

HIS  
PLAN  
OUR  
PURPOSE

# IS THERE MORE?

*Understanding the Storyline of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation*

THE STORIES OF **GRACE, DELIVERANCE + PROMISE**

TEACHER GUIDE

28  
nineteen<sup>TM</sup>

# THE WHOLE STORY

Warren Weirsbe writes, “When He wrote the Bible, God didn’t give us a ponderous theology book divided into sections labeled God, Creation, Man, Sin, and so forth. Instead, He gave us a story, a narrative that begins in eternity past and ends in eternity future.”

## FEATURED



### THE STORY OF **GRACE**

> *January*



### THE STORY OF **DELIVERANCE**

> *February*



### THE STORY OF **PROMISE**

> *March*



### THE STORY OF **FAITH**

> *April*



### THE STORY OF **RENEWAL**

> *May*



### THE STORY OF **PURPOSE + PRAISE**

> *June, July + August*



### THE STORY OF **CHRIST: IN HIS OWN WORDS**

> *August + September*



### THE STORY OF **POWER**

> *October*



### THE STORY OF **CHANGE**

> *November*



### THE STORY OF **HEAVEN**

> *December*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## THE STORY OF **GRACE** > 5



- 7 **Grace** In Creation > *Genesis 1 + 2 > January 4/5*
- 15 **Grace** In the Garden > *Genesis 2 + 3 > January 11/12*
- 23 **Grace** In the Ark > *Genesis 6-8 > January 18/19*
- 31 **Grace** To All > *Genesis 15 > January 25/26*

## THE STORY OF **DELIVERANCE** > 39



- 41 **Deliverance** from the Past > *Exodus 3 > February 1/2*
- 49 **Deliverance** for the Future > *Exodus 12 > February 8/9*
- 55 **Deliverance** for Today > *Exodus 16 > February 15/16*
- 61 **Deliverance** from Ourselves > *Exodus 20 > February 22/23*

## THE STORY OF **PROMISE** > 69



- 71 **Promise** Kept > *Joshua 3 > February 29 / March 1*
- 79 **Promise** Committed > *Joshua 24 > March 7/8*
- 85 **Promise** Made > *1 Samuel 16 > March 14/15*
- 91 **Promise** Fulfilled > *2 Samuel 7 > March 21/22*
- 99 **Promise** Affirmed > *1 Kings 11 > March 28/29*



THE GOD OF GENESIS  
IS THE GOD OF THE  
REST OF THE BIBLE.

# THE STORY OF GRACE

This year we are embarking upon a brand-new curriculum which over the course of the next 12 months will tell God's story from Genesis to Revelation in 10 different story segments. The goal for this year is to understand how God's story impacts your story, and to learn how to effectively share His story with others. We will be studying scripture chronologically and encourage you to once again or for the first time read through the Chronological Bible. The weekend lessons will not be limited to the weekly reading, but the "workbook" provided will let you know where we are going in each section as we discover His Plan - Our Purpose from Genesis to Revelation. This month we will focus on the Story of Grace in the book of Genesis.

If we are going to look at "grace," we need to understand what it means. The grace of God is the most profound, powerful, and humbling thing we will ever experience; but it is also one of the most difficult concepts for us to grasp clearly. We are accustomed to the understanding of what is fair and what people deserve. But the message of grace is different and unique. It has been said, "Grace is the opposite of karma, which is all about getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve." Grace is the love of God shown to the unlovely; the peace of God given to the restless; the unmerited favor of God.<sup>1</sup> Grace begins in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. Ray Stedman says "We must remember, as we study, that Genesis is the first chapter of the story that ends with the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the declaration of the way God has found to obtain the release of human life from despair and death, and to bring it into power, excitement, and grace. In other words, the God of Genesis is the God of the rest of the Bible."<sup>2</sup>

So often, we think the God of the New Testament is the God of Grace and the God of the Old Testament is the God of Judgment. We will see today and the weeks to come that from the very beginning of the story, God is a God of Grace; and within the grace of God there will be boundaries and ultimately consequences, even judgment. God is love (1 John 4:16) and that love is demonstrated both through His grace and His judgment.

This month we are going to explore the Story of Grace in the following ways.

Jan 4/5	Grace in Creation - Genesis 1 & 2
Jan 11/12	Grace in the Garden - Genesis 2 & 3
Jan 18/19	Grace in the Ark - Genesis 6-8
Jan 25/26	Grace to All - Genesis 15

Throughout these lessons prayerfully look at how God's Story impacts Your Story. Consider the words of Dr. Warren Weirsbe: "When He wrote the Bible, God didn't give us a ponderous theology book divided into sections labeled *God*, *Creation*, *Man*, *Sin*, and so forth. Instead, He gave us a story, a narrative that begins in eternity past and ends in eternity future."<sup>3</sup>

Let the story begin where it was intended; **In the beginning God.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Justin Holcomb, *What is Grace?*, Christianity.com.

<sup>2</sup> Ray C. Stedman, *Authentic Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Warren Weirsbe, *Be Basic (Genesis 1-11)*, David C. Cook, 2010.



IN THE  
BEGINNING GOD  
CREATED THE  
HEAVENS AND  
THE EARTH.

GENESIS 1:1

# GRACE

## IN CREATION

### DATE

January 4 & 5

### WEEK

1 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Genesis 1:1

## SETTING THE STAGE

The stage is simple; darkness, emptiness, vast void. Then it happens, God creates. And that is where it all begins.

Have you ever arrived at the movie theater after the movie already started? It may be just 5-10 minutes into the movie, but the story has begun, the characters have been introduced, and the context has been set. You spend the next 10-15 minutes trying to figure who goes with whom, where they are and what they want to accomplish. You end up trying to catch up and understand that which was made clear from the beginning, which you missed.

It is the same way for many people in life, especially at the beginning of the year wondering if this year is going to be different. Is this year going to be better? Is this year going to be more meaningful? Is my story going to be clearer this year? There are those who struggle to make sense of their own story because they have missed the beginning of it.

How does that happen? They were there when they were born obviously. But what about the beginning of all beginnings. Without a proper understanding of God and how we came into existence, we will never understand the purpose of our lives and how the story is supposed to unfold.

Today we are going to begin the story at the very beginning. We are going to focus on the first act of HIS story, with not just an actor or producer, but with the Creator: God Himself.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. The God of Grace
2. The Light of Grace
3. The Handiwork of Grace

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Hebrew word for "ground" is Adamah
- Hebrew word for "man" is Adam
- From Adamah God made Adam

# GRACE

## IN CREATION

### 1. THE GOD OF GRACE

We will begin God's story at the most logical of places, the beginning. Ray Stedman writes "We must remember, as we study, that Genesis is the first chapter of the story that ends with the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the declaration of the way God has found to obtain the release of human life from despair and death, and to bring it into power, excitement, and grace. In other words, the God of Genesis is the God of the rest of the Bible."<sup>1</sup>

So often, we think the God of the New Testament is the God of Grace and the God of the Old Testament is the God of Judgment. We will see today and, in the weeks, to come that from the very beginning of the story, God is a God of Grace; and within the grace of God there will be boundaries and ultimately consequences, even judgment. God is love (1 John 4:16) and that love is demonstrated both through His grace and His judgment. In this lesson, we see that love manifested through His gracious gift of creation.

The first four words of the entire Bible introduce us to the primary character of the story, and the next six words lay the foundation.

Warren Weirsbe writes, "When He wrote the Bible, God didn't give us a ponderous theology book divided into sections labeled God, Creation, Man, Sin, and so forth. Instead, He gave us a story, a narrative that begins in eternity past and ends in eternity future."

**GENESIS 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Countless books have been written and rewritten based on these ten words. Debates have been held for centuries based on these ten words. These ten simple words provide the main character and foundation of our story. Not just the story of God, but collectively "our" story.

You and I were not in the beginning, we were created. All that we can see, hear and touch were not in the beginning, but created. Civilizations, leaders, industries, boundaries and countries were not in the beginning, but created.

The first few words of our story are based on this presupposition: God and only God was in the beginning. There is nothing that expands on that truth. There is no fanfare, no trumpets, no explanation; rather very plainly and deliberately the Bible says, "*In the beginning God.*" In its simplicity we find complexity. Our finite minds want to focus on the tangibles of a specific start and specific end. We can understand that which is finite, we struggle with the understanding of the eternal; that which has no beginning and no end.

Even Moses struggled to recognize this when he wrote Psalm 90.

**PSALM 90:2** *Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

Warren Weirsbe writes, "When He wrote the Bible, God didn't give us a ponderous theology book divided into sections labeled *God, Creation, Man, Sin*, and so forth. Instead, He gave us a story, a narrative that begins in eternity past and ends in eternity future."<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Ray C. Stedman; *Authentic Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Basic (Genesis 1-11)*, David C. Cook, 2010.



Thus, our story starts in eternity past, in the beginning God. And from that beginning we see the grace of God in action with the very next word: created.

In the beginning God created. Everything that exists is because God, in His grace, created the heavens and the earth. There is nothing that has ever existed that did not exist without this foundational truth of the story. God is Creator and throughout the entire Bible, writers, prophets, leaders, kings, priests and even shepherds recognized that truth.

The foundation of our story is laid, now let's see how it unfolds.

**GENESIS 1:2** *The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* <sup>3</sup>*Then God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light.* <sup>4</sup>*And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.*

If you simply look at verse 2 isolated, it would be scary. The earth had no structure, no form, no real purpose; there was simply darkness on the surface of the deep.

From the beginning of creation there was darkness. Darkness can be scary, intimidating and even overwhelming at times. Darkness can also be overpowering.

There are people of all ages who sleep at night in the darkness, but not without a nightlight. There is often times a fear associated with darkness. The beginning was chaos; dark, void and formless.

If the work of grace in the soul is a new creation, this chaos represents the state of an unregenerate graceless soul: there is disorder, confusion, and every evil work; it is empty of all good, for it is without God; it is not only dark, it is darkness itself. This is our condition by nature, till almighty grace effects a blessed change. <sup>3</sup>

And it was in the midst of the darkness that the Spirit of God was moving and hovering over the surface of the waters. There is a sense of anticipation of what the Spirit of God will do in the midst of this darkness. I picture in my mind's eye a low-lying fog that is hovering over the water, surrounding and covering the darkness in all directions as far as you can see. Darkness that intimidates and overwhelms. Darkness that hides, covers, and even overpowers. And yet, the darkness is not alone; the Spirit of God is moving and hovering with anticipation expressing a hint of grace.

Consider that from the very beginning of the story, even in the midst of the darkness, we are introduced to the fullness of God. God, the Creator was in the beginning. But before anything took shape, in the midst of the darkness we are introduced to the Spirit of God hovering and moving over the water. The activity of God's Spirit is the greatest word of comfort that human beings can know. He moved upon the face of the waters indicating that the chaos is not the final story. <sup>4</sup> The Spirit of God present at creation does not allow darkness to win. It does not allow darkness to intimidate or overpower. The presence of the Spirit of God shows that God wants to be ever present. In the midst of our darkness and challenges; in the midst of our chaotic circumstances; in the midst of when we are feeling void, God shows His grace and wants to be present with us.

THE GOD OF GENESIS  
IS THE GOD OF THE  
REST OF THE BIBLE.

The Spirit of God  
present at creation  
does not allow  
darkness to win.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, Commentary, Genesis 1, [www.second.org/teachers](http://www.second.org/teachers).

<sup>4</sup> Dr. James Dixon, *Geneis: Expository Thoughts*, Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005.

Clearly, we see God and the Spirit in Genesis 1, but if we look at John 1:1-3 we see that Jesus was there also in the beginning.

**JOHN 1:1-3** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Pause for a moment to consider that God is complete with no need of anything or anyone. He is God; the Hebrew word used is *Elohim*, which is used in Genesis 1 in the plural form 32 times and means “All Powerful God.” As *Elohim*, He lacks nothing, yet bestows grace to us through creation.

As His story unfolds over these next 12 months, we will see that God, the Creator is the Father. God, the Son is Jesus. God, the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. But we capture a bit of that triune truth here in Genesis.

And it is the grace of God that creation even took place. In the midst of the darkness, the Spirit of God moved in such a way as to be ever present hovering over the water, not being consumed by the darkness. God desired there to be structure, purpose and relationship. God did not need creation, yet by His grace He created. He did this while the Spirit of God was hovering over the water in the darkness with anticipation.

Several years ago, I went spelunking for my very first time in some caves in Missouri. It was as dark as you can imagine. In fact, no one was allowed to go inside without a personal flashlight. The camp leaders knew that it was so dark in there that without light it would be not only scary, but dangerous. There was a need for light in order to proceed moving forward. Once our group got into a certain spot in the cave, our guide asked us all to turn off all the flashlights. It was pitch black. Even though I knew who was next to me, I could not see them; I could not see my hand in front of my face. The only thing that brought comfort was light. There was a collective sigh of relief when after a few minutes the guide said, “let there be light” and he turned his flashlight on.

## 2. THE LIGHT OF GRACE

---

While the Spirit of God was hovering over the water in the darkness with anticipation; it was at that moment of anticipation that everything changed. The grace of God changes everything with four spoken words; “*Let there be light.*” In the midst of the darkness with the Spirit of God moving over the surface of the waters, a candle was lit for all eternity. God did not have to use His hands or tools; God merely spoke, and light was created, and it was good. Light, in fact is not only good, it is essential to life. Light is the main source of energy for all organisms. Light is something we need yet often take for granted. However, every time we see light it should be a reminder of the grace of God in creation.

Light would come to be a reminder of the presence of God (*1 John 1:5*), the promise of God (*1 Peter 2:9*), the plan of God (*Psalms 119:105*) and the power of God (*Psalms 27:1*) Light would even be used to describe Jesus, the Son of God.

**JOHN 1:4-5** *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

In John chapter 3, after the infamous verse of John 3:16 we find these words concerning light in the following verses as Jesus continues to dialogue with Nicodemus, ironically during the darkness of night.

