as we see, points to Jesus. **Revelation 5:5** refers to the “*Lion of the Tribe of Judah*.” This is pointing to Jesus. It’s so exciting to see the very first book of the Bible and the last book connected with literally hundreds of years in between them.

God was King before Genesis, during the time of Genesis, during the time of Revelation, and today. He will always be King, He will always be in charge, always. He rules over all nations and our job is to go and take His name to the nations. **Matthew 28:19** tells us to go to all nations and make disciples and the reason for this is so they will know Jesus. They will know the One King, the One Ruler, the Giver of Life, and life itself. Today may we take His name to our family, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, and to the nations!

¹⁹ Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 116

Sermon Notes

WEEK 23 JOSEPH IS ATTACKED BY HIS BROTHERS

By Dennis Watson

Perhaps as an adolescent, Joseph had a problem with his pride over dreams he had. However, God used not only his dreams but even his arrogance. We will see this week one of the many ways God uses human frailties to accomplish His purposes. Nothing limits the power, the will, and the work of God.

Day 1- Read Genesis 37:12-20

Joseph had shared his dreams with his brothers as we read last week. They were definitely outraged because of the dreams and the favoritism that their father showed. One day Israel (Jacob) sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were out taking care of the family flocks. When the brothers saw him approaching, the anger they felt toward him really came to the surface. As he approached, their attitudes turned to a murderous plot and another plot to cover it up. It was not just an attack on their brother, but their father also.

You see here the danger of secret sins. To hold on to a sinful thought is like holding on to a firecracker that has already been lit for too long! I did that when I was a kid and just about blew off my fingers and lost my hearing. In **James 1:15-16**, you find what I call the anatomy of sin. Sins begin as a thought, temptation, a mental toy and then if not dealt with it becomes a sinful act. Joseph's brothers may have complained before about their brother, but now it was about to move beyond feeling and talk, and added to that, there was mob mentality. All of his brothers together were displeased with their brother. Although one of the brothers alone probably would not have hurt him, together the mob mentality caused them to feed on each other.

Have you ever been part of this type of situation? Have you ever, along with others, ganged up on a person because you were all in agreement? Have you ever had to cover one wrong with another?

The brothers were just getting started on a plot that would thicken for many years!

The good thing is, God really does cause things to work together for good! Give thanks to God for His goodness toward us no matter what we do.

Day 2- Read Genesis 37:21-30

When mob mentality takes a turn for the really bad and wrong, someone has to provide a corrective word! It is what believers are to be—salt and light. Reuben tried to talk sense into his brothers. When Joseph arrived, they took the advice of Reuben and instead of killing Joseph, they threw him into a pit. Reuben had a plan to later come back and rescue his younger brother. For some unknown reason Reuben disappeared from the scene for a brief time. Perhaps he had gone to make his plans to deliver Joseph. While he was gone a band of traveling traders, who were called Ishmaelites or Midianites, came along. These people were descendants of Abraham by his wife’s handmaid, Hagar. At the urging of another brother, Judah, the brothers decided to sell Joseph to them. Both Reuben and Judah were both trying to do “the lesser evil.” Reuben returned and he was very upset when he saw that his brother, Joseph, was gone out of the pit. He had been sold to traveling traders who would eventually take him to Egypt and sell him there.

What an exhausting account! Can you imagine how Joseph must have felt? What about the brothers? How do you think they felt as they journeyed home to tell their father?

Isn't it wonderful to know that God uses all things and no plotting of people can frustrate God’s plan. Even our worst or softened evil plans will not stop God from accomplishing His plan! Give thanks to God for His power, faithfulness and determination to accomplish His perfect will!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Matthew 27:1-10

You see some similarities between the account of Joseph's rejection by his brothers and the rejection of Jesus by His own people. Joseph was sold by his brothers, the sons of Israel, for twenty silver pieces. Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples, also a son of Israel, for thirty pieces of silver. Both accounts appear at first to be tragic and so very sad. However, we know that God used the rejection of His Son Jesus, to cause Him to be crucified on the cross. This event accomplished salvation for all who will receive His death as payment for their sin debt. We will see in the weeks to come how the rejection and selling of Joseph resulted in the deliverance of the people of Israel from famine and slavery. God is in the saving and delivering business! We see this throughout the Bible and the account of Joseph is what is called a "type of Jesus." A type is a person or event that resembles another and allows us to see God at work in both with one being greater than the other. Joseph went to Egypt in what appeared to be a tragic situation which turned out for good. Jesus went to the cross in what appeared to be a tragic situation. However, God accomplished salvation through His rejection and death.

Judas and Joseph's brothers received payment for their betrayal. Did the money do them any good? Of course not! As far as the money given to Judas, he tried to return it but it could not be accepted because it was blood money. It was used to buy a field for his eventual burial after he committed suicide. As for the money given to the brothers, there is no further mention of it. No amount of money can make anyone happy; is it deceptive.

Thank God for His incredible plan!

Day 4- Read Genesis 37:31-36

All of the brothers compounded their crime with a lie. This was a cover-up! They killed a goat and put the blood on the special coat Israel (Jacob) had given to Joseph. Their plan was to show it to

their father and tell him that a wild animal had killed his son. This is the way sin works. When you commit a sin, if repentance and obedience do not follow, more sin follows compounding the sin.

But there is a big uh-oh here! Did you notice it? The brothers killed a kid of the goats to put blood on the coat to deceive their father. Years earlier Jacob (Israel) and his mother Rebekah killed a kid of the goats to deceive his father Isaac. They used the meat to prepare a meal and the fur to put on Jacob so that his father Isaac would think it was Esau. In doing so he deceived his father to get Esau's blessing. Now Jacob (Israel) was about to be deceived in a similar way. The brothers brought the blood-stained coat and showed it to their father and asked, "Do you recognize it?" He immediately recognized it as the coat he had given to Joseph. That is the way sin is; it compounds. One sin is covered with another and then there are layers of sin piled on. But not only does it compound, our sin comes back around. The Bible teaches that we reap what we sow. Jacob had deceived and cheated his brother Esau. Now Jacob's sons deceive their father and cheated his son, their brother Joseph.

Be very wise. Sin is destructive. Do not leave sin lying around. It will hurt you and it will hurt others. It will compound and it will come back around. Repent, obey, and follow God's best!

Day 5- Read Numbers 24:15-17

God uses anyone and anything to speak and accomplish His purposes and deliver His message. In the biblical, historical account there is a non-Israelite prophet through whom God spoke, Balaam. It is also Balaam's donkey that spoke to Balaam and inspires me to say, "God still uses donkeys." As the Israelites were headed for the Land of Promise they were approaching Moab. The King of Moab was a man named Balak. Balak was concerned about the approaching Israelite army and called for Balaam to come and curse the Israelites so that he could defeat them. However, God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel but only to

bless them. In today's passage Balaam gives a prophecy of a coming king. The coming king that he spoke of was King David. A great king would come from Jacob (Israel). He would rule, reign, and defeat Israel's enemies. Many prophecies in the Old Testament had an immediate fulfillment and then a more distant one.

In **Numbers 22:18**, Balaam says that He cannot “*go beyond the word of the Lord.*” The phrase “*the word of the Lord*” is used 245 times in the King James Version of the Bible. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it reads like what we find in John 1 “*the word was with God and the word was God.*” It is safe to say that the ‘*word of the Lord*’ in the Old Testament is in reference to Jesus the ‘word.’ Balaam was speaking the ‘word’ of God.

In **Revelation 22:16**, Jesus is the “*Bright and morning star*” coming from the family of David. David defeated enemies like the giant Goliath. Jesus defeated the enemy of sin and death. David ruled and Jesus will have all of His enemies placed at His feet (**1 Corinthians 15:22-26**).

Jesus is the living Word of God. He is the King. Jesus is the main point to the whole Bible!

Notes

WEEK 24 JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE DREAMS

By Chris Watson

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

Day 1- Read Genesis 39

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

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

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

doesn't. Give whatever may be going on in your life right now to the Lord and say, "God I trust you!"

Day 2- Read Genesis 40

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

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

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 41:1-14

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

"Joseph was in this place for a specific time and reason. He was going to save Israel from the famine that was to come. "By saving Israel, Jesus is born so we can be saved."²⁰ One has to believe that after God used Joseph in this way, Joseph knew everything happening was part of God's plan. It has been said that in situations we face we can either become bitter or better, and I believe Joseph became better. What about you?

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

²⁰ Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 124

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

Day 4- Read Genesis 41:15-36

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

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

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

through God's hands. While it may be hard or tough to see why He allows these times, trust Him that it is all part of His great big plan!

Day 5- Read Isaiah 42:5-9

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

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

“To free captives from prison” – **Luke 4:18-19** says, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”* This prophecy was being fulfilled as Jesus was in Nazareth.

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

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

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

Sermon Notes

WEEK 25 GOD PROVIDES FOR THE ISRAELITES IN FAMINE

By Dennis Watson

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

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

Day 1- Read Genesis 41:38-57

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

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

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

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

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

Day 2- Read Genesis 42

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

The ten older brothers headed for Egypt. When the ten brothers arrived in Egypt they come face-to-face with the governor over the land—their brother Joseph. It had been thirteen years since they had sold him to the traders. He was seventeen when he was sold and he was thirty when his brothers arrived in Egypt. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him. He accuses them of being spies and has them thrown into prison for three days. It was Joseph’s way of teaching his brothers a lesson for what they had done to him. They told him they were not spies but were twelve brothers, but one had died and one was at home with their father. He had them released from prison and told them that if they

were telling the truth they would bring their younger brother back with them. To make sure they would follow through, Simeon, one of the brothers, would be held in Egypt until they returned. When they departed with sacks of grain, Joseph returned their money hiding it in the sacks. As they were going home one of the brothers discovered the money and was terrified. When they got home they were really frightened when each one found that there was money in their sack. They told Israel, their father, and he was grieved by the account of the trip to Egypt. He would not let them return to Egypt, he was thinking that he had not only lost Joseph but he would also lose Simeon.

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 43

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

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

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

Day 4- Read Genesis 44

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

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

easier to continue in sin than to come to the point of making the decision to stop, repent and do what is right.

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

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

Day 5- Read Psalm 110

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

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

He was like Melchizedek in that we do not know of a beginning or end of Melchizedek. Jesus has no beginning and no end. In more

ways than we can know, Jesus is a Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

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

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

Sermon Notes

WEEK 26 JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS

By Chris Watson

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

Day 1- Read Genesis 45:1-5

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

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

To be honest, I would like to think my response would be the same as Joseph's, but for some reason I am not sure it would have been. What's your response when things go bad, when things don't work out like you want, or when life just seems "unfair?" Do we complain, get upset, or even try to get back at someone who did us wrong? Or, can we respond like Joseph and realize that even if it

was bad or evil, God might use it in our lives or in the lives of others. Ask the Lord to help you see how He sees, and to realize that when we can't, we need to trust Him.

Day 2- Read Genesis 45:16-28

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

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Genesis 45:6-15

Yesterday, we saw the connection to Jesus and we will see it today. A remnant means something that is left over or a part of something. Marty Machowski says, “God knew the famine was coming and all of Joseph’s family would die if they didn’t get food. So God sent Joseph ahead to Egypt so Jacob and his sons could be saved from the famine. They were important because God made his covenant with Jacob and his father Isaac, and Grandfather Abraham before them”.²¹

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

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

Thank the Lord today for His direction and His plans!

Day 4- Read Genesis 46:1-7, 26-30

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

The account of the relationship of Joseph and his brothers will continue, no matter how their story started. However, the reunion

²¹ Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 134

of father and son is totally different. We know from reading the account, up to this point, that God was in control and orchestrated it all. It's interesting to see all of the pieces that came together, even though it took years to happen.

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

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

Day 5- Read Isaiah 49:1-6

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

Just think of Jesus being a servant. Jesus is God (Trinity), so the ruler of the universe lowered Himself and lived among humans. He lived among humans so that He could take the penalty of their sins and they could live with Him for eternity and know Him in a personal relationship! This is incredible and while we know this and experience it daily, we must not grow used to it or see it as something we deserve. Rather, let us be thankful for the gift of Jesus daily, many times throughout the day. Without Jesus we have only death, destruction, no peace, and hell, just to name a few.

With Jesus, we have life and when we pass from this life we have peace, heaven, freedom from sin, and fulfillment in Jesus. Praise be to God for what He has done for us. Remember, we do nothing to get it or deserve it, we just receive it. We don't boast in what we did, we received what had already been done through Jesus Christ.