**JOHN 3:19-21** *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone practicing evil hates the light*

*and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*

From the beginning of creation there was always meant to be light. The very first thing God speaks into creation is light and that changes everything. God chose not to leave earth formless and void in darkness. God chose not to let His creation be overwhelming, intimidating and scary. God chose to show grace. God chose to say, “*let there be light*” and there was light.

**GENESIS 1:5** *God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So, the evening and the morning were the first day.*

The separation has been defined and named. Light will be called Day. Darkness will be called Night. It was in this part of creation that God begins a pattern of separation. Not only did God separate light from darkness/day from night. He also separated the waters above from the waters beneath (v. 6-8) and separated the land from the waters (v. 9-10). Later in the story of God in the Bible, He separates His people (Israel), from the nations around them (*Exodus 34:10-17*). In the Gospel of Matthew, He separates the sheep from the goats (*Matthew 25:31-46*).

Notice that although there is light and darkness there is not a sun or moon yet; that comes in day four. To be honest it is not clearly stated the source of the light on the first day. However, it is noted clearly at the end of the story that God Himself is light.

**1 JOHN 1:5** *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*

**REVELATION 21:23** *The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*

On day one of creation it is like God allowed His glory to shine forth in such a way to bear light on that which was dark. He continued that process throughout the story, culminating in what will be our heavenly home as portrayed in Revelation. The grace of light shines for eternity.

### 3. THE HANDIWORK OF GRACE

---

We have seen the God of Grace, the Light of Grace which shined throughout creation in days one through five. Now in day six of creation we see the Handiwork of Grace in both male and female.

The beginning of day six is the creation of animals.

**GENESIS 1:24-25** *Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind;” and it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

The animals were created each according to its kind, each with purpose and each was good. But then in verse 26, on the same day God creates man and woman.

**GENESIS 1:26-28** *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

Though we will not dive into it, we should take notice of the plural nouns here, “*our image*” and “*our likeness*,” which does not state clearly the Trinity, but it does support the Trinity as we have seen in looking at Genesis 1 thus far in conjunction with John 1:1-3. The plural pronoun usage here is unique to the creation story, which makes sense when we consider what is being created.

To look more closely at this part of creation let’s look at Genesis 2, which allows us to zoom in on parts of creation from chapter one.

**GENESIS 2:7** *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

From the dust of the ground, from that which God had created; He formed man. The Hebrew word for “ground” is “*Adamah*.” The Hebrew word for “man” is “*Adam*.” So, from *Adamah*, God made *Adam*.

The Hebrew word translated “formed” means like a pottery with clay, shaping and molding.

Notice that this is the only part of creation where God gets His hands dirty, if you will. There is an intimacy to this part of creation that exists nowhere else in the previous things created. God wanted to purposely form, mold and shape us into His likeness, making us unique and above all other creations.

David would note it like this in Psalm 139:

**PSALMS 139:13-14** *For You **formed** (same word as Genesis 2:7) my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. <sup>14</sup> I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

God got personal when He created man. He did not just speak, but He interacted. With great care and deliberation God formed, shaped and molded man in His image. Not necessarily in the physical image, but notice what God does once man is formed.

**GENESIS 2:7B** *...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

The word used for breathed, is literally “exhaling a breath.” This part of creation sets us apart from all other living, breathing creatures. God breathed the “*breath of life*” into us which made us not only physical beings but spiritual beings.

**IN GENESIS 1:26**, when God said, “Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness...”

I do believe this is a reference to the Trinity, again not camping here but touching on it. This part of creation is the essence of God’s grace. This is the embodiment of God’s grace, literally and figuratively.

Because as we zoom in on this part of creation, it is clear that we as human beings are different and unique from all other creation. We are created in the image of God, the fullness of God. God the Father, God, the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we think of these verses it should remind us of the mind, body and spirit. This is what separates us from any other creature.

Unlike the angels and animals, humans can have a very special relationship with God. He not only gave us personality – minds to think with, emotions to feel with, and wills for making decisions – but He also gave us an inner spiritual nature that enables us to know Him and worship Him. <sup>5</sup>

In days one through five God said what He created was “*good*.” On day six, when He created man in His image, He said it was “*very good*.” (*Genesis 1:31*)

God breathed not just life, but spirit into each one of us. We are reminded with this picture of creation that God wanted to be involved in our lives from the very beginning. God, by His Grace, chose to get His

---

<sup>5</sup> *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary; Complete Old Testament*, Colorado Springs, CO; David C. Cook, 2007, p. 16.

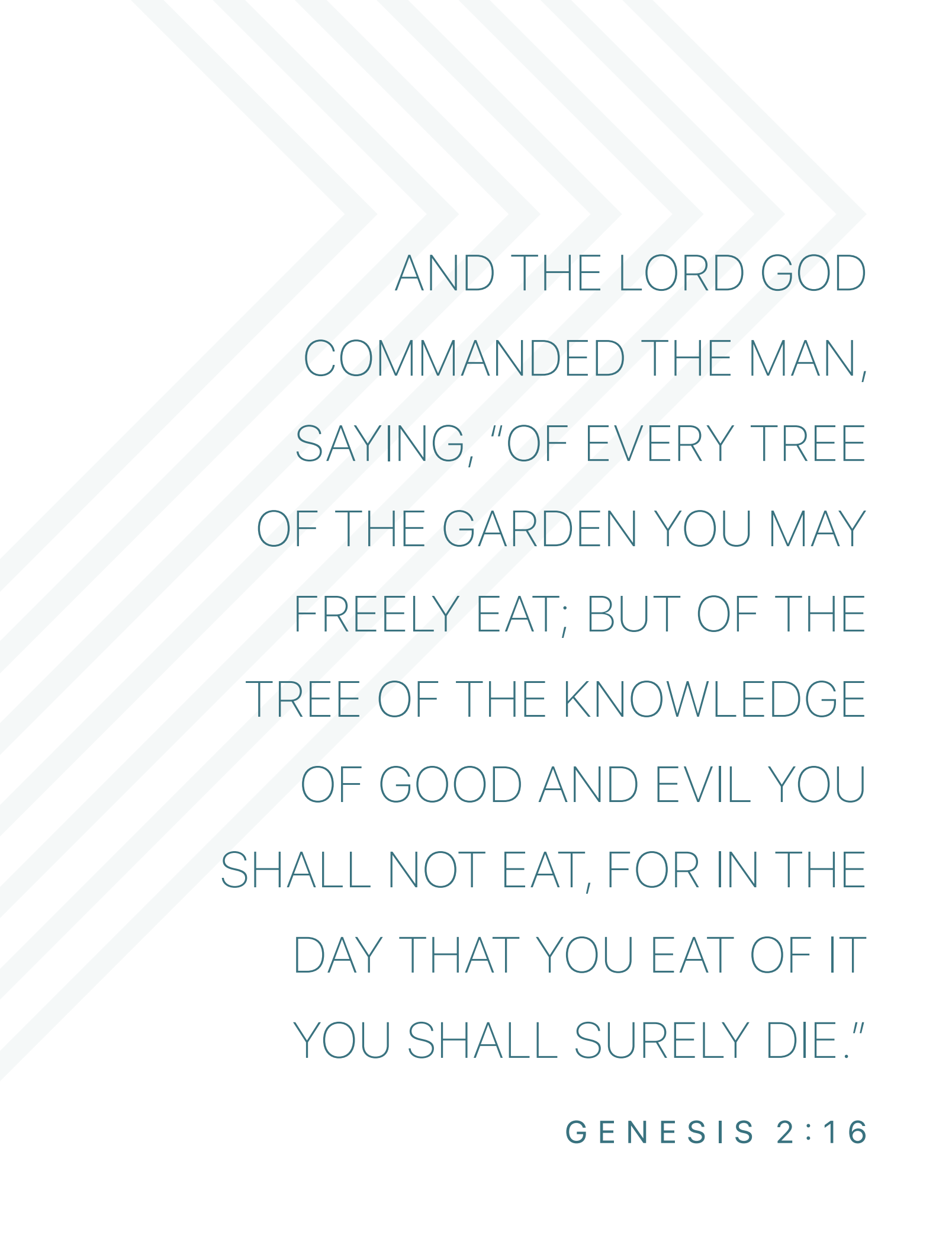
hands dirty when He created man in His image both male and female. God created us for relationship with Him; and it all started *"In the Beginning."*

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

The Story of God begins in the beginning as does our individual stories. God created light that changed everything. Though God could have merely spoken man into existence like He did everything else. Even with the animals, that came out of the earth, God utilized the earth and not His hands in their creation. But with you and me and all humankind, we were unique from the beginning. By the Grace of God, He had something different in mind for us from the beginning. God was willing to get His hands dirty with us from the beginning, which is a clear picture of His grace in action.

As we start this new year; it is a time to reflect and renew. This is a new year, a new beginning, a new opportunity. Let this year be a year where you allow God to get His hands dirty in the shaping and forming of your life, your priorities, your relationships. Allow the grace of God to do a life changing work in you from the inside out; so that you may be His light in this dark world.

This year, let His Story shape Your Story. Let His Plan shape Your Purpose.



AND THE LORD GOD  
COMMANDED THE MAN,  
SAYING, "OF EVERY TREE  
OF THE GARDEN YOU MAY  
FREELY EAT; BUT OF THE  
TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE  
OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU  
SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE  
DAY THAT YOU EAT OF IT  
YOU SHALL SURELY DIE."

GENESIS 2:16

# GRACE

## IN THE GARDEN

### DATE

January 11 & 12

### WEEK

2 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Genesis 2:16

## SETTING THE STAGE

Today we continue with the Story of Grace, looking specifically at Grace in the Garden.

This week in Genesis chapters 2 and 3, we see the name of God become more personal. In Chapter 1, it was simply “God.” It was the Hebrew word, “Elohim.” But now we have “*LORD God*,” which we see 11 times in 22 verses.

When you see LORD in all “caps” that is the Hebrew word for Yahweh or Jehovah. It is the personal name of God. Think of it as the difference between Mr. Smith and John Smith. “John Smith” would be more personal, intimate, and accessible. So, in Chapter 2 we see God as more personal, intimate and accessible to His creation.

God did not wait until the New Testament with the birth of Jesus Christ to become personal and intimate and accessible. God is LORD God; Yahweh/Jehovah. A personal God from the very beginning of creation.

We know that God wanted to be involved from the beginning; hence the act of Grace in Creation. God never intended for His creation to be on cruise control or function like a robot. God created living plants, animals, nutrients that would allow growth and provision for all living creatures. His creation was designed to work together in perfect harmony, each unique element having purpose and value. In Chapter 2, we see this clearly in the midst of a garden.

God set, with great intentionality, that which He created in His own image, in the midst of a garden. We have seen the Grace of God in creation. And throughout creation, God spoke something into existence. Yet with man, He got His hands dirty by “forming” man in His own image, both male and female. *Continued on page 16 >*

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Grace In Responsibility
2. Grace In Freedom
3. Grace In the Fall

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Everything needed for life was in the Garden of Eden.
- The Hebrew word “Akul” means eat without restraint.

# GRACE

## IN THE GARDEN

*Setting the Stage, continued* > Understanding what grace means requires going back to an old Hebrew term that meant “to bend, to stoop.” To show grace is to extend favor or kindness to one who does not deserve it and can never earn it. Receiving God’s acceptance by grace always stands in sharp contrast to earning it on the basis of works.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout creation God had shown grace by bending, stooping, and leaning towards that which He had created, getting His hands dirty in forming man and woman. The expectation of God was that in turn Adam and Eve would get their hands dirty by tending and taking care of that which God had created.

### 1. GRACE IN RESPONSIBILITY

**GENESIS 2:8-10** *The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. <sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <sup>10</sup> Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.*

The LORD God planted a garden that we have come to know as the Garden of Eden. Everything you ever needed for life was in the garden. There were plants, fruits, trees, and even four riverheads; all of which would work together to provide all the sustenance and nutrition needed; and it was all in the midst of the garden.

Understanding what grace means requires going back to an old Hebrew term that meant “to bend, to stoop.”

For many people this is a familiar story, or at least parts of the story are familiar to some degree. But consider the phrase, “in the midst of the garden.” We may be quick to overlook that phrase, but it gives detail to the fact that everything needed for man and woman were within the parameters of that garden.

The Tree of Life was in the “midst of the garden.” The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was in the “midst of the garden.” Everything that Adam and Eve needed was in the “midst of the garden.” All that was good in the world was in the “midst of the garden.” We also know that all that was bad for them was in the “midst of the garden.”

Adam and Eve were to live LIFE in the “midst of the garden.” The choices they were to make were to be made in the “midst of the garden.” The responsibilities they had were to be carried out in the “midst of the garden.” This garden was like every other garden that takes responsibility to keep it working and growing.

**GENESIS 2:15** *Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend (cultivate) and keep it.*



<sup>1</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening: Believing in Grace is One Thing. Living it is Another*, Thomas Nelson, 2006.



There is grace in responsibility. God could have easily taken the burden upon Himself. He could have created the plants and trees in such a way as to never need attention or cultivation. Yet God wanted man to have responsibility. God wanted man to experience the grace of nurturing, the grace of cultivating, the grace of giving attention.

In Genesis 1, God was very clear from the beginning that He intended for man and woman to have authority and responsibility.

**GENESIS 1:26-28** *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

The concept of work and responsibility was never the result of the fall. The concept of work and responsibility is part of grace in the garden. God created us in such a way to give us the privilege of living freely, making choices, and having responsibility.

Even in the midst of the garden, Adam and Eve had the responsibility to tend and keep the garden. They had the responsibility to be fruitful and multiply. They had the responsibility to name the animals. They had the responsibility for one another. They had responsibility to their Creator, to do what He had asked within the garden. All of this took place because God created man and woman to be different from all other creatures. We are unique in our grace in responsibility. A responsibility which also comes with great freedom.