Thank Jesus today for your salvation and what He did!

Notes

Sermon Notes

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Appendix

ENOCH REMOVED WITHOUT DEATH

By Dennis Watson

Methuselah was the oldest man in the Bible. He lived to be 969 years old, yet he died before his father. How could that be? His father Enoch did not die because God took him. Enoch and the prophet Elijah were the only two people in the Bible who did not die. Enoch walked with God and God took him and Elijah was taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. This week we will look at this man Enoch. Why was it that God did not let him die but took him into heaven without seeing death? Enoch is one of those biblical characters we know little about but what we do know teaches us a great deal.

Day 1 ENOCH'S TRANSFORMATION- Read Genesis 5:21-22

Read those two verses again. What do you suppose brought about this change in Enoch's life? I have observed the change in life that often happens to a young man after he becomes a father. It is what I believe to be the kick-in of responsibility. Young men often become responsible after being given responsibility. Becoming a father is a huge responsibility and I have observed young men, including my two sons, taking a huge leap to responsibility when becoming a father. It happened to me too. So after Enoch "*begot Methuselah, he walked with God three hundred years.*" We know nothing about the previous sixty-five years of Enoch's life but the remainder of his days on earth were clearly different. He distinguished himself from the people and the culture around him and he walked with God.

Based on scripture let me speculate a bit. Not only was his life changed by the birth of what appears to be his first child but God clearly made him aware of something. Look at these passages in the New Testament book of Jude:

“It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” **Jude 1:14-15**

These passages in Jude attribute to Enoch a prophecy that he was giving about men who were not following God and who had rebelled against Him. This prophecy was soon to be fulfilled and also had a far-reaching fulfillment. Now the name Methuselah in a study of the original roots means, “his death shall bring.” Could it be the message that Enoch preached about coming judgment and the name given to his first son anticipated the judgment would not come until his son Methuselah died? Remember, the flood came the year Methuselah died.

So what do you think changed Enoch’s life to the point that he walked with God? I believe it was more than the birth of a son. It was the birth coupled with the prophecy and a name. I guess he figured he had better get his life together. Wise move in light of what God revealed to him. How about you? Think that in light of what God has revealed to you, you ought to get your life together?

Day 2 ENOCH TAKEN BY GOD- Read Genesis 5:21-25

Enoch’s life was changed because of God revealing Himself to him. As a result of that transformation Enoch walked with God and God took him out of his world without dying.

In 2008 a movie entitled “Taken” came out. It was about a 17-year-old girl by the name of Kim who was a victim of human trafficking. She was the daughter of a retired CIA agent. Of course the movie was filled with suspense and intrigue. It was then followed by two sequels “Taken 2” and “Taken 3.” However, the original “Taken” was not a movie, it was a real life historical event. **Genesis 5:24** tells about this event, *“And Enoch walked with*

God; and he was not, for God took him.” This was not an event of human trafficking but of God rescuing one of His own before judgment came to the world. It is recorded in scripture that three-hundred years after his son Methuselah was born, God took Enoch. Unlike his ancestors who it was written of them, *“and he died”* it was written of Enoch, *“and he was not, for God took him.”*

This is, as is the case of all of God’s activities, an incredible event. What else could we possibly expect but for God to act in an incredible and supernatural way? After all, look at creation. Look at the biblical account of redemption. Look at the amazing human body. And of course there is the virgin birth and the sacrificial atoning death of Jesus and His resurrection. God does amazing things which leave us in awe. This account of Enoch being taken is a reminder of God’s grace and mercy.

On a lighter note, J. Vernon McGee shares:

The only way I know to describe this is the way a little girl described it to her mother when she came home from Sunday school. She said, "Teacher told us about Enoch and how he walked with God." Her mother said, "Well, what about Enoch?" And the little girl put it something like this: "It seems that every day God would come by and say to Enoch, 'Enoch, would you like to walk with Me?' And Enoch would come out of his house and down to the gate, and he'd go walking with God. He got to the place that he enjoyed it so much that he'd be waiting at the gate of his house every day. And God would come along and say, 'Enoch, let's take a walk.' Then one day God came by and said, 'Enoch, let's take a long walk. I have so much to tell you.' So they were walking and walking, and finally Enoch said, 'My, it's getting late in the afternoon, I'd better get back home!' And God said to him, 'Enoch, you're closer to My home than you are to your home; so you come on home with Me.' And so Enoch went home with God." I do not know how you can put it any better than that, my friend.

This is a child's look at this amazing historical account. What a blessing! And, it anticipates what will happen to God's people.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read John 14:1-3 And 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Enoch was taken. He was removed. He was snatched away. The main reason for his removal was so he would not face the coming flood-judgment. Enoch pleased God because he believed God or put his faith in Him and therefore was pleasing to God. "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*" (**Hebrews 11:6**)

In **John 14:1-3** Jesus begins to comfort His disciples because of His coming suffering and departure from them. He tells them not to be troubled because He is going to prepare a place for them and He will return to get them to take them there. Now jump over to the passage in 1 Thessalonians and read about that coming event. It is a removal of believers and **1 Thessalonians 1:10** says that "*Jesus will deliver us from the wrath to come!*" Oh does that not sound exactly like what God did for Enoch? Enoch was "taken" and the believers who are alive when Jesus returns will be "caught up." The dead believers will rise from the dead and the living believers will be "*caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*"

How was Enoch saved? He believed God. How are you saved? By believing God. Abraham was made right (declared righteous) because he believed God (see **Genesis 15:6** and **Galatians 3:6**).

Of course what we are talking about is the rapture of the church. Enoch was raptured. The believers who are here when Jesus returns will be raptured. Like it was with Enoch the event was his being taken and the means was he believed God. The same is true of us. The event is the rapture and the rising from the dead to meet Jesus in the air and the means is our faith in Jesus. Enoch had the Word, we have the Word made flesh!

Day 4 SO WHY DID GOD TAKE ENOCH?-

Read Hebrews 11:5-6

Can you imagine Enoch's family when he turned up missing? All of the commotion and questions? Mrs. Enoch probably called to their little three hundred year old son Methuselah, "Have you seen your daddy?" It was probably asked, "why did God take him? He was so young" (relatively speaking of course). The family only knew he was gone. Enoch knew now firsthand why God had taken him. Yet those not taken were burdened and struggling thinking it must be a mistake. However, it was no mistake. Scripture makes it clear; God took him!

What is the essence of the gospel? The essence of the gospel is that you can escape the judgment to come and enter into God's grace or favor. That is exactly what God did, He took Enoch before the flood. Judgment came and Enoch entered into God's eternal favor.

Is God's judgment harsh? Clearly from the beginning of humanity there has been a right and wrong way to live. God by nature, is the very standard of all things. When a person is not in line with His standard that person is determined by God's justice to be guilty. God's will is that all people be brought into His standard. This is what Peter refers to when he writes that God wants all people to be brought to repentance rather than perish (see **2 Peter 3:9**). To repent is to turn away from what is not of God and turn to Him. God's plan is to destroy all that is contrary to Him and make all things new in keeping with His holiness. That which is contrary to Him will suffer judgment and what is in His favor will live forever in His favor. So, it is obvious that Enoch, after receiving God's revelation and the birth of Methuselah, repented and walked with God and God gave to Enoch His favor rather than His judgment. God took Enoch so he would not go through the flood of God's judgment.

How was it that Enoch pleased God? Was it something that he did? It was first and foremost his faith!

**Day 5 MORE ABOUT JESUS AND OUR SALVATION:
ENOCH AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT-
Read Genesis 5:1-22**

For some people the miraculous is weird or difficult to believe. However, the greatest and most obvious miracle of all is the creation of the universe out of nothing! After that, it is not so hard to believe in the virgin birth, that God would become a man and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. With that in mind, there is the miraculous taking of Enoch from the world without death. It is fun to keep reading and studying the Bible because it makes more and more sense along the way. The Bible has an incredible historical context. Through the lineage of the first ten patriarchs of the Bible there is an incredible message. From Adam to Noah, there is a message in the root meaning of the names of these ten men.

What did Enoch know when he named his son Methuselah which means “*his death shall bring?*” Because the passage says that after he had Methuselah he “*walked with God three hundred years.*” However, I believe that Enoch did some dot connecting also. Chuck Missler explains that the Bible is an amazing book which goes way beyond just the words on the pages.

The great discovery is that the Bible is a message system: it’s not simply 66 books penned by 40 authors over thousands of years, the Bible is an integrated whole which bares evidence of supernatural engineering in every detail.

The Jewish rabbis have a quaint way of expressing this very idea: they say that they will not understand the Scriptures until the Messiah comes. But when He comes, He will not only interpret each of the passages for us, He will interpret the very words; He

will even interpret the very letters themselves; in fact, He will even interpret the spaces between the letters!²²

GENEALOGY OF GENESIS 5

Adam	Man (is)
Seth	Appointed
Enosh	Mortal
Kenan	Sorrow; (but)
Mahalalel	The Blessed God
Jared	Shall come down
Enoch	Teaching
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lamech	The Despairing
Noah	Comfort, rest

So here is the message that is found in the original Hebrew roots:

“Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (that) His death shall bring (the) despairing rest.”

I am not sure, but I believe Enoch knew something was going on.

God is always at work. There are no coincidences only divine appointments! Enoch must have been paying attention. He must have been anticipating hearing from God. Are you?

²² <https://www.khouse.org/articles/1996/44/#fn:8>

JOB'S REPENTANCE

By Dennis Watson

Interpreting scripture requires that it be done in light of, or in the context of, the larger body of scripture. When we read and study the Old Testament we must do so in the light of the New Testament. It has been said, and rightly so, that the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed. This statement is first credited to Augustine who was a theologian and philosopher of the 4th century. As we take a look at the book of Job we must keep in mind the New Testament. Many times it is asked in regard to the book of Job, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" The only problem with that statement is that Jesus taught that "*No one is good but One, that is, God.*" So Job must not have been good in the way people often interpret. We also know from the New Testament that "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (**Romans 3:23**). The book of Job has a message for all times, but especially for believers living in these days.

Day 1 GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN ALL THINGS-

Read Job 1:1-12

Here we are introduced to the man named Job. We really do not know much about Job but here are a few things we do know. We know he was, "*blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.*" He was a "*good man.*" This means he was a man who did the right things and believed there was a God to whom he was accountable. We know he had the desire to do the "right things."

We know that he was a man with a family. He had seven sons and three daughters. He was careful to pray and give offerings for his children in case they "*sinned and cursed God in their hearts.*"

Job was also a very wealthy man possessing herds, flocks, and many other possessions. It is recorded that he was, “*the greatest of all the people of the east.*”

We know that all of the angels, even Satan, report to God. They can do nothing without His permission, not even Satan. “*The Almighty*” is one of the key names for God in the book of Job; it is used thirty-one times. No matter what happens, in this world and in our lives, God is on the throne and has everything under control. It is so encouraging to have this glimpse into God’s throne room. He is in complete control of the evil one. God is sovereign!

It is God who directs the attention of Satan to Job, “*Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?*” Satan rebuffs God accusing Him of showing Job special favor and tells God that if he could get a hold of Job, Job would curse God to His face. God releases all that Job has to Satan’s power, all except Job himself.

Well, there you have it. Often times in the life of a follower of God the enemy can have influence but only under God’s protective authority. Thus the painful journey begins. The biblical, historical account of Job is one that all of us can, to an extent, identify with. We have all gone through struggles and suffering when we have wondered, “What did I do to deserve this?”

Perhaps you have been there or are there now. Either way there is probably more to come. Be reminded that God is in control and even the enemy can only do what is under God’s authority.

Day 2 GOD REALLY DOES MOVE IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS- Read Job 29:12-25

In these verses Job does a review of some of his good works. There is nothing wrong with good works. Jesus said that we are to let our light shine so that others will see our good works and glorify God.

No, there is nothing wrong with good works unless we are trusting our good works to win us favor with God.

God loves you too much to leave you where you are. That is great news, however, He may allow some very uncomfortable times in order to move you forward. That seems contradictory in light of

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

There is a double qualifier for that promised “*perfect peace.*” First the person kept at perfect peace is the one “*whose mind is stayed on You.*” “You” is the Lord. This person keeps their mind always on the Lord. The second qualifier that corresponds to the first is, “*because he trusts in you.*” The person God keeps in perfect peace is the person who keeps his mind on the Lord and trusts Him.