## 2. GRACE IN FREEDOM

---

**GENESIS 2:16** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;*

In the midst of the garden was grace in freedom. The Hebrew word “*Akul*” means to “eat without restraint.” So from the beginning, God wanted man and woman to experience freedom in the midst of the garden. He did not want to confine us to robotic status. He did not want us to be restricted in actions or opportunities. There is a measure of trust involved with freedom. Notice that God did not simply make a suggestion of freedom. He used a very strong word translated as “commanded.” It is the Hebrew word “*Tsavah*” which means a “command or order.”

In essence, God is making sure that Adam and Eve understand clearly that He wants them to experience grace in freedom. In the creativity of God, He provided a variety of animals, plants, trees, even four rivers instead of just one. God is letting them and us know that we have free choices to make in the midst of the garden.

**The Hebrew word “*Akul*” means to eat without restraint.**

And we still live in the midst of the garden today. Everything we need for sustenance and nutrition is available to us, especially in this country. We have been given great freedom, but remember freedom exists in the realm of responsibility. The two always go together.

In God’s grace, He provided man and woman with responsibility and freedom in the midst of the garden. Everything that was good was in the midst of the garden. Everything that was needed was in the midst of the garden. Everything that was part of life was in the midst of the garden; including two trees; the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (*Genesis 2:9*). God set everything up in the midst of the garden including parameters and boundaries.

**GENESIS 2:16** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

God did not complicate it at all; in fact, He made it quite clear. Man has been given responsibility and freedom; freedom to choose. Obedience to God leads to life and enjoying all that is provided; eating without restraint and freedom. Disobedience to God ultimately leads to death. It was simply one tree in the midst of the garden that was off limits. God was not being mean. In the midst of the garden, God showed grace.

Think of it in terms of a parent and child. Every child has great freedom; but every parent would be remiss if they did not implement some parameters for the good of and protection of the child.

God is the ultimate parent. We are often the stubborn and prideful children. We are in this relationship with God, as His creation and He the Creator. Regardless of whether we acknowledge or embrace the relationship; it exists. God has set up parameters for our good and our protection. We have the complete freedom to listen to what God says and obey. Or we have the complete freedom to not listen to what God says and disobey and ignore the parameters.

God always wanted man and woman to have freedom of choice. Again, He did not want robots or puppets; rather He wanted living, breathing human beings created in the image of God. Here is another way to think of it; man came from the dust, the ground. Adam came from *Adamah* (which we saw in last week’s lesson). The trees and plants came out of the ground. So, man and woman have the free choice of relating more to the creation, that which comes from the ground; or the free choice of relating more to the Creator, the One who created the ground itself.

The free choice has to be made in the “midst of the garden.” Sometimes with freedom comes a fall.

### 3. GRACE IN THE FALL

---

“If Genesis 3 were not in the Bible, there would be no Bible as we know it. Why? Because the rest of Scripture documents the sad consequences of Adam’s sin and explains what God in His grace has done to rescue us.” <sup>2</sup>

**GENESIS 3:1-7** *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”*

*<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

In these seven verses, history was changed with the fall of man. There is no explanation of where the serpent came from in these verses, the serpent merely appears. Thus, begins a conflict that is traced through the stories from Genesis 3 to Revelation 21. It is a conflict that we face today at home, in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening: Believing in Grace is One Thing. Living it is Another.*

workplace, on the ballfield, at school and even at church. Throughout Genesis, Satan is referred to as a serpent, although elsewhere in scripture he is referred to as a roaring lion, a dragon, angel of light, devil, the evil one, prince of this world and destroyer.

Regardless of the name or reference, Satan is consistent in that he wants to steal, kill and destroy. He wants nothing more or less than for us to be separated from God. In these verses, Satan, as the serpent captures the attention of Eve first.

Satan asked a very simple, almost innocent, question. *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”* In the simplicity, there was a seed of doubt planted. Satan will often begin in such a way when he tempts us; simple, casual, and even seemingly innocent. There was nothing inherently wrong in the question. The problem was in how Eve responded. It is the response that changes everything.

Eve could have easily ignored the serpent. Though admittedly in the midst of the garden, a talking serpent probably would capture anyone’s attention. Eve began this brief conversation with the serpent, and she let her guard down.

And then as serpents tend to do, it struck. This time it was not with a seed of doubt, but an outright lie. When Satan, as the serpent, says this lie, notice where the eyes of Eve are looking.

**GENESIS 3:6-7** *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

It just takes a split second for your eyes to be taken off that which is right. Countless accidents occur each year because someone takes their eyes off the road. Countless golf balls have been missed because the golfer takes their eyes off the ball. Eve took her eyes off of God and the truth of God, if even for a split second. The tree looked good. The tree was pleasant to the eyes. The tree was desirable to make one wise. The tree was in the midst of the garden. The tree was accessible. And she took of its fruit and ate; and then she also gave it to her husband, and he ate.

With a blink of an eye, and a bite of the fruit sin entered the world. Then the eyes of both of them were opened. They had been given responsibility and freedom. They had been given parameters that were for their own good.

Their eyes were open and for the first time they felt shame in their nakedness. Their initial response was to try and hide. Artists have rendered fig leaves covering the private parts of both Adam and Eve, and yet it was possible they had tried to cover all of themselves in such a way as to hide in their shame. They knew they had done wrong. They had disobeyed God. Sin should always cause us to be uncomfortable whether it be ashamed of doing wrong or feeling guilty, both of which they experienced.

The verses that follow show Adam and Eve tried without success to hide from God. How often do we do the same? We disobey God. We sin. We take our eyes off that which is right. We believe the lie and we hide both figuratively and literally. Adam and Eve had such a personal and intimate relationship with God and yet because of their disobedience they hid.

**GENESIS 3:9-13** *Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”<sup>10</sup> So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”<sup>11</sup> And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”<sup>12</sup> Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”<sup>13</sup> And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

**“If Genesis 3 were not in the Bible, there would be no Bible as we know it. Why? Because the rest of Scripture documents the sad consequences of Adam’s sin and explains what God in His grace has done to rescue us.”**

Although Adam and Eve took their eyes off of God, God never took His eyes off of them. God knew exactly where they were. God knew exactly what they had done. But God wanted them to own their sin. God wanted them to confess their sin. God wanted them to realize they had made a choice to disobey.

God spoke to them. God's voice was both a horror and a comfort at this point. More than ever, Adam and Eve, were in a sinful state where they had to hear the voice of God. It is hard to keep our attention focused on His words when our sin is in view, but it more critical than ever.<sup>3</sup>

Upon hearing the voice of God, they began the ever-popular "blame game." Adam blamed both God and Eve: the woman "you" gave me, "she" gave me of the tree, and I ate. He owned his sin after he blamed both God and Eve. Eve blamed the serpent as being the one who deceived her; but then she owned her sin when she said, "I ate." They both openly confessed before God.

There were going to be consequences because of their sin. These consequences continue to this day. There were consequences for the serpent (v. 14-15). There were consequences for Eve (v. 16). There were consequences for Adam (v. 17-19). The pain of childbirth started as a consequence of Eve's sin. Thorns, thistles, sweat and pain in physical work started as a consequence of their sin. Physical death started as a consequence of their sin. And most importantly, spiritual separation from God started as a consequence here in these verses.

And yet, there is still grace in the fall. Remember, Adam and Eve noticed they were naked; they were ashamed of their nakedness after their disobedience. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. But God showed grace.

**GENESIS 3:21** *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

In the simplicity of this verse, we see the complexity of God's grace. The fig leaves were not going to work. God provided a covering of their physical bodies that symbolized a covering of their sin and disobedience. Blood had to be shed for the skin of an animal to be made into a tunic that covered both Adam and Eve. Throughout the Old Testament God required the sacrifice of an animal; shed blood to serve as confession before God and to stay in relationship with Him. The prophet Isaiah realized the importance of the covering of God in this relationship.

**ISAIAH 61:10** *I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with robes of righteousness.*

In the New Testament, when Jesus was crucified on the cross; it would be the final sacrifice ever needed. Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross so that you and I might be eternally covered for our sins, thus clothing us with garments of salvation and wrapping us with robes of righteousness.

The grace of the cross began in the midst of the garden when God provided covering for Adam and Eve. He has always shown His grace in the midst of our garden of battles, challenges, disobedience, mistakes, guilt, and even shame. The good news of grace that was found in the garden still prevails today.

---

<sup>3</sup> Dr. James Dixon, *Genesis: Expository Thoughts*. Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005, p. 91.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Life was meant to be lived “in the midst of the garden.” As far back as Adam and Eve, there was responsibility and freedom. We are not to live with a sense of entitlement. If anyone had the right to be “entitled” it would have been Adam and Eve, yet God graciously gave them responsibility in the midst of the garden.

The freedom we have today is unparalleled in all of history. However, with greater freedom, comes greater responsibility and a greater possibility of falling. Not falling from grace but falling from that which God had purposed for us; a loving personal relationship with Him.

In the midst of the garden we are to stay on the path. It all comes down to choices. Regardless of whether or not we see the bright colorful trees or the pesky little weeds in the garden; we make a choice on whether or not to stay on the path.

- Do we stay focused?
- Do we stay connected with God?
- Do we stay connected with family and friends?
- Do we remain faithful in our values and morals?

Adam and Eve made a choice that has consequences to this very day for all of us. God showed them grace in the fall. God covered their nakedness which symbolized the sacrificial covering that would be necessary to be right before God. God showed grace once again through His Son, Jesus Christ as that final sacrifice; covering us for all eternity.

Remember what Adam and Eve experienced in the midst of the garden is available to you as well.

God's grace.

God's provision.

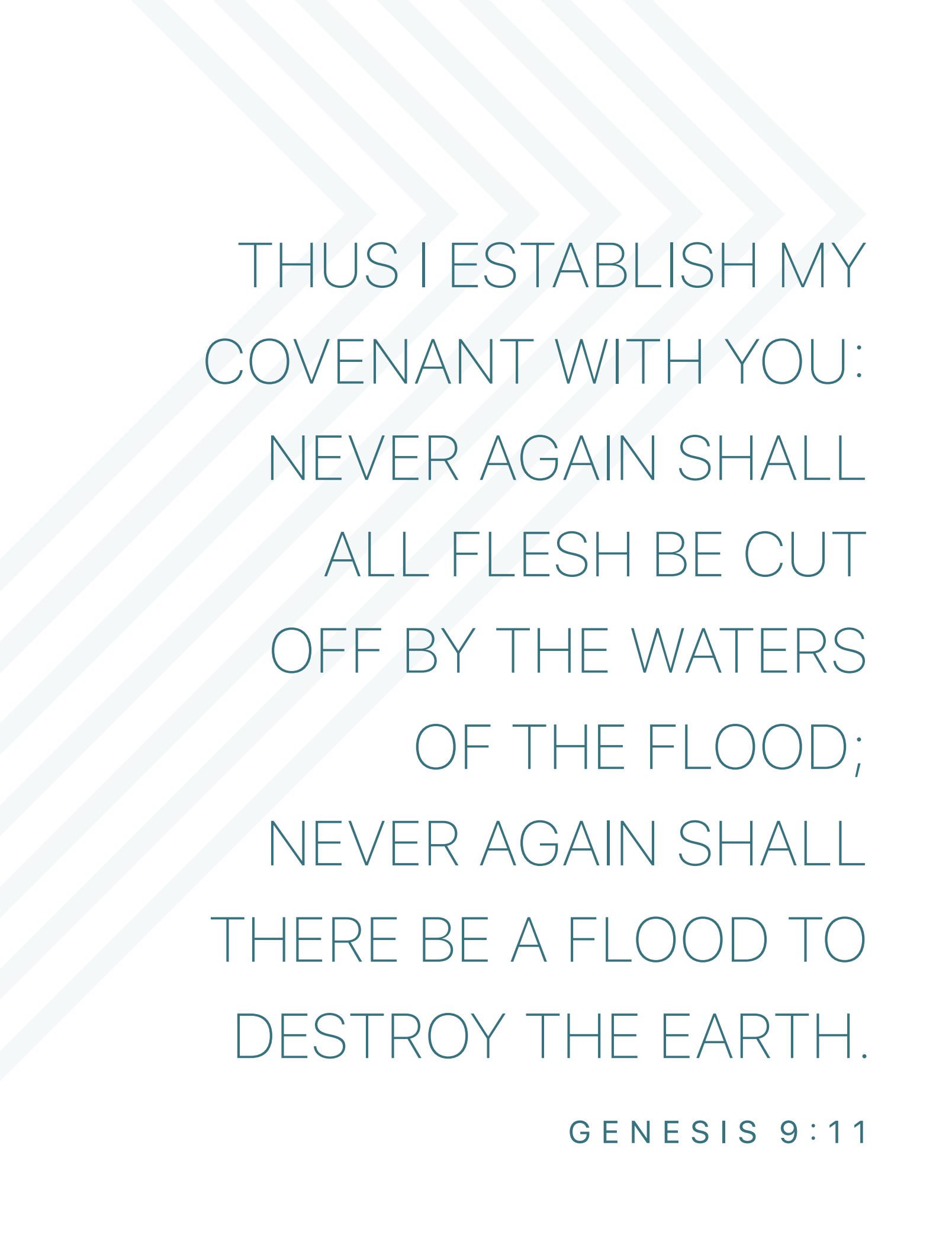
God's mercy.

God's forgiveness.

God's protection.

God's direction.

God's grace finds us right where we are in the midst of the garden, covering us, forgiving us and walking with us.



THUS I ESTABLISH MY  
COVENANT WITH YOU:  
NEVER AGAIN SHALL  
ALL FLESH BE CUT  
OFF BY THE WATERS  
OF THE FLOOD;  
NEVER AGAIN SHALL  
THERE BE A FLOOD TO  
DESTROY THE EARTH.