Let me illustrate with this scenario. You are in a burning building on the tenth floor. The flames have pushed you to the window, out the window, and onto the ledge. Now the flames are out the window and beginning to burn you. There are people ten stories down below holding a device to jump into for safety. Your choice is to stay where you are and be burned to death or trust the people down below and the safety device and jump. That is trust and dependence. In our personal “burning buildings” we may not see or recognize the seriousness of the situation. But God knows all. His love for us is so great that He gave His own Son in sacrifice to save us. So, often He allows, or creates, such situations which open the door to move us from where we are to the next faith-place He wants us. It may be a physical place or it may be a heart place. He wants us to live with Him in a relationship of trust and absolute dependence only on Him. God does not always put out the fire. He does not always float us softly to the ground below. He often places us where we trust Him regardless of what is going on.

It appears that Job had become a man who had a system or formula. Religious systems or formulas are man-made. Job had gotten to the point where his goodness, and his good feelings about himself were all wrapped up in doing good things. He had become more like a robot going through religious exercises. He was under the impression that if he did good things, God was obligated to take care of him.

Michael Jones, in a teaching video entitled “The Book of Job Explained,” says that Job had a formula like this: Good God + Good works = A good life. He also says that Job’s friends also had a formula like this: Good God + Bad Works = A bad life. Job wanted to know what had happened to his formula and his friends basically said that Job’s formula did not apply, but theirs did.

God cannot be manipulated! He is God and we are not. We answer to Him and He does not answer to us. His grace cannot be earned. It is His gift to sinful man to make man right with Himself. Job was stuck in the “I am good because I do good works” syndrome. God wanted Job to live a good life because of his relationship with Him. The relationship is the focus, not good works. Good works is the relationship of trusting God.

Trust Him! Live from your relationship with Him!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Luke 15:11-32

This biblical historical account is often known as the “Prodigal Son.” It would be better to call it the “Prodigal Sons.” A prodigal is someone who squanders wealth or opportunity. In this account we read about a father who had an older son and a younger son. He most likely had other sons, in between, but the focus is the father and these two sons. The younger son asked for his inheritance and then leaves and goes to a far country and wastes, or squanders, his inheritance on sinful, fleshly living. He then finds himself so broke

that he is forced to feed pigs and becomes so hungry he wants to eat their food. He comes to his senses and returns home asking to be a servant but his father welcomed him home, not as a servant, but as the son he was. The older brother was jealous when his younger brother came home and says to his father, “after all this time I have been a faithful and good son and you have never thrown a party for me.” This son was a squanderer too. He squandered his privilege and position and thought he deserved more because of how he had acted. The point of the parable is the faithfulness of the father to receive his repentant son back.

Now, back to Job. Like the older son, Job was a moralist. A moralist is someone that believes that they deserve something special because they have been “good.” The older son believed that his behavior earned him a special place with his father and his younger brother should have no place with his father because of his behavior.

What is the motivation of God’s grace? Is it behavior or moral goodness? Can a person earn God’s grace? Consider the opposite of a moralist. A moralist is someone who does good to earn special treatment from God. A hedonist is someone who believes that the pursuit of pleasure is the most important thing in life. The younger son was a hedonist. He just wanted to have a good time and pursue that in a way he determined—wild and riotous living. Now what do you think? That freezes most of us in our tracks. We are like Job and the older son and begin to think, “Well after all I have done shouldn’t God reward me with earthly blessings?” Dave Ramsey has made popular a response to the question, “How are you doing?” The popular and truthful response is, “Better than I deserve.” But do you really believe that? When you consider prostitutes, corrupt, and immoral people, don’t you just sometimes think you deserve better from God because you are a good person? The older son believed he deserved better than his hedonist brother. Job believed that he deserved better because he was a good person. Job’s friends believed that Job was going through tough times because he had done bad. They were all wrong. Satan

was wrong. Job was wrong. His friends were wrong. The older prodigal son and the younger prodigal son were wrong. God was right and so was the father in the prodigal sons account. Of course, in the parable the father represented God. The father was waiting for his son to come to his senses and come home. God was waiting for Job to come to his senses and repent. They did and were restored. God's desire is that all of us will come to our senses and turn to Him in faith entirely depending on His amazing grace. That grace is granted in Jesus Christ. Even Job knew there was a Redeemer.

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. Job 19:25

Whether we are hedonistic or moralistic, we all equally need the Redeemer!

Day 4 GOD WILLS FOR YOU TO EXPERIENCE HIS BEST- Read Judges 3:6-11

God has historically gone to incredibly great lengths to bring His own people to the place of repentance and obedience. We see this in the book of Judges. His own people whom He had delivered from Egyptian bondage would become disobedient. In fact, the book of Judges is a record of a cycle that characterized Israel and even God's people today. The cycle was one of obedience, followed by disobedience. The people would then cry out in repentance and God would raise up a deliverer. In the passage today we see an example of that cycle. It records that God sold His own people into the hands of their enemy. God does not want to leave His own people in a place of disobedience.

We see this in **1 Corinthians 5:1-5** where we read about a man in the church involved in immorality. The people were to, "*deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit*

may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” The goal was for the man to repent and turn in obedience back to the Lord.

Another example is in **1 Timothy 1:20** where we read what Paul wrote about two men, *"Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."* Again, the goal of handing over to the enemy was repentance.

This is clearly what was happening in the book of Job. God put Job in Satan’s hands knowing that Job was God’s servant and that he would be brought to the place of obedient surrender and would know God as he had never known Him.

This was clearly an example of tough love. It reached its greatest peak when God went to the greatest length of all to bring us to Himself. No, it was not our suffering but the suffering of His only Son, Jesus Christ.

Norman Geisler and Frank Turek beautifully express the love of God that will not force or coerce:

“God has provided enough evidence in this life to convince anyone willing to believe, yet He has also left some ambiguity so as not to compel the unwilling. In this way, God gives us the opportunity to either love Him or reject Him without violating our freedom. In fact, the purpose of this life is to make that choice freely and without coercion. For love, by definition, must be freely given. It cannot be coerced. That’s why C. S. Lewis wrote, “the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of [God’s] scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to override a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo.”²³

²³ Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Lim baugh)

Satan put Job through incredible suffering as he did Jesus. But it was all under the sovereign hand of God and accomplished His purposes.

Day 5 WHAT JOB CAME TO UNDERSTAND- Read Job 42

God is faithful. He keeps His own. **Philippians 1:6** reminds us of this wonderful truth, “...*he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” You see this at work in Job’s life. He was a servant of God and God kept him safe. You may say, “Safe? Look what happened to him!” Yes, but look how it ended!

- Job came to realize who God really was.
- In all of this no one was right except God
 - Job was wrong—lost in his own moralism
 - Job’s friends were wrong—they thought Job was suffering for some specific sin
 - Satan was wrong because he thought he could destroy Job
 - God allowed Job’s things to be taken from him to wake him up
- God was always in control
- God had (and has) Satan on a tight leash
- God gave Satan enough rope to hang himself
- God used all of this for Job’s benefit
- God used this to bring Job back to Himself

So it was, that after God had told Job that He was God and that Job was not, Job repented. He was confronted with God’s greatness and grandeur and saw his own weakness and came to “abhor” himself.

I am not sure about you, but I have certainly questioned God on way too many occasions. I have even told Him how I thought He

should do things. But the great truth that Job came to was that God was the One in control and the only One worthy or qualified to run the world. It was there that Job came to rest and to be still and know that HE (God) WAS GOD!

Notes

ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

By Dennis Watson

This week we look at the appearance of a very mysterious individual, Melchizedek. Melchizedek suddenly appears on the scene in Genesis without parents or lineage and then just as quickly, he disappears. He is important as *“the priest of God Most High.”* He shows up at a time to encourage Abram on his faith-journey. He is the source of the eternal priesthood of which Christ is *“a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”* Melchizedek is a type of Christ. He prefigures Christ and our Great High Priest. Christ is the antitype. This simply means that Melchizedek foreshadows Christ.

Day 1 MELCHIZEDEK: THE HISTORICAL SETTING- Read Genesis 14:1-17

That the man God would make the father of a great nation and through whom all the people of the world would be blessed would need a special blessing goes without saying! And we see such a special blessing in the biblical, historical account of Abram and Melchizedek.

Abram (later changed to Abraham) left his home in Haran under God’s instructions and headed for *“a land that God would show him.”* That land was the land of Canaan. Later Abram and his family continued on their journey. Because of the vastness of their possessions, flocks, and herds, and because of strife, it became necessary for Abram and his nephew Lot to part ways. Abram invited Lot to make the choice of which way to go and what land to take. Lot made a human choice and chose the plain of Jordan in the east, and Abram took what God had promised, the Land of Canaan. The decision to let Lot choose was an act of faith on Abram’s part, trusting God for what He had promised. Lot’s human choice brought him to the city of Sodom whose residents were *“wicked and sinful against the Lord.”*

After Lot and Abram parted ways, God renewed His promise to Abram (see **Genesis 13:14-18**). God would renew His promise for Abram, particularly after major life events. Have you ever needed that kind of encouragement after major life events? I know I have. I am thankful for God's Word, His Spirit, and His church. He very often gives me encouragement through one or all of these during those times. Abram did not have the advantage of the written Word of God, but the Lord would speak with Abram directly to keep him moving along.

The historical setting took a turn for the worse for Lot and his family. Four kings attacked the people of the Jordan Valley near the Salt Sea and took Lot and his family captive. This seems like a random historical account, but it is part of the plan of God to make Abram great and to bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. Abram got word of the attack and the capture of Lot and his family. He assembled and armed 318 of his servants and pursued the attackers. He caught up with them, defeated them, rescued Lot and his people, and brought them back to Sodom.

Obviously, the Lord was with Abram. He was able, by the Lord's strength, to defeat the attackers and rescue Lot and his whole clan. **Genesis 14:13** is the first appearance of the word 'Hebrew.' It is significant although it is a word in the Hebrew language that is not purely the word for 'Hebrew;' it is a word that makes us aware of what is to come regarding the people from Abram's offspring.

After this victory, Abram had a very interesting encounter with a very interesting and unusual person. We will look at that tomorrow. But as we close today, consider the hand of God in your life. Be careful not to call random those events that God is in. I believe He is faithful to bless us as we follow.

Day 2 ABRAM, MELCHIZEDEK AND THE GOD-JOURNEY- Read Genesis 14:18-20

This is a very unusual event. It seems like a random insertion, seemingly interrupting the historical narrative that continues in verses 21-24. This is just the introduction to Melchizedek. He appears again in **Psalm 110:4** and in **Hebrews 5-7**.

At this point in Genesis we have traced the lineage of all of the biblical characters who have appeared with the exception of Adam, because he was the first. Here we have this Priest and King who suddenly appears on the scene without any connection to a family or lineage. The writer of Hebrews says that he was, *“without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.”*

So what do we know about Melchizedek? First we know that his name means *“king of righteousness.”* He is called *“king of Salem”* which means *“king of peace.”* This was clearly no ordinary man. He just suddenly appeared. He is known as king of righteousness and king of peace. He is also a *“priest of God Most High.”* We will return to these titles later this week, but let’s look for a moment at what happened when Melchizedek and Abram met.

Any time in Scripture you see the words ‘then’ and ‘after’ you know that you are reading historical narrative. So here after the rescue of Lot we read, *“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine.”* So we see that Melchizedek came to bless Abram on the occasion of his victory. Melchizedek identified Abram with *“God Most High.”* He connected the victory and Abram with the blessings of God. He acknowledged that it was *“God Most High Who delivered your enemies into your hand.”* Abram received the blessing, and in response to Melchizedek, gave him a tithe of all he possessed. Abram humbled himself, recognizing Melchizedek as greater than himself.

It must have been an encouraging time for Abram on his God-journey. I know I need special times of worship and special words from God on my God-journey. I cannot imagine what it was like for the first—the father of the great nation. He was pretty much all alone, on his own, except for the Lord. Those special times must have been absolutely necessary for him. How about you? I know that daily time with the Lord is necessary for my God-journey. Special times of worship and fellowship on a daily and weekly basis are essential for my God-journey.

I love watching Abram’s God-journey. In chapter 15 of Genesis we see God reaffirm His promise to Abram. Then we read the great statement regarding Abram in **Genesis 15:6**, “*And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*” Abram’s God-journey led to growing faith!

Day 3 MELCHIZEDEK: CONNECTING TO JESUS- Read Hebrews 7:1-3

We will take the next two days to look at how Jesus is a “*priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*” In **Genesis 14:18** we see the first appearance of the word ‘priest.’ It is not here that we learn about the priesthood of Aaron which was known as the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priesthood was never intended to be permanent (see **Hebrews 7:11**). Instead, in **Genesis 14** we are introduced to the priesthood of Melchizedek. The priesthood of Aaron known as the Levitical did not appear until about 500 years later. That was a temporary priesthood. Melchizedek’s was a priesthood that was permanent.