GENESIS 9:11

# GRACE

## IN THE ARK

### DATE

January 18 & 19

### WEEK

3 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Genesis 9:11

## SETTING THE STAGE

In Genesis 6, we are told that creation was in dire need of a “reset.” As we learned last week in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve introduced sin into this world, and since then it has spread across all of humanity (*Romans 5:12*). We see this in Genesis 4 with the first murder, as Cain kills Abel. Eight generations later, we see Lamech kill a man and even boast about it (*Genesis 4:23-24*). Then we get to chapter 6 and we are told that the sons of God were marrying the daughters of men (*Genesis 6:1-4*). Interpretations vary on those 4 complex verses ranging from the intermarriage of pagan, tyrant kings with God’s people, to the intermarriage of fallen angels with humanity. Regardless of the interpretation, we know that it was a detestable thing and it broke the heart of God. We are told in Genesis 6:5-6, “<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” When we read that passage, it initially seems harsh. Did the Father truly regret making people in His own image? Did God make a mistake in His creation? Kenneth Matthews explains: “God’s response of grief over the making of humanity, however, is not remorse in the sense of sorrow over a mistaken creation; our verse shows that God’s pain has its source in the perversion of human sin. The making of ‘man’ is no error; it is what ‘man’ has made of himself.”<sup>1</sup>

God’s heart was broken over the sin of mankind. Sin grieves our God (*Ephesians 4:30*) not only because it robs Him of the glory that He is due, but it also robs us of the joy that He designed us to walk in. Because of this, God chose to hit the reset button through the flood. In one fierce storm, the likes of which will never be seen again, God blotted out nearly all the life on this earth. However, if you know the story, He did not blot out **ALL** living things. *Continued on page 24 >*

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. God Offers Grace Before Judgment
2. God’s Grace Has a Time Limit
3. God’s Grace Gives Us a New Beginning

### THINGS TO KNOW

- We all need the greater ark, Jesus Christ to save us from the flood of God’s wrath and deliver us to a new beginning.



# GRACE

## IN THE ARK

*Setting the Stage, continued* > Because of His great mercy and grace, God preserved a remnant through one faithful servant, Noah (*Genesis 6:8*). As we journey through this story today, we will see that God's grace was extravagant, even in the midst of His righteous and terrifying judgment.

### Introduction

Have you ever hit your wits' end with technology? For many, technological advancements have been life's greatest blessing, but also life's greatest curse. John Tudor put it this way, "Technology makes it possible for people to gain control over everything, except technology."<sup>2</sup> Technology is hard to get a handle on! Have you ever been working hard on your computer, and then at the worst time it begins to lag? Maybe you've been in the middle of an episode of your favorite show when abruptly the TV screen freezes up. Or perhaps you have been frustrated to discover that your router is suddenly not delivering the Wi-Fi connection it should. We have all had those moments where our home technology

is not operating the way it should and there is no clear way to repair it. However, sometimes we notice there is a magical "reset" button that allows us to start over. With one simple push of that button, the device resets and removes all of our problems, and in return, it gives us a fresh start.

### Exposition

**GENESIS 6:13-19 NKJV** "And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. <sup>14</sup> Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. <sup>15</sup> And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

<sup>16</sup> You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. <sup>17</sup> And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. <sup>18</sup> But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark – you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. <sup>19</sup> And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female."

Noah is introduced in Genesis as a man that found favor in God's eyes. The Lord informed him of His plan to flood all of creation as a consequence for humanity's sin. However, God also tells Noah that he and his family will be spared through the construction of an unprecedented ark. In a baffling decree, Noah is commanded to build an enormous sea vessel in the middle of the desert. It is difficult to fathom how much faith it must have taken for



<sup>1</sup> *The New American Commentary*, Volume 1A, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> John Tudor, IT History Society, [ithistory.org/quotes/john\\_tudor](http://ithistory.org/quotes/john_tudor).



Noah to accept such an overwhelming task. Noah invested many years and resources into this ark's construction. It is fair to speculate that Noah received lots of criticism and mockery along the way. This was not a subtle DIY project that he was doing at home. He was building a 3-deck ship that was over 440 feet long, 73 feet wide, and 44 feet high. It would have yielded a displacement of 43,000 tons and provided approximately 95,700 square feet of deck area.<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, Noah withstood many personal attacks that questioned his mental well-being. Why did the ark have to be so large? More than protecting Noah and his seven family members, God told Noah that the ark would be used to protect the animals of the earth. Noah is appointed ship-maker, captain, and zookeeper all at once. He is told that at the appointed time, God will lead two of every kind of creature into this boat to ensure the future repopulation of the earth. But the truth is even with all those animals, there was still room to fit more people on that large of a boat. And I believe more could have boarded it because of our first point today.

**We all need the greater ark, Jesus Christ, to save us from the flood of God's wrath and deliver us to a new beginning.**

## 1. GOD OFFERS GRACE BEFORE JUDGMENT

In 2 Peter 2:5 it says Noah was a *"herald of righteousness."* This means Noah was not just a ship-maker; he was also a preacher! God used those years of construction as a time where Noah proclaimed God's righteous plan to his neighbors. I do believe Noah explained the ship's purpose. Noah surely told them that God was angry and that He was going to pour out His wrath through a world-wide flood. He must have pointed to that massive ark under construction as God's visible offer of salvation. Nonetheless, only the eight people in Noah's family ended up boarding the boat as passengers. This means no one believed his story. No one repented. No one asked to be on that boat with him before the storm.

This story translates into modern times quite well. Tragically, every single day people ignore their own Noah and their own ark. God sends "Noahs" our way all the time. Sometimes they are friends, family members, or colleagues. Other times they are preachers or missionaries. They may take on different titles, but they all are used by God as His "heralds," proclaiming His truth into our lives. They point to God's coming judgment, but they also point to an ark as a means of salvation. What is our ark? It is the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, we can be protected from the wrath of God that is to come and we are offered a new life filled with hope, just like Noah.

Noah's friends and neighbors were given ample time to think about and accept his offer. This too is the case in our own lives. In fact, Peter says Jesus has not returned yet because He is giving us additional time to get on "our ark" (2 Peter 3:9). But sadly, many ignore the messengers and take the patience of Jesus Christ lightly. Unfortunately, the story of the flood tells us that the decision has devastating consequences. The story of Noah reminds us that the window of opportunity will eventually come to a close.

**Did you know that this Hebrew word for ark (teba) only occurs in the Flood narrative and in Exodus 2:3,5, where it is the "basket" in which the infant Moses is placed in by his mother? Both Noah and Moses were saved from drowning through an "ark." <sup>4</sup>**

**GENESIS 7:11-16 NKJV** *"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened."<sup>12</sup> And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.<sup>13</sup> On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark – <sup>14</sup> they and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and*

<sup>3</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 280.

every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort.<sup>15</sup> And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which is the breath of life.<sup>16</sup> So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.”

After years of construction, God fulfilled this tragic promise. Most commentators believe the flood waters came for 40 days and 40 nights. But the water did not just come from the “top-down,” it came from the “bottom-up” as well (*Genesis 7:11*). Fountains of the earth began to gush with water and the earth began to accumulate water at a rate never seen before, or since. Water topped even the highest of the mountains (*Genesis 7:20*) and there was no salvation available apart from the ark. People on the outside quickly learned our second point:

## 2. GOD’S GRACE HAS A TIME LIMIT

---

God generously gave years for people to heed Noah’s warnings. God had been patient for generations in the past, however, the day came where His warnings were over. Instead of hearing about God’s wrath, people began to witness it for themselves. And God’s last word to them was not in the form of a sentence. It came through the form of divine action: He shut the ark’s door (*Genesis 7:7*).

Why would God Himself shut the door? That is a great question that has captured the imagination of many scholars for centuries. While the Bible does not explicitly answer that question, I believe it could be in part for two practical reasons.

“The expression, ‘And the Lord shut him in,’ beautifully shows God’s fatherly touch, at the very brink of judgment. The same care that saw this matter through carries our salvation to its conclusion.”<sup>4</sup>

**First, God shut the door to protect those who were inside.** God promised Noah and his family salvation through the ark. And when God begins a project, He always sees it through to completion (*Philippians 1:6*). His personal presence, sealing the door was a powerful reminder to Noah that God was on the boat with them. He was showing Noah that He would hold fast to His promise. In the same way, God follows through with His promise of salvation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul tells us in *Ephesians 1:13-14*,<sup>13</sup> *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*<sup>14</sup> *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.* When we step into our ark, by grace and through faith in Jesus Christ, God likewise shuts the door to our hearts. He seals it with the presence of His Holy Spirit, reminding us that He is with us in the future storms of this life and that our salvation is safe and secure. Nothing can break through and rob us of the salvation that we have accepted from Him through faith. God’s hand moving that door is a beautiful reminder to Noah, and to us, that our salvation and our future is in good hands.

**Secondly, God shut the door because time was up.** I can only imagine the horror of what Noah must have watched. Jesus says just days before the flood, people were eating, drinking, marrying, and celebrating (*Matthew 24:38*). They were caught completely off guard by the raging storm. Undoubtedly, they must have run to that boat in desperation when they saw the waters begin to rise. But they could not enter the ark because God’s grace had a time limit. They now believed Noah’s warnings, but it was simply too late. Why is that? Because faith is the key to opening up the door to salvation. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (*Hebrews 11:6*). When we die or when Christ returns (whichever comes first), the door to our own ark will likewise be closed. Why is that the case? Because there will no longer be room for faith. We will see the reality of our judgment with our own eyes just as Noah’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, page 98.

peers did. And like Noah's friends, many will grieve because they did not accept the clear invitation when it was presented (*Luke 13:25, Revelation 1:7*). They ignored the warnings and decided to take their own chances. Have you entered your ark? Have you accepted Jesus' invitation to salvation by grace and through faith? The door is open now, but the Biblical truth is that it could shut at any time.

So, God shuts the door and the rain begins to devastate the earth. For 40 days and 40 nights, the heavens are opened and creation experiences torrential downpour. Finally, after those 40 days, God closed the heavens but water continued to rise for 150 days (*Genesis 7:24*). As the water finally started to peak, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (*Genesis 8:4*). On that mountain, Noah's family had to wait seven more months for the water to recede fully. In total, they spent a little over a year on that ark together. But on that final day, God told Noah to get off the boat and gave him the same instructions He gave our first parents, Adam and Eve, "be fruitful and multiply" (*Genesis 8:17*). From there, He spoke with Noah and re-established a relationship with humanity.

**Read Luke 13:22-30 and notice the parallels to the story of the Flood. Jesus explains the door of salvation is open today but will be closed one day.**

**GENESIS 9:8-17 NKJV** *"Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: <sup>9</sup> 'And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your ]descendants after you, <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' <sup>12</sup> And God said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: <sup>13</sup> I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; <sup>15</sup> and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' <sup>17</sup> And God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.'"*

Noah hears from the Lord and receives wonderful news for all of the generations to come. God establishes the Noahic Covenant and communicates our final point.

### 3. GOD'S GRACE GIVES US A NEW BEGINNING

The ark did not just protect Noah from death, it delivered him to a brand-new life! On that mountain, God set up a covenant with Noah, establishing a new agreement not just with him personally, but with all of creation for the future. God unconditionally promises that He will never send another flood to destroy all life on this earth again. God did not communicate any rules or stipulations to that agreement, He simply offered a sign to prove His intentions. What is the sign? A beautiful rainbow. Warren Wiersbe explains this interesting choice.

"Rainbows are caused by sunlight filtering through the water in the air, each drop becoming a prism to release the colors hidden in the white light of the sun. Their lovely colors speak to us of what Peter called the 'manifold grace of God' (1 Peter 4:10). The Greek word translated 'manifold' means 'various, many-colored, variegated.' The rainbow reminds us of God's gracious covenant and the 'many-colored' grace of God ... A bow in an instrument of war, but God has transformed it into a picture of His grace and faithfulness, a guarantee of peace. God could certainly turn the bow of judgment upon us, because we've broken His law and deserve judgment. But He has turned the bow toward heaven and taken the punishment for us Himself!" <sup>5</sup>

The rainbow reminded Noah, and reminds us, that we can have a new life through the grace of God. This is made available to us through Jesus Christ and His triumphant victory over death. Just like a victorious warrior armed with a bow, Jesus Christ fought the battle against sin and death and won on our behalf. Because of that, we too are offered a new covenant with God that requires no conditions. All we have to do is follow Noah's example, and say yes to God's invitation through faith. And when we do, we no longer have to fear the flood waters of God's wrath, but instead we can begin a new life with a new purpose, just like Noah.

For those that have been believers a long time or just a few years there is an invitation for us as well. Do you need a fresh start today? Do you need to push the "reset" button? Have you found yourself going through the motions, caught up in the world? Do you need to trust God today with whatever circumstance you are facing? Do you need to be reminded that God is present and calling you in? In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Come further up, further in."

THE HEBREW WORD, "QESET"  
IS USED FOR BOTH RAINBOWS  
AND THE BOW OF A WEAPON.  
"BUT HERE IN WHAT IS NOTHING  
LESS THAN A RADICAL  
REINTERPRETATION OF DIVINE  
POWER, THE BOW CEASES TO  
FUNCTION AS A SYMBOL OF  
COMBAT AND IS NOW A SYMBOL  
OF PEACE AND WELL-BEING."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary Volume 1*, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 317.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

God was patient with His people for generations. Yet, the people continued to ignore God and go down their own path. The people intentionally rejected God's warning time and time again. This is not unlike what happens today in big and small ways.

We live in a culture where people ignore and reject God on a daily basis in a variety of ways. Perhaps you have done that in the past or currently are in the present. It is not too late for you, a friend or a family member. It is imperative that we learn from Noah's example and follow his footsteps in faith. We too must heed the warning of God's coming wrath, accept His offer of salvation, and then enjoy a fresh start through covenant with Him.

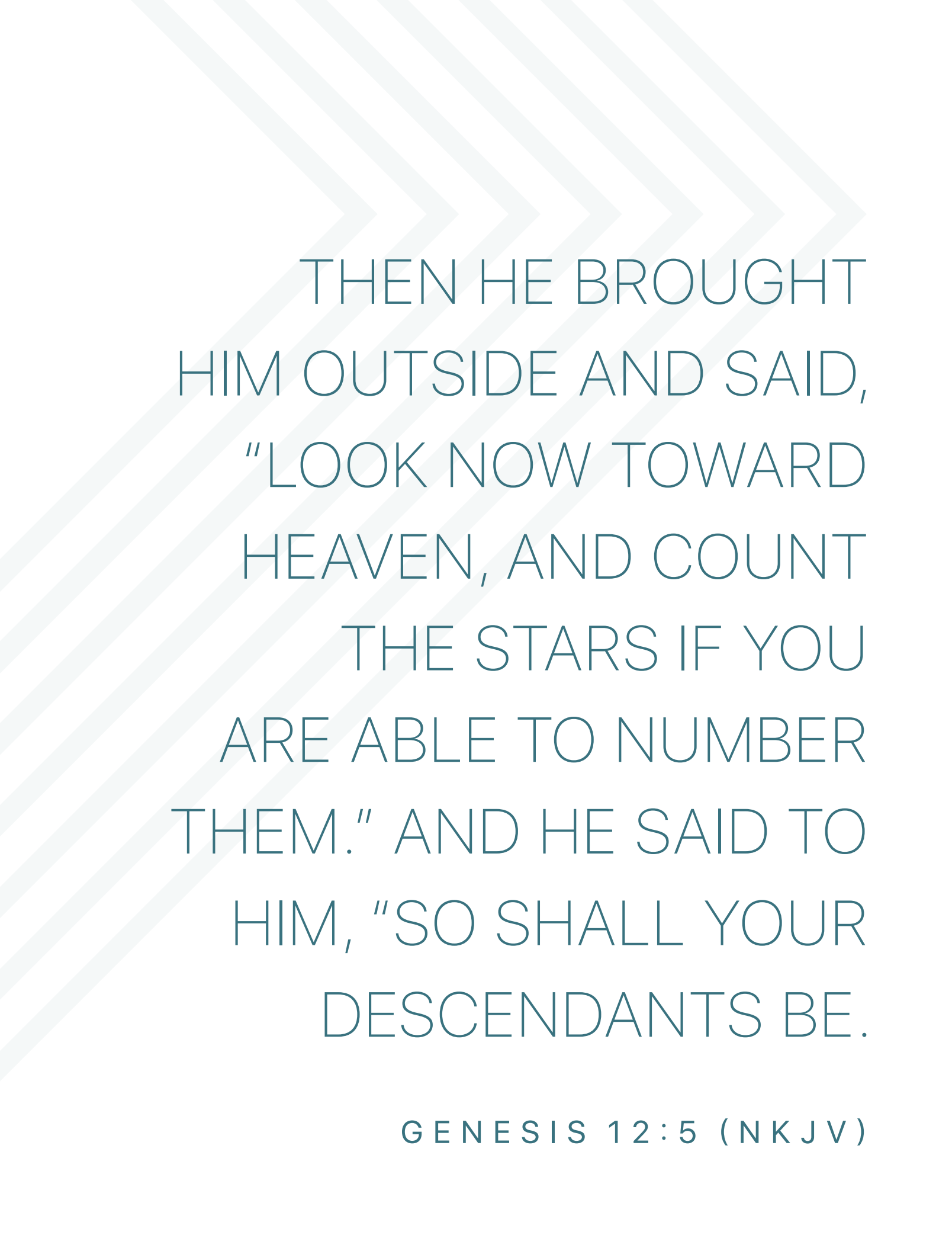
God's grace in the ark is the same grace He offers to us today. The ark was a symbol of salvation for Noah and his family. The cross of Jesus Christ represents our salvation in that Jesus took all of our sin and punishment upon Himself on the cross to the point of death and then burial. But in just three days the grace of God shined forth not in the form of a rainbow this time, but in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus conquered death. Jesus paid the price. Jesus did that for you. If you have that relationship with Jesus Christ already, celebrate that victory.

If you do not have that relationship or are in doubt of that relationship, there is no better time than now to settle that in your heart once and for all. Let His Story impact Your Story. It is as easy as ABC:

**A - Admit you have sinned.** Tell God you are sorry for your sins and ask Him to forgive you.

**B - Believe Jesus is God's sinless Son.** John 3:16 says *For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.* Jesus never sinned, so He did not deserve the punishment for sin: death. Even though He never sinned, Jesus volunteered to take the punishment for your sins and for mine. He died on a cross and was buried. But death was not the end of the story. Three days after He died, Jesus rose and walked in newness of life!

**C - Choose to make Jesus the Lord and Savior of your life.** Ask Jesus to become your Lord and your Savior. Ask Him to teach you to live His way in your thoughts, words, and actions.



THEN HE BROUGHT  
HIM OUTSIDE AND SAID,  
"LOOK NOW TOWARD  
HEAVEN, AND COUNT  
THE STARS IF YOU  
ARE ABLE TO NUMBER  
THEM." AND HE SAID TO  
HIM, "SO SHALL YOUR  
DESCENDANTS BE.

GENESIS 12:5 (NKJV)

# GRACE

## TO ALL

### DATE

January 25 & 26

### WEEK

4 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Genesis 12:5

## SETTING THE STAGE

God used Abram to change His Story. Abraham was the Patriarch of Israel, whose story is told in Genesis chapters 12-23.

Despite God's swift judgment of sin most people ignored Him and continued to sin. But God revealed himself to Abram, who would later be renamed Abraham, and chose to use Abraham's family to be the instrument of his salvation plan for humanity. Abraham was not chosen because he was a perfect man; in fact, his life demonstrated some great flaws. But he also demonstrated great faith in God and His promises. <sup>1</sup>

We know him as Abraham with a wife named Sarah. However, before he became known as Abraham, his name was Abram. The lesson today deals with the time in his life that he was Abram and his wife was Sarai.

When God changed a person's name and gave him a new name, it was usually to establish a new identity. God changed Abram's name, meaning "high father," to "Abraham," meaning "father of a multitude" (*Genesis 17:5*). At the same time, God changed Abraham's wife's name from "Sarai," meaning "my princess," to "Sarah," meaning "mother of nations" (*Genesis 17:15*). This name change took place when God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. God also reaffirmed His promise to give Abraham a son, specifically through Sarah, and told him to name his son Isaac, meaning "laughter." <sup>2</sup>

Abram grew up in Ur, which was a cultural community where his family lived. He left Ur, not to better his life but to obey God. It is the obedience of Abram that allowed God to show grace that would build a nation and people of God for all generations.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. God Gives Us Grace In Our Suffering
2. God Gives Us Grace In Our Doubting
3. God Declares Us Righteous by Grace, Through Faith

### THINGS TO KNOW

- About 30,000 stars are listed in the General Catalog used by astronomers and it is estimated that there are 100 billion more.

# GRACE

## TO ALL

### Introduction

Astros fever has spread across the city of Houston these past three years! It seems wherever you are, you will find a local Houstonian sporting an Astros hat, blue and orange t-shirt, or a jersey of their favorite player. Astros pride, has of course, reached an all-time high since their 2017 playoff run to the franchise's first World Series trophy. Since that monumental moment, baseball fandom has reached an unprecedented level in our city. However, for those of us who have been here for a while, you will also quickly remember that it was not always like this. Before we became the "World Champion Astros," we were better known as the infamous "Last-ros." The franchise had six consecutive losing seasons from 2009 to 2014 and Minute Maid Park was a very cheap ticket in those days. And if you were a fan then, it was an easy time to get frustrated. Ownership and the General Manager would explain that they had a long-term vision to build a championship-caliber team. That sounded great, but their strategy was to keep the team's payroll low and consistently trade away any marketable players. They were focused on developing a new line-up from the ground up, not on retaining quality veterans. They did not go after big name free agents, instead, they invested in their farm system and focused on draft picks and developing young players. Fast forward to 2020, and I think we would all say they were geniuses making it to the World Series two out of the last three seasons. But if we could rewind the clock, we would quickly remember that there were days when we were frustrated and questioning the validity of their promises.

Today in Genesis 15, Abram is in a similar boat. In Genesis 12, God made some massive promises to this elderly, pagan man from Ur. God told Abram that He was building something special through him. He said that Abram was going to get new land, have a new lineage, and become a great nation that would bless the entire world. We can only imagine the hope and excitement that Abram must have felt after that announcement! Unfortunately, none of those things happened immediately. Ten years have passed between chapters 12 and 15. At this point in the story, Abram has no promised land, no lineage, and certainly no nation to call his own. And in today's passage, we are going to see that Abram is in distress because of his circumstances. However, Abram is going to provide a great example of faithfulness during turmoil that we can learn from. Through his testimony, we will see that God always gives grace to His people who patiently trust in His promises.

### Exposition

**GENESIS 15:1 NKJV** *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."*

Our first verse frames Abram's encounter with God as happening, "after these things." So the natural question would be, "what are those things?" Since his first encounter with God in chapter 12, Abram came across some trouble. Chapter 13 tells us about a family split. Abram and his nephew, Lot, have



<sup>1</sup> *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*, Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Gotquestions.com.



to separate because there is not enough land for them to take care of their animals together. Lot chose the most fertile land near a city called Sodom and Abram went the other way. In Chapter 14, war began to break out. Five Canaanite cities led an uprising against the four kings of the region. This led the four Mesopotamian overlords to reassert their power through attacks across the land. Abram initially chose to stay out of it, but he had to do something when his family was brought into the battle. Abram heard that the invaders captured Lot and his family, so Abram took matters into his own hands and formed a militia with 318 of his trained men. “Abram, the general” led a decisive victory, rescuing Lot from the invaders and making his name known to the area’s kings.

So, in chapter 15, one might wonder why would Abram be so afraid that God had to reassure him? In part, it could be because Abram is simply exhausted. He is coming off an emotional roller coaster ride where he and his family risked their lives in battle. Perhaps he is also afraid that the kings may come back and attack him again. God miraculously protected them in the battle, but how does he not know if they will return with reinforcements for a second round? To make matters worse, Sarai is still barren. Not only does he not have a land of his own, but he also does not have a promised son. God sees that Abram is tired and frustrated, so He reveals Himself to him with a comforting message, “*Do not be afraid, Abram.*” God’s words remind us of our first point.

## 1. GOD GIVES US GRACE IN OUR SUFFERING

Throughout scripture God made His presence known in big and small ways. Whether it was by a pillar of fire or a still small voice, the presence of God is a reminder of His grace towards us. God’s solution to Abram’s problems is to grace him with His presence again. This is because God’s powerful presence has a way of restoring and renewing our hearts.

How can God’s voice renew us? *Psalm 16:11* explains, “*You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy.*” When we spend time in the presence of our Creator, we are able to experience a fullness of joy that cannot be found elsewhere. This joy is often the best medicine for our lives, especially in a season of suffering. God knows this to be true, so He reveals Himself once again and gives Abram two comforting messages:

**First, God says, “I am your shield.”** He reminds Abram that He is there with him and will continue to protect him in this season of waiting. God is offering **immediate grace** in the valley. He sees Abram’s weaknesses but says that He is there to make him strong. Paul understood that our moments of weakness actually serve as our greatest opportunities for intimacy with the Lord. He writes in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, “*And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” <sup>10</sup> *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*”

God promises to meet us in our weakness and sustain us in the valley. Isaiah 41:10, “*Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*”

**Second, God says, “I am your exceedingly great reward.”** God reminds Abram that He is not only his protection but also his reward. God is effectually saying, “hang in there, I’ve got something great waiting for you!” God is reminding him that all of the things He promised in Chapter 12 will still come

**“God’s remedy for Abraham’s fear was to remind him who He was. Your life is only as big as your faith, and your faith is only as big as your God. If you spend all your time looking at yourself, you will get discouraged, but if you look to God by faith, you will be encouraged.” <sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary Volume 1*, p. 67.

to fruition. Abram is just struggling to keep his eye on the prize since he is tired of the valley. Have you ever found yourself in that same situation? Where you are in a season of waiting and wanting to see God fulfill His promises in your life? In those moments we too must set our eyes on the **future grace** that is awaiting us. God's words must have later resonated with Abram because we are told in the New Testament that *"he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Hebrews 11:10). By faith, Abram did not just look towards his future earthly rewards, but he also looked towards his future heavenly reward. We should learn from Abram's example and focus on that future grace, as it will fuel our present obedience.

Look at Genesis 12:2-5,

**GENESIS 12:2-5 NKJV** *"But Abram said, 'Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'" <sup>3</sup> Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!'" <sup>4</sup> And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.'" <sup>5</sup> Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.'" And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"*

As good as God's pep-talk was, Abram is still dejected. He hears God reaffirm His promises, but he is still troubled by his present circumstances. After all, God had told him that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16), but right now he is in his 80's with a barren wife and no children. He even points out that his servant currently serves as the heir to his house. During the patriarchal period, a man with no children often adopted a servant to provide for his burial and inherit his estate, taking on the role of an heir. Abram is brutally honest with God and shares his questions and concerns. But this does not disappoint or anger our Lord, instead, God uses it as an opportunity to minister to His servant, Abram. This leads to our second point today.

## 2. GOD GIVES US GRACE IN OUR DOUBTING

---

God tells Abram that he will indeed have an heir from his own lineage. There will be no need for an adopted son or servant. But then God displays His amazing grace and patience to Abram. Instead of leaving it at that authoritative message, God helps Abram understand by taking him for a walk outside. He invites him outside at night so that he can show him something that will alleviate his doubts: the stars.