Some believe that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ also known as a Christophany. But J. Vernon McGee writes:

“I believe Melchizedek was a type given to us by Moses and guarded by God. He just walks out of nowhere and walks back into nowhere. He had no beginning or ending of days. The Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end. He is Alpha and Omega. He

started it all, and He will end it all. He is the AMEN. He is the One who is the eternal God and as such has no beginning or ending. The writer is telling us that we have a priest like that -- He is after the order of Melchizedek.”²⁴

As a type, Melchizedek anticipated the eternal priesthood of Christ. That is what we read about in chapters 5-7 of Hebrews. Once again, this is some incredible dot connecting. God gives us a picture, way back in Genesis, of an eternal priesthood, long before the priesthood is established. He gives us the first appearance of the tithe long before the tithe was established. Then, in the New Testament we see it all come together in Christ.

The priesthood of Melchizedek, of which Christ is priest, is perpetual. It is like Him, a priesthood without beginning and without end. The Levitical priesthood ended. But the order of the priesthood of Melchizedek has no end. It goes on even now. Jesus was the Great High Priest. He is our Great High Priest even now. He is our Great High Priest forever.

Day 4 MELCHIZEDEK: CONNECTING TO JESUS (2)- Read Hebrews 7:23-28

Yesterday we saw how the Melchizedek priesthood of which “Christ was a priest forever” was a perpetual priesthood. Melchizedek pointed to Jesus. The human Levitical priesthood even pointed to Jesus. It too, was a type of Jesus. Jesus not only is our Great High Priest, He is our sacrifice. It is a real blast to be connecting the dots!

His priesthood is perpetual, but it is also perfect. Jesus, as our Great High Priest, did not offer up animal sacrifices for us. He is the perfect Lamb of God. His sacrifice was perfect. He Himself, became our sacrifice:

²⁴ Thru The Bible With J. Vernon McGee

He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12

In **Hebrews 7:25**, we really connect more dots. Why are Melchizedek and his priesthood so important? All through Hebrews we see the significance of this special and other-world priesthood come to our world. But right here in this one verse many dots are connected.

Jesus our Great High Priest is "*able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.*" He is not a high priest who makes annual sacrifices of animals to cover our sin, He is the sacrifice who once and for all time covers our sin. He finished the work of the sacrifices for sin. He is the perfect sacrifice atoning for sin once and for all. In this He is the perfect High Priest.

There had to be this priesthood. It had always been, but Melchizedek made it known. He first brought it to man through Abraham. Jesus Christ is the real end-goal of the Melchizedek priesthood.

A priest would represent God before the people and represent the people before God. Jesus literally and bodily is right now representing you before God and representing God before you. He is at the right hand of God, and He is always interceding.

Jesus is not only a perpetual priest, but He is the perfect Priest.

He made certain our salvation, and He is always interceding—praying for us before our Heavenly Father. Jesus' priesthood is active today and always will be. He is our perfect High Priest!

Day 5- Read Psalm 110

Jesus used the Scriptures. Of course the Scriptures that He used were those of the Old Testament. We will see this in a few weeks when we look at what Jesus taught about the Bible. In today's passage we find a verse about Melchizedek that was prophetic of Jesus being the Messiah who would be, "*a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*" The verse Jesus quotes about Himself is verse 4. Here is what J. Vernon McGee has to say:

The words of this psalm are addressed to the psalmist's "LORD." The expressions are those of a prophet who had received a revelation from God. The king was also a priest, a fact that looks beyond the order of Aaron, which was not a royal order. This is one reason the psalm has been classified as a prophetic psalm. Jesus quoted **Psalm 110:1 in Mark 12:36** (cf. **Matt. 22:44; Luke 20:42**) to demonstrate that He the Messiah was to be David's Lord, not merely David's descendant (**Mark 12:35, 37**). By Jesus' use of the passage one also notes that David wrote **Psalm 110**, that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it refers to the Messiah. **Psalm 110:1** is also quoted in **Acts 2:34-35** and **Hebrews 1:13**. Attempts to date **Psalm 110** in the Maccabean times, when some priests held temporal power, are therefore futile. Those leaders were priests first and also had civil power but in **Psalm 110** the King is a Priest.²⁵

This passage in **Psalm 110** is sandwiched between the passage in Genesis about Melchizedek and those in Hebrews, also about Melchizedek. This is a Messianic Psalm. All seven verses of **Psalm 110** are prophecy about the Messiah. This Psalm is mentioned many times in the New Testament.

²⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Verse 1 anticipates the ascension of the Messiah and His place at the right hand of God.

Verse 2 anticipates the rule of the Messiah.

Verse 3 anticipates large numbers coming to Christ.

Verse 4 anticipates the eternal priesthood of the Messiah.

Verse 5-6 anticipates the judgment of the Messiah.

Verse 7 anticipates the Messiah's suffering, death and resurrection.

We are seeking to connect dots regarding Jesus and the Word of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Remember "the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament Revealed" (Augustine).

JUDAH AND TAMAR

By Dennis Watson

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

Day 1- Read Genesis 38:1-7

As we begin this biblical historical event, we need to see that there is a “disconnect” that has started to take place. How different Jacob, Judah’s father, was from Abraham. You remember that God had said of Abraham: *“For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”* **Genesis 18:19** Abraham was adamant that the search for a wife for his son Isaac not be made among the Canaanites. Instead he sent his servant to his country and his family to find a wife for Isaac. Jacob, however, was more concerned with his business and the family conflict with his two wives. He neglected his sons, and they all, except for Benjamin and Joseph, made very tragic choices.

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

of Canaan and into Egypt which became a safe and secluded place for a period of time.

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

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

Day 2- Read Genesis 38:8-11

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

Now we come to the second son, Onan. There was a practice in ancient times which under the law in **Deuteronomy 25:5-6** became known as levirate marriage. It is literally a marriage with a brother-in-law. After Er died his wife Tamar was to be taken by his brother, and the first son born to Onan and Tamar would be

considered the child of the deceased husband. That way the family name of the deceased brother/husband would carry on through that son. However, Onan acted unfaithfully regarding his responsibility to do this. His sin was that of irresponsibility. He would not do what needed to be done to carry on the family line so the Lord killed Onan too. Then there was the third son, Shelah. Judah kept him from Tamar and just assumed that the two-time widow would go away. He promised that the youngest son Shelah would marry her, but he did not keep his promise.