Why show him the stars? First, **the stars communicated how BIG our God is**, as Creator of those stars (Genesis 1:16). God challenges Abram to try to count them. Abram is overwhelmed in the moment by the power and majesty of the sky before him. Abram knows that the sea of stars did not get there by chance, but our Sovereign Creator designed each one and placed it according to His will. Abram cannot get his mind around the vastness of the sky and he felt very small next to it. He probably felt in some ways like David when he said, *"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, <sup>4</sup> What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?"* (Psalm 8:3-4). The stars remind David and Abram that God is in control. God is showing Abram that if He can create that beautiful nighttime sky, can He not also create a son for your household?

But **the stars also communicated how BIG God's plan was for Abram**. God had told Abram that all the earth would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3). He's reminding him of that promise when He says that his descendants will outnumber those stars. There are about 30,000 stars listed in the general catalog used by astronomers, but scientists claim that there are billions more. <sup>4</sup> God is trying to show

---

<sup>4</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Weirsbe Bible Commentary*, p. 68.

Abram how massive Abram's influence would be one day. Through Abram, the lineage of Israel would be created. And through the lineage of Israel, the Messiah would come into this world. And through the Messiah, the doors of heaven would be opened to the Jew and the Gentile alike. Abram was the amazing starting point, and God is trying to show him the scope of the finish line. He is saying one day, every person who walks in faith with our Triune God will trace his or her origin back to Abram. We are told Abram's eyes and heart are awakened to this monumental reality, as our scripture says:

**GENESIS 15:6 NKJV** *"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

Kenneth Matthews explains: "As a consequence of Abram's belief, the Lord 'credited (Hb hasab) it,' that is, his faith, as 'righteousness' (Hb sedaqa). The term 'credited', also translated 'reckoned' or 'counted,' means 'to assign value'; in this case the Lord assigns Abram's faith the value of righteousness."<sup>5</sup>

**Note:** Sarai, the wife of Abram, had doubts too. Hagar was the servant of Sarai. God had promised Abram many descendants, but, ten years after the promise, Sarai was still unable to have children, and they were both on the verge of becoming too old to have children at all. Sarai chose to give her servant Hagar to Abram, in accordance with the custom of the day, so that Sarai could have a child through her (*Genesis 16:2*). Ishmael was Hagar's son, and later Sarai would give birth to Isaac, a picture of God's grace. Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands, trying to 'help' God out in this scenario. However, God did not forsake His promise to them, and still blessed them according to the promise. Ultimately Abram placed his faith in God, and God placed His righteousness on Abram. This leads us to our final point today.

### 3. GOD DECLARES US RIGHTEOUS BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH

The Bible is clear that righteousness is not something we can obtain through our own efforts.

Paul reminds us of this truth when he explains that no one is righteous and we all have fallen short of God's glory (*Romans 3:10, 23*). Further, he explains that any effort to earn righteousness looks like rubbish to our Holy and perfect God (*Philippians 3:8*). Because of that, our hope for salvation has to come from outside of ourselves. Grace is our only hope.

Abram placed his faith in God and His perfect redemptive plan. Because of that declaration of faith, God declared him righteous. Why would God do that? Because our faith is the thing that pleases God the most (*Hebrews 11:6*). God is not looking for our stuff, it is all His anyway (*Psalms 24:1*). He is looking for our trust and our love. This comes through a faith-based relationship with Him. When we respond in that way, God credits us as righteous and holy.

In the same way, you and I can be made righteous today through our faith. Paul says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). Jesus Christ knew no sin but took on our sin when He was nailed to the cross. He did this so that we might be able to take on His perfect righteousness through faith. Martin Luther called this "the great exchange." Jesus took on our sin, and we get to take on His righteousness. The key that opens the door to that amazing transaction is simply our faith. When we trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, God looks at us just like He did for Abram, and declares us righteous.

One of the basic lessons in "the school of faith" is: God's will must be fulfilled in God's way and in God's time.<sup>6</sup>

Genesis 15:6 is quoted twice by Paul (*Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6*) and once by James (*James 2:23*) to confirm justification has always come by faith.

<sup>5</sup> *The New American Commentary*, Vol 1B, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Weirsbe Bible Commentary*, p. 68.

This is amazing because Abram was a pagan man with plenty of unrighteousness in his heart. But when he placed his faith in God, the Lord no longer saw him as a sinner destined to death. He saw him as righteous and destined for eternity with Him. This same offer is available for you and me today. It does not matter what sins have entangled your life. Through Jesus Christ, there is an offer of grace to all through faith in Him.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

We live in a culture of wanting and expecting everything to happen quickly. When we get impatient over a microwave cooking dinner in two minutes, there is an issue. And I say that as a confessional.

God's timing is perfect, which means His timing is not always our timing. He is perfect and we are not.

The story of Abram reminds us that God has a purpose for each of our lives. His plan, our purpose is our theme this year. God's plan was to use Abram to build a nation. It did not happen overnight or in a course of weeks or even months. But it was years in the making, and the nation that Abram gave birth to still exists today. God fulfilled His promise by showing grace to Abram even after Abram doubted and took matters into his own hands.

God's grace is one of patience, forgiveness, redemption, and righteousness. The good news today is that salvation is available to all, just as it was to Abram, by grace, and through faith.

# THE STORY OF **GRACE**

**GRACE** IN CREATION

**GRACE** IN THE GARDEN

**GRACE** IN THE ARK

**GRACE** TO ALL



*COMING UP NEXT:*

THE STORY OF **DELIVERANCE**



THE STORY OF  
DELIVERANCE BEGAN  
AS THE PEOPLE OF  
GOD CRIED OUT.

# THE STORY OF DELIVERANCE

At the beginning of Exodus, God's people are not in a position of influence and power like they were at the end of Genesis. They have been oppressed for 430 years by cruel Egyptian taskmasters. However, Exodus is the story of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh's grip. It is written by its main character, Moses, whose own birth and rescue were nothing short of miraculous (*Exodus 2:1-10*). Exodus is the archetypal story of deliverance revealed throughout the Old Testament.

The story of Israel's salvation has everything that anyone could ever want in an adventure story; a cruel villain (Pharaoh), an unlikely hero (Moses), fantastic disasters (the plagues), a spectacular deliverance (crossing the Red Sea), a long journey (through the wilderness), a mountaintop experience (where Moses receives the Ten Commandments), and a grand finale (when God comes down to fill the tabernacle with His glory)."<sup>1</sup>

The story of deliverance began as the people of God cried out. They were ready for a change, they were tired of being in bondage, and they were ready to move forward. But to move forward, they had to be willing to turn to God.

**EXODUS 2:23** *Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. <sup>24</sup> So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. <sup>25</sup> God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.*

The story of deliverance takes shape when God heard; God remembered; God took notice. God's people can find themselves in seemingly insurmountable circumstances from which they need deliverance too, like health crises, unemployment, and the war against temptation. Exodus gives God's people confidence that He can deliver us and set us free. As we look at Exodus we will learn who our deliverer is, what we need deliverance from, and how we are delivered.

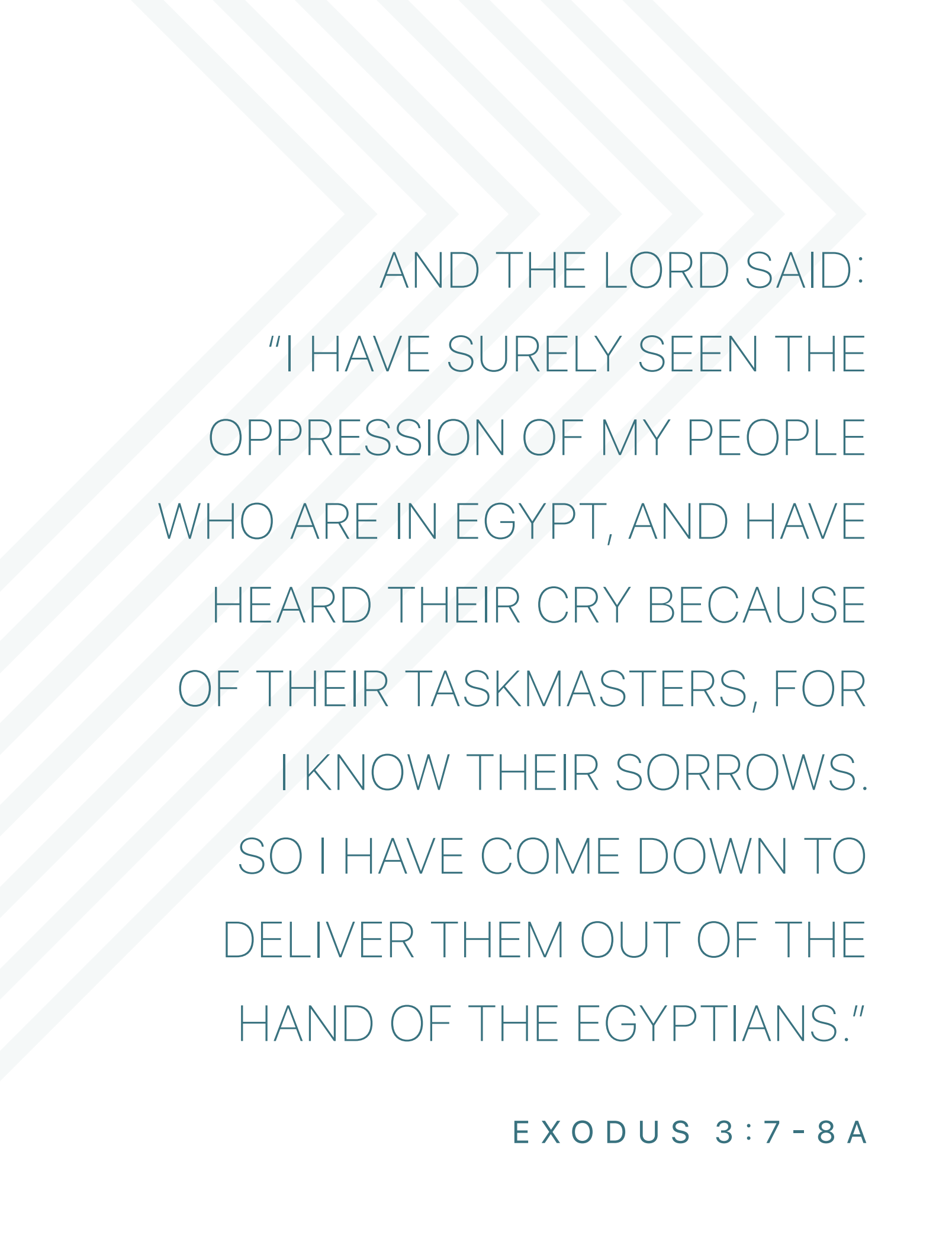
Over the next four weeks, we will look at this story of deliverance as we examine passages from the book of Exodus. We will see how God's plan shapes the purpose of His people as they journey from their past into their present, and as they move forward into their future.

We each face different seasons of our lives when we are in Egypt, or the wilderness or on the cusp of the Promised Land. We can trust that God has His reasons for allowing each season. A difficult season is not a deviation of God's plan. It is an invitation to exercise the muscles of our faith in Him. He hears our every murmur, knows our every fear and provides for our every need. God desires to open our eyes to His deep, tender heart for us and His eager, active hand in our lives.

Feb 1/2	Deliverance from the Past - Exodus 3
Feb 8/9	Deliverance for the Future - Exodus 12
Feb 15/16	Deliverance for Today - Exodus 16
Feb 22/23	Deliverance from Ourselves - Exodus 20

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Literary Study Bible*, p. 78.



AND THE LORD SAID:  
"I HAVE SURELY SEEN THE  
OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE  
WHO ARE IN EGYPT, AND HAVE  
HEARD THEIR CRY BECAUSE  
OF THEIR TASKMASTERS, FOR  
I KNOW THEIR SORROWS.  
SO I HAVE COME DOWN TO  
DELIVER THEM OUT OF THE  
HAND OF THE EGYPTIANS."

EXODUS 3:7-8A



# DELIVERANCE

## FROM THE PAST

### DATE

February 1 & 2

### WEEK

1 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Exodus 3:7-8a

## SETTING THE STAGE

Some days are difficult. We may face overwhelming tasks at work, challenges at home, or problems with our health. But three words have the power to change our day. They transform a day of hardship or monotony into a day of hope and expectation. The three words are “out for delivery!”

There is nothing like receiving a notification on your phone that your Amazon package will be waiting for you when you get home. Maybe it is a new phone case or a pair of shoes or an Instant Pot. It does not matter. It is “out for delivery,” and now you have a little pep in your step the rest of the day.

Yet as exciting as these three words are, they do not compare to the ultimate story of delivery in the book of Exodus. Philip Ryken calls it the greatest adventure story ever told: “The story of Israel’s salvation has everything that anyone could ever want in an adventure story; a cruel villain (Pharaoh) an unlikely hero (Moses) fantastic disasters (the plagues), a spectacular deliverance (crossing the Red Sea), a long journey (through the wilderness), a mountaintop experience (where Moses receives the Ten Commandments), and a grand finale (when God comes down to fill the tabernacle with his glory).”<sup>1</sup> *Continued on page 42 >*

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Who Is Delivering Us?
2. From What Are We Being Delivered?
3. How Are We Being Delivered?

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Exodus: “A going out” or “a departure”<sup>2</sup>
- Moses: The writer of Exodus whose name means to “draw out”
- Yada: “acknowledge;” to be aware and moved into action
- Bēriyth: covenant, a sacred agreement between God and a person or group of people
- YAHWEH: “I AM WHO I AM;” the most holy name of God
- Holy: separate, distinct, alone

---

# DELIVERANCE

## FROM THE PAST

*Setting the Stage, continued* > At the beginning of Exodus, God's people are not in a position of influence and power like they were at the end of Genesis. They have been oppressed for 430 years by cruel Egyptian taskmasters. However, Exodus becomes a story of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh's grip. It is written by its main character, Moses, whose own birth and rescue were nothing short of miraculous (*Exodus 2:1-10*). Exodus is the archetypal story of deliverance revealed throughout the Old Testament.

Today, God's people can find themselves in seemingly insurmountable circumstances from which they need deliverance, too, like health crises, unemployment, and the war against temptation. Exodus gives God's people confidence that He can deliver us and set us free. As we look at Exodus we will learn who our deliverer is, what we need deliverance from, and how we are delivered.

### 1. WHO IS DELIVERING US?

---

We often look for deliverance in the things of the world. We search for temporary relief in the approval of people, the accumulation of wealth, or our own morality. But all of these things are bandages that merely cover our circumstances temporarily. They do not bring any true, deep relief and healing in our lives.

The people of Israel found that God was the only One who could bring deliverance to their lives. When we look at the text, we can make some fascinating observations about the identity of our Deliverer.

**EXODUS 2:23-25** *Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. <sup>24</sup> So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.*

#### **Our Deliverer hears us.**

The Egyptians treated the people of Israel with immense cruelty. They were harsh, demanding, violent, and oppressive. During their agony and turmoil, the Israelites cried out to God. But we know from verse 24 that their groanings and prayers were not in vain.

**EXODUS 2:24** *So God heard their groaning ...*

God heard them. The God of Exodus was not – and is not – deaf, nor was He disinterested with the lives of the Israelites.

The hope that we have as the people of God is that He hears us. He bends His ear to the groanings of



---

<sup>1</sup> *The Literary Study Bible*, page 78.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Merida, David Platt, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*, Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014.

His people. When we walk through adversity and cry out to God, our Deliverer listens to us, hears our struggling, and attends to our desires to be set free. God harkens to our displacement and suffering in life. We can rejoice because our Deliverer hears us!

To experience deliverance in our lives, one of the first steps we need to take is to cry out to the God who hears us.

### **Our Deliverer is faithful and loves us.**

As God listened from Heaven to the cries of His people, we see in verse 24 that He remained faithful to the covenant that He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would not let His covenant go unfulfilled.

**EXODUS 2:24** ...*God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*

God did not forget about the Israelites because He is faithful to His Word. He always accomplishes what He promises. We may feel that God has forgotten us in different seasons in life, but we can rest in knowing that nothing slips the mind of God. He always remembers us.

God remembers us because He does not enter into just a contract with His people, which can be broken if the terms and conditions are not met. His love supersedes that of contract and enters the arena of covenant. In Hebrew, the word for covenant is *bĕrith*. A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and a person or group of people. Sallie Lloyd-Jones defines it as “a never-stopping, never-giving-up, unbreaking, always-and-forever love.”<sup>3</sup>

Tim Keller explains what this covenant love looks like: God sets the terms and specific conditions and then promises His blessing if we choose to obey. A covenant is not merely a contract. We do not get to negotiate the terms. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties that holds significant weight and has serious consequences.<sup>4</sup>

One term that we do not get to negotiate is the timeline. Our deliverance may not come as quickly and conveniently as we would like. It certainly did not for the Israelites, as they endured centuries of slavery. However, God was faithful to keep His promise to them in His time. He is and will be faithful to us, too. We have a Deliverer who is committed to being faithful to us and loving us well. We can have confidence that, as the people of God, we are heard, remembered, and loved.

### **Our Deliverer acts.**

In verse 25, we see that God goes beyond listening to His people.

**EXODUS 2:25** ...*and God acknowledged them.*

God “*acknowledged them*,” which means more than simple awareness. Because God is all-knowing, He did not suddenly become aware of the Hebrews’ circumstances. He sits on the Throne of Heaven and was aware of the plight of the Hebrews before they ever stumbled into it.

The Hebrew word used in our English translation for the word “acknowledge” is *yada*. It means to be aware **and** to be moved into action. When we read further, we see that God’s awareness led Him to action.

**EXODUS 3:7-8** *And the LORD said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.*

**We can trust that God is currently moving heaven and earth to deliver us. He is aware and acting on our behalf today.**

<sup>3</sup> Sallie Lloyd Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, Nashville: ZonderKidz, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage Study 2: Consumer vs. Covenant Marriage*, London: Penguin Group, 2011.

God did not passively sit on His hands. His acknowledgment yielded action. Notice the wonderful way the New Living Translation translates verse 25:

**EXODUS 2:25 (NLT)** *He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.*

God moved on behalf of His people and set into motion His plan of deliverance. But when we look at Exodus, we may disconnect the account of the Israelites from our reality as God's people today. We might believe that it was true then but that deliverance cannot happen now.

However, we can trust that God is currently moving heaven and earth to deliver us. He is aware and acting on our behalf today. If we want proof of the acknowledgment of God, we need to look no further than the cross. God acted on our behalf to deliver us. He acknowledged our predicament long ago and set His plan into action: He sent the Deliverer to "come down" to die for us. We can heed the words of the Apostle Paul that *since he did not spare even his own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?* (Romans 8:32 NLT).

### **Our Deliverer is holy.**

We have made three observations about our Deliverer: He hears us. He is faithful and loves us. He acts. Now let's take a look at an exchange in which God Himself reveals who He is to Moses.

**EXODUS 3:5-6** *"Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."*<sup>6</sup> *Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. ...*

**Moses and the Burning Bush is a very familiar scene for many Christians, but we must be careful that we do not let our familiarity lead us to a commonplace view of God.**

Moses and the Burning Bush is a very familiar scene for many Christians, but we must be careful that we do not let our familiarity lead us to a commonplace view of God. As God speaks to Moses, He conveys the reverence that all of us should have as we approach Him. He tells Moses to take off his shoes, for the place where he stands is holy ground. God establishes Himself before Moses as holy.

It is of utmost importance that we recognize God's holiness. The word holy means to be separate, distinct, and alone. There is no one like our holy God. He is not like us. His holiness is displayed in His purity; God is separate from us in that He cannot sin or commit evil. His holiness is also displayed through His power. He has the power to create, work miracles, forgive, and heal.

### **Our Deliverer is I AM.**

As God commissions Moses to free the people of Egypt, Moses asks who he should say is sending him. God responds by providing His Divine Name.

**EXODUS 3:14** *And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

The holiest name of God is YAHWEH, which means, "I AM WHO I AM." It points to His self-sufficiency, self-existence, and eternity. He is the One who is and will be. He does not need us or anyone. He exists apart from us. Before we took our first breaths, God was. Before Adam and Eve blinked the first time, God was and saw them. Before the sun burst forth its first ray of light, YAHWEH was.

We can find solace in this name of God and rejoice in the many other names and attributes of God that appear throughout the Bible. His names reveal Himself to be who we need Him to be. God meets us at our points of need and can fulfill any need. There is nothing that we need that cannot be found in God's personhood and work. Our efforts are vain apart from Him. Our Deliverer can pull us out of all slavery, bondage, or dire circumstance in which we find ourselves.

## I AM...

### YAHWEH Jireh

The LORD Will Provide

### YAHWEH Rapha

The LORD Who Heals You

### YAHWEH Nissi

The LORD Is My Banner

### YAHWEH Sabaoth

The LORD of Hosts

### YAHWEH Raah

The LORD Is My Shepherd

### YAHWEH Mekoddishkem

The LORD Who Sanctifies You

### YAHWEH Shammah

The LORD Is There

### YAHWEH Shalom

The LORD Is Peace

## 2. FROM WHAT ARE WE BEING DELIVERED?

In Exodus, the people of Israel are being delivered by God from their slavery in Egypt. God describes their slavery in Exodus 3:7.

**EXODUS 3:7** *And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows."*

The Egyptian taskmasters have mistreated them for centuries. Pharaoh has killed their children and placed impossible demands on them. The Egyptian empire was built on the backs of the Hebrews.

While the slavery of the Israelites to the Egyptians was not a result of any specific sin, Scripture uses this paradigm of slavery and delivery quite frequently to illustrate the freedom from the bondage of sin. In fact, Jesus said in John 8:34: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."* Sin is a harsher taskmaster than any Egyptian could ever be. It never considers our well-being. Sin shackles us to selfishness. It imprisons us to a life of brokenness and heartache. Just like the Egyptians murdered the children of Israel, sin violently murders us, leaving behind nothing but the carnage and ashes of burned-down lives.

**Sin is a harsher taskmaster than any Egyptian could ever be.**

We may not have taskmasters controlling our lives as the Egyptians did, but we are often controlled by our sinful appetites. The Apostle Peter writes to the Church in 2 Peter 2:19 (NLT): *"For you are a slave to whatever controls you ..."* When we are controlled by our appetite for wealth, we neglect our families and become slaves to our careers. When we are controlled by our appetite for acclaim, we are so desperate for people to notice us that we will go to extreme measures to be seen and heard. When we are controlled by our appetite for lust, we search for pleasure around every corner instead of finding our ultimate pleasure in Christ.

An appalling depiction of slavery to our appetites is found in Thomas Costain's history, *The Three Edwards*. It chronicles the life of Raynald III, the fourteenth-century duke of what is now Belgium. Raynald was nicknamed *Crassus*, which is Latin for "fat." Raynald was morbidly overweight, and his appetite for food led to his imprisonment and death.

After a skirmish between Raynald and his younger brother, Edward, Raynald was captured and imprisoned. Edward built a room around him and promised him that he could leave and regain his position, property, and wealth as soon as he was able to walk out of the room. An average-sized person

would not have had difficulty leaving the room, as it had several windows and an average-sized door with no locks. Raynald's only hindrance was himself. In order to escape and be restored, he would need to lose weight.

Edward knew his older brother desired to feed his appetite more than he desired to be free. Every day, Edward sent his brother delicacies and rich foods. Raynald gorged himself and grew bigger. Ten years

**Jesus' calling is to lead us out of the prison of selfishness and sin – but we must choose to follow Him into freedom.**

later, Raynald was still trapped in his prison. Duke Edward was accused of being cruel to his brother, to which he quickly replied, "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills." Raynald was shackled to his own appetite, his gluttony the very thing that entrapped him. He was free to leave but enslaved to his appetites.<sup>5</sup>

Raynald's story may seem extreme, but if we are honest, we all find ourselves imprisoned to some extent by our own appetites. However, Christians are not to be controlled by fleshly appetites. Our lives are to be controlled by our appetite for God and living a righteous life.

Jesus has offered us freedom. The door is wide open. To experience deliverance, all we must do is die to our appetite for sin and choose to walk into freedom. Moses's calling was to lead the Israelites out from the oppression of the Egyptians – but the people had to choose to follow Moses to leave the reign of Pharaoh. Jesus' calling is to lead us out of the prison of selfishness and sin – but we must choose to follow Him into freedom.

### 3. HOW ARE WE BEING DELIVERED?

Moses was assigned what seemed to be an impossible task: He was to lead all of Israel out of slavery and into the Promised Land. Never had one man been tasked with such a significant assignment. As his weaknesses and insecurities came to the forefront of his mind, Moses realized he was inadequate. He was not a man of control; he had killed a man in a fit of rage and buried him in the sand. He was not a general; he was a shepherd. He was not a young man; by this time, he was eighty years old. He was not a good speaker; he had a speech impediment that caused him to stumble over his words. How could the Exodus occur through a seemingly unqualified and inadequate leader?

Moses asked God how this task would be possible. We see God's response in Exodus 3:10-12.

**EXODUS 3:10-12** *Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.*<sup>11</sup> *But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"*<sup>12</sup> *So He said, "I will certainly be with you...."*

God made a promise to Moses, *"I will certainly be with you."* Deliverance is only possible because God has promised His presence. And we see that God fulfilled His guarantee. God was with Moses on every step of the journey and in every meeting with Pharaoh. God was present with Moses on the edge of the Red Sea and in every mile in the wilderness. The promise of God's presence to Moses was the great equalizer.

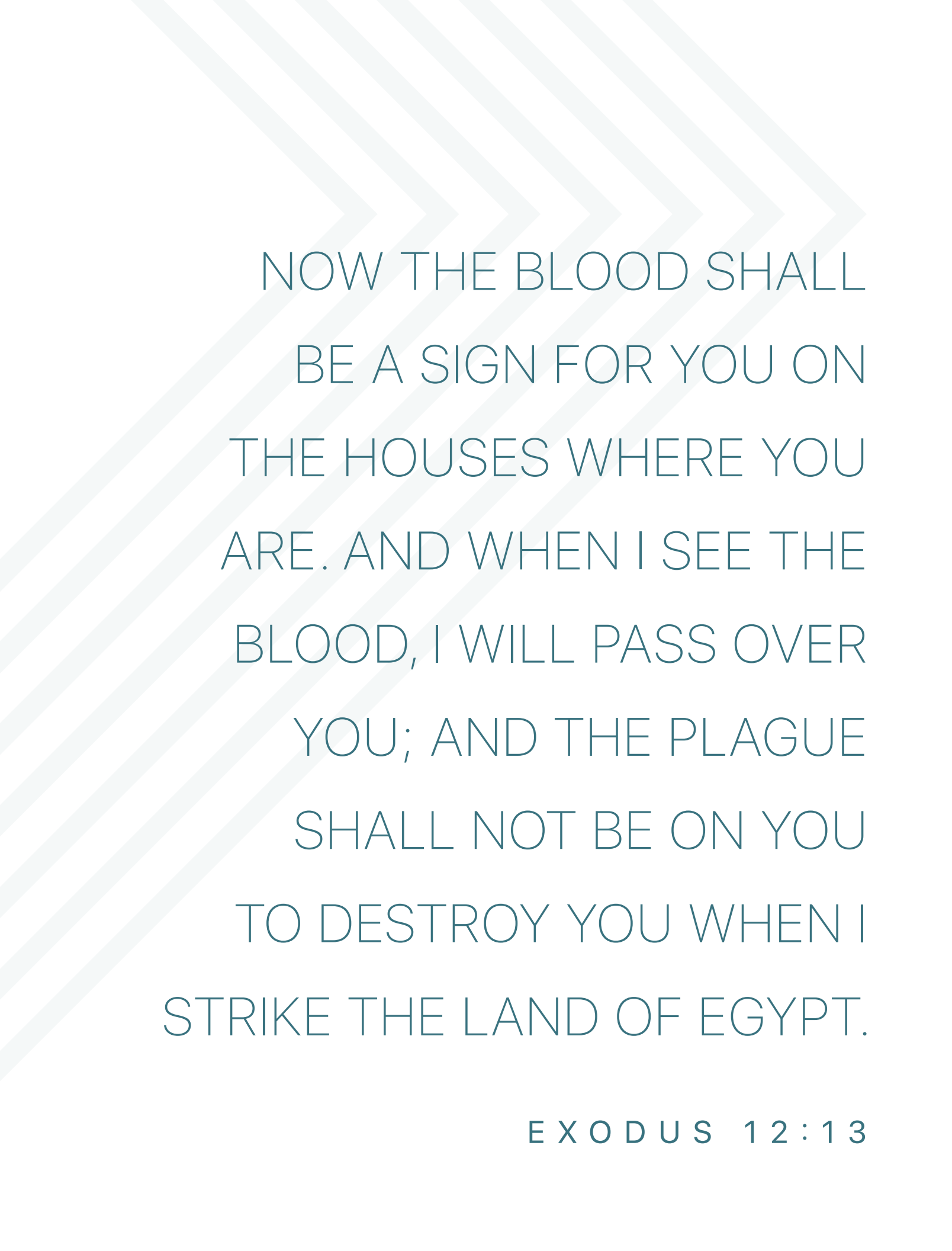
<sup>5</sup> Thomas B. Costain, *The Three Edwards*, London: Tandem, 1977.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