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

It is at this point that I like to, and need to, bring up the point of God's best. Tamar took things into her own hands because others had forsaken their responsibility. That does not make it right and shows what happens when God's own people do not seek His best. Are you seeking His best? I believe there are blessings and benefits in store, long-term, when God's people seek His best. God's will and plan will be accomplished, but it sure is a blessing to be willingly participating with Him for His best.

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Luke 3:33 and Matthew 1:1-6

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

So far we have seen God create a perfect world with man being the crown of His creation. When it was all done, He proclaimed it

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

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

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

Day 4- Read Genesis 38:12-30

What a crazy account! We have some major intrigue here. Er died because of his evil behavior and character. Onan died because of his disobedience and rebellion. Judah failed to keep his promise and was deceived by Tamar who felt she must take matters into her own hands because of the failures of everyone else in her family!

What a mess! That is what happens when people turn their own way and ignore God. It makes trouble for all.

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

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

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

Day 5- Read Genesis 49:8-12

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

"This deathbed message is dramatic because it is prophetic. It tells what will happen to the twelve sons of Jacob when they become tribes. What was prophetic then has now become largely historical."²⁶

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

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

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

²⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

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

Now the prophetic connection continues in Revelation.

“And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” **Revelation 5:5**

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” **Revelation 11:15**

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

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

SLAVERY OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

By Dennis Watson

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

"God used Israel's experiences in Egypt to prepare them for the special tasks He gave them to accomplish on earth: bearing witness to the true and living God, writing the Holy Scriptures and bringing the Savior into the world."²⁷

Day 1- Read Exodus 1:1-7

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

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

"And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy." **Genesis 46:27**

²⁷ Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

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

“And Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.’” **Genesis 48:3-4**

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

"Jacob's descendants increased: The Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous (cf. **Acts 7:17**). Several generations separated Levi from Moses so that the time from Joseph's death (**Gen. 50:26**) to the growth of the nation as described in **Exodus 1:7** was probably little more than 100 years. The adult males in the Exodus totaled 600,000, not counting women and children (**12:37**), so the total Israelite population at that time may have been about 2 million. No wonder the land (i.e., Goshen, **Gen. 45:10**, in the southeast Delta) was filled with them. According to God's promise to Abraham (**Gen. 12:1-3**) a large nation had emerged. They had yet to receive a land (**Gen. 15:18-21**) and a "constitution" (the Mosaic Law)."²⁸

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

²⁸ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

really exciting and encouraging to see the roots of our salvation and faith!

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

Day 2- Read Exodus 1:8-10

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

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

I love what Warren Wiersbe says about this:

"Why would the Egyptians want to make life miserable for the Jews? Israel was a source of blessing in the land, as Joseph had been before them (**Gen. 39:1-6**), and they weren't causing trouble. Pharaoh's stated reason was that the presence of so many Jews was a security risk: since the Jews were outsiders, if there were an invasion, they would no doubt ally themselves with the enemy. However, whether Pharaoh realized it or not, the real cause was the conflict announced in **Genesis 3:15**, the enmity between the people of God and the children of Satan, a conflict that still goes on in the world today. No people in recorded history have suffered as the Hebrew people have suffered, but every nation or ruler that has persecuted the Jews has been punished for it. After all, God's promise to Abraham was, "*I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*" **Genesis 12:3**. God kept that promise in the way He dealt with Egypt and Babylon in ancient days and Stalin and Hitler in modern times. God is long-suffering as He sees nations persecute His chosen people, but eventually His hand of judgment falls on the oppressors."²⁹

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS- Read Matthew 2:13-15

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

²⁹ Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

But he did get it right, repented and obeyed God by going to Nineveh.

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

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

"The Messiah was sent to and returned from Egypt so that the prophet's words, "*Out of Egypt I called My Son*", might be fulfilled. This is a reference to **Hosea 11:1**, which does not seem to be a prophecy in the sense of a prediction. Hosea was writing of God's calling Israel out of Egypt into the Exodus. Matthew, however, gave new understanding to these words. Matthew viewed this experience as Messiah being identified with the nation. There were similarities between the nation and the Son. Israel was God's chosen "son" by adoption (**Ex. 4:22**), and Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. In both cases the descent into Egypt was to escape danger, and the return was important to the nation's providential history. While Hosea's statement was a historical reference to Israel's deliverance, Matthew related it more fully to the call of the Son, the Messiah, from Egypt. In that sense, as Matthew "heightened" Hosea's words to a more significant event—the Messiah's return from Egypt—they were "fulfilled."³⁰

³⁰The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

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

Day 4- Read Exodus 1:15-22

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

"A standing ovation for abortion? That's what New York's Reproductive Health Act got in the Senate chamber when it passed last week. Lawmakers and bystanders stood and applauded a law that legalizes abortion all the way up until birth, for any reason."³¹

Once again it can be said, "There is nothing new under the sun." If they applauded in New York and they stood by during the killing of the male babies in King Herod's day, they must have been doing it in the days when Pharaoh called for the killing of the

Hebrew newborn baby boys in Egypt. In the United States, as of this moment according to an online abortion clock, "61,160,433 babies have been killed while still in their mother's womb since 1973."³² It is a sad thing to think of killing babies at any stage of development. Pharaoh took his place as a murderer of babies with the purpose of wiping out the Jacob-Israel family. Many throughout history have attempted this. Hitler sought to exterminate the Jews. Political leaders in other nations have sought to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. But it is amazing to see all of these attempts continue to fail.

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

³² <http://www.numberofabortions.com/>

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

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

Day 5- Read Genesis 15:13-16

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

God clearly had a plan which included and required Abraham’s descendants to be in Egypt. It became a time of safety and security but also a time of slavery. This was of course no surprise to God. God was in on the people being in Egypt and He was also in on

getting them out. The Jacob-Israel family had been there so long that most of them probably began to think of Egypt as their home. They had become comfortable. Later, as they wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus, they often desired to return to Egypt. So they had probably settled into the Land of Goshen for good but God would have no part of that. That was not His plan.

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

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

"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." **Job 42:2**

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

Notes