The story of Exodus is the story of the deliverance of God's people. God delivered them from a past oppression that kept them in Egypt for over 400 years. For generations, the only thing the people of God knew was a life of slavery, bondage and oppression. They needed to be delivered from their past. As we seek deliverance from seemingly insurmountable circumstances in our own lives, we find great assurance in three truths.

- Our Deliverer is our holy God, YAHWEH. He hears us, is faithful and loves us, and acts on our behalf.
- Our Deliverer can lead us out of bondage. He sets us free from slavery or any dire circumstance in which we find ourselves.
- Our Deliverer promises His presence. Among Jesus' last words before he ascended to Heaven were, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20 NKJV).

God will guide us through the wilderness of life and part the waters of impossible situations for us. He is faithful to walk with us, just as He did for the Israelites. Ultimately, we will experience His presence in the Promised Land of Heaven. The deliverance from the past gives us confidence as God's people that He can deliver us today.



NOW THE BLOOD SHALL  
BE A SIGN FOR YOU ON  
THE HOUSES WHERE YOU  
ARE. AND WHEN I SEE THE  
BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER  
YOU; AND THE PLAGUE  
SHALL NOT BE ON YOU  
TO DESTROY YOU WHEN I  
STRIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT.

EXODUS 12:13



# DELIVERANCE

## FOR THE FUTURE

### DATE

February 8 & 9

### WEEK

2 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Exodus 12:13

## SETTING THE STAGE

The first day at a new job. A bended knee and a trembling hand holding a ring box. The first time holding your newborn child. An unexpected call from the doctor. Some days mark us forever. They change who we are and how we see the world.

Such days are burned into our memory. When we think back, the smells still linger in our noses, and the tastes still hover on our tongues. These vivid memories seem so palpable. Life-changing days like these will remain etched into our minds, forever shaping us.

In chapter 12 of Exodus, the Israelites are on the cusp of a life-changing day that would be filled with sensory overload. There would be simultaneous rejoicing and devastation, feasting and mourning, joy and sorrow, and forgiveness and judgment.

In our Scripture today, we arrive at the life-changing day: the Passover. The Passover was the day that the Israelites were freed from bondage to the Egyptians. It would serve as an Independence Day for the Israelites, changing the course of their history. In fact, this day was so monumental that God ordered that the Passover would start their calendar year. It was symbolic of the fresh start and fresh life that God was granting to the people of Israel (*Exodus 12:1-2*).

The Passover was the last of the Ten Plagues that God sent to the Egyptians. The purpose of the plagues was to display God's authority. The word "plague" is the Latin word for "mighty blow." The mighty blows that God dealt the Egyptians included afflicting them with boils and lice, killing their fish, livestock, and crops, and causing a thick darkness to come across the land.

The tenth plague was by far the deadliest and most devastating. God would sweep over the land of Egypt, visiting every home and taking the life of every firstborn male—unless the house was covered by the blood of an innocent lamb. Today, we will look at the Passover and learn about the substitute of the lamb, the symbol of the blood, and the signpost of the event.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. A Substitute
2. The Symbol
3. A Signpost

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Plague: Latin word for "mighty blow."

# DELIVERANCE

## FOR THE FUTURE

### 1. A SUBSTITUTE

**The judgment of the Passover was not just for the Egyptians. It was also for the Israelites.**

The Passover was intended to showcase God's supremacy over all of the Egyptians' false gods. But the judgment of the Passover was not just for the Egyptians. It was also for the Israelites. The day would serve to distinguish the people of God from those who worshipped other gods. It would identify the Israelites as God's chosen and protected people. The Passover would occur to everyone who dwelt in the land of Egyptians. Both the Egyptians and the Israelites were going to be visited by God that day because all people are ultimately judged by God.

Before His appointed visit, God provided detailed instructions to Moses that the Israelites were to follow in order to spare their households.

**EXODUS 12:3-6** *Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. <sup>4</sup> And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. <sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup> Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.*

Every Israelite household was instructed to take a year-old male lamb on the tenth day of the month and slaughter it on the fourteenth day. The purpose of the lamb was to serve as a substitute. Instead of their first-born son passing away, the lamb would die in his place.

This was not the first time a lamb was sacrificed as a substitute for God's people. We see two instances in Genesis in which there was a blood sacrifice. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were literally covered by the sacrifice of an animal. It stood in their place and covered their nakedness. And on Mount Moriah, God provided a lamb as a substitute just as Abraham was about to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice.

However, God made it clear that not just any male lamb would do. He provided specific qualifications for this substitute: the lamb was to be one year old. It was to be free from blemish or defect. These are no small details. The age of the lamb mattered because, at one year, a lamb is at the peak of its strength and vibrancy. And the perfection of the lamb mattered because it was a representation of the quality of its life. We will see later in Deuteronomy 17:1 that a blemished animal was an abomination to God. In order to offer a perfect substitute, the Israelites were expected to find a perfect sacrifice.

Impending judgment hung over the head of all those residing in Egypt that evening. Death was on the doorstep of every house in Egypt. As the sun rolled beneath the horizon, all were in danger. But God had provided His people a way to spare themselves and their households from the fate that all deserved. The Israelites had the opportunity to take God at His word and exercise their faith in Him. They could find a substitute that would stand in the impending death in place of their firstborn sons. Behind the cover of a young, perfect lamb, they would be shielded from the wrath of God and instead receive the mercy of God.



## 2. THE SYMBOL

We live in a culture that values symbols. If we watch old Western movies, it is easy to tell the difference between the hero and the villain based on their cowboy hats. If a character is wearing a white hat, he is a hero because his hat is symbolic of his moral purity. But if a character is wearing a black hat, he is a villain because his hat is symbolic of his corruption and willingness to terrorize the local saloon. And if a character is wearing a brown hat, he is probably Clint Eastwood, and things are going to get ugly.

We see symbols on a national level. The bald eagle, the Statue of Liberty, and the American flag are symbols to many of hope, freedom, and an opportunity to have a better life. We also see symbols on an intimate level. Our wedding rings represent the commitment we have made to our spouses. Made from precious metals, our rings symbolize that our devotion and durability are unending, even through the harshest of seasons.

In Exodus 12, we learn that the blood of the young, perfect lamb is an important symbol.

**EXODUS 12:6, 12:12-13** *And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it ...<sup>12</sup> 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.<sup>13</sup> Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

God gave additional instructions to His people about animal sacrifice. The Israelites were told to take the blood and spread it over the doorposts of their homes. The blood was a symbol that identified the people of God. It indicated that those inside the home believed God would keep His word. The painting of each doorframe represented their faith and obedience to God. God explained that when He visited the land of Egypt later that night, He would “pass over” the homes where there was blood. When God saw the blood, He saw the substitute. He saw their faith and their obedience to Him. The symbol of the shed blood on the door was an external demonstration of an internal commitment to trust God.

**The symbol of the shed blood on the door was an external demonstration of an internal commitment to trust God.**

The blood on the doorpost from the sacrificial lamb is not the only symbol in Exodus 12. In the next set of instructions from God, we see that the Israelites were directed to participate in a Passover meal that would also be very symbolic.

**EXODUS 12:8-11** *Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.<sup>9</sup> Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails.<sup>10</sup> You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.<sup>11</sup> And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.*

Like the instructions regarding the sacrificial animal and its blood, the Israelites received detailed stipulations about the meal that would follow the Passover. They were to eat unleavened bread. This bread did not contain yeast, and they were not permitted time for the bread to rise. God wanted them to eat the meal with a belt on their waists and shoes on their feet so that they could leave in a hurry. It was a reminder to the people of Israel that they were to be ready to follow God. They could be called to make their exodus out of Egypt at any moment.

This dinner was to be a farm-to-table meal. The Israelites roasted their lamb, made fresh bread (with gluten), and accompanied the meal with bitter herbs that were themselves very symbolic. They were instructed to eat the bitter herbs as a reminder to them of their bitter enslavement in Egypt. The herbs

were also symbolic of the bitterness of sin. In *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Puritan pastor and theologian, Thomas Watson, said, “Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.”<sup>1</sup>

**The Passover serves as a signpost that points toward something even greater for God’s people.**

This highly symbolic Passover meal would endure for generations. Every year, when the Israelites would eat this meal, the smells and tastes would bring them back to the night that changed the history of their nation. They would recall the sacrificial lamb. They would be reminded of the bitterness of sin and slavery. They would remember the attitude of hastiness that they were to show when God called them. Ultimately, the Passover Meal would serve as a reminder of the deliverance they could experience. It prompted them to maintain an attitude of sacrifice, a readiness to obey God, and a regard for sin as bitter.

An extra layer of symbolism was added to the tradition during one very special Passover meal. Nearly 1,500 years after the first Passover, Jesus and His disciples gathered in the upper room, and they shared the Passover meal the night before His death. They ate the lamb, and they ate unleavened bread. They ate the bitter herbs. It was on that night and at that dinner that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. He took the unleavened bread, and He broke the bread as a symbol of His body that was going to be broken on the cross. He took a cup of wine, and He explained to His friends that His blood was going to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins (*Luke 22:14-21*). And then, with haste, Jesus got up from the table because God was calling Him to be obedient, even unto death (*Philippians 2:8*). He was going to become our Passover Lamb, and He would taste the bitterness of sin like nobody before Him had ever tasted – and like nobody ever will.

The Passover is rich with symbols, from the lamb to the blood to the meal that followed. Each element was carefully designated by God to represent a large truth. But God had an even bigger plan in mind than freedom from the Egyptians when He provided instructions to the Israelites. The Passover serves as a signpost that points toward something even greater for God’s people.

### 3. A SIGNPOST

**Just as the first Passover was very personal and the Israelites personally applied the blood of the lambs to the doors of their houses, we too, by faith, need to personally apply the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to the doors of our hearts.”<sup>2</sup>**

The Passover proved to be a remarkable event for the Israelites who heeded God’s instructions. It was a “mighty blow,” the tenth and final plague that delivered them from the grip of Pharaoh. As God’s judgment swept across the land, killing the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, the Israelites were safely covered from God’s wrath by the blood of a perfect animal sacrifice. The next morning, the Egyptians wailed in distress while the Israelites tasted God’s freedom and goodness. God had displayed His authority, identified His people, and upheld them among their oppressors.

However, as remarkable as the Passover was as Independence Day for the Israelites, it pales in comparison to the ultimate deliverance that God had in mind for all of His people. The bigger purpose of that historic day in Egypt was to serve as a signpost pointing to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul makes the connection that what we see in Exodus is a shadow of what was to come. And, that what was demonstrated on the cross was the substance.

**1 CORINTHIANS. 5:7B** *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

God’s instructions for the lamb pointed to the day when Jesus Himself would be slain as the ultimate, sacrificial Lamb in place of God’s people. Like the young, perfect lamb that was required on the day

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Darrell Bock and Mitch Glaser (Eds.), *Messiah in the Passover*, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2017.

of the Passover, Jesus was in the prime of His life when He was sacrificed. He was a full-grown and vibrant man who was unblemished in that He never sinned and had no fault (2 *Corinthians* 5:21; *Hebrews* 4:15; 1 *John* 3:5; 1 *Peter* 1:18-19).

Every element of the Passover pointed to the Gospel, including God's instruction to paint the blood of the lamb across doorposts. God would later instruct His people to identify themselves and exercise their faith by painting Jesus' blood across their hearts.

In *Messiah in the Passover*, Dr. Rich Freeman describes the Passover as a signpost: "Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the fulfillment of Passover. Like the first Passover lambs sacrificed to redeem Israel from slavery in Egypt, Jesus' death on the cross redeems us from slavery to sin ... And just as the first Passover was very personal and the Israelites personally applied the blood of the lambs to the doors of their houses, we too, by faith, need to personally apply the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to the doors of our hearts."<sup>3</sup>

The past picture of the Passover points to the future plan of God in Jesus Christ.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Although the Passover occurred thousands of years ago, the day points to our ultimate deliverance through Jesus Christ. In Exodus, the Passover lamb saved the Israelites, an event that led them on their journey to the Promised Land. Today, Jesus saves us and leads us toward the promised land of Heaven.

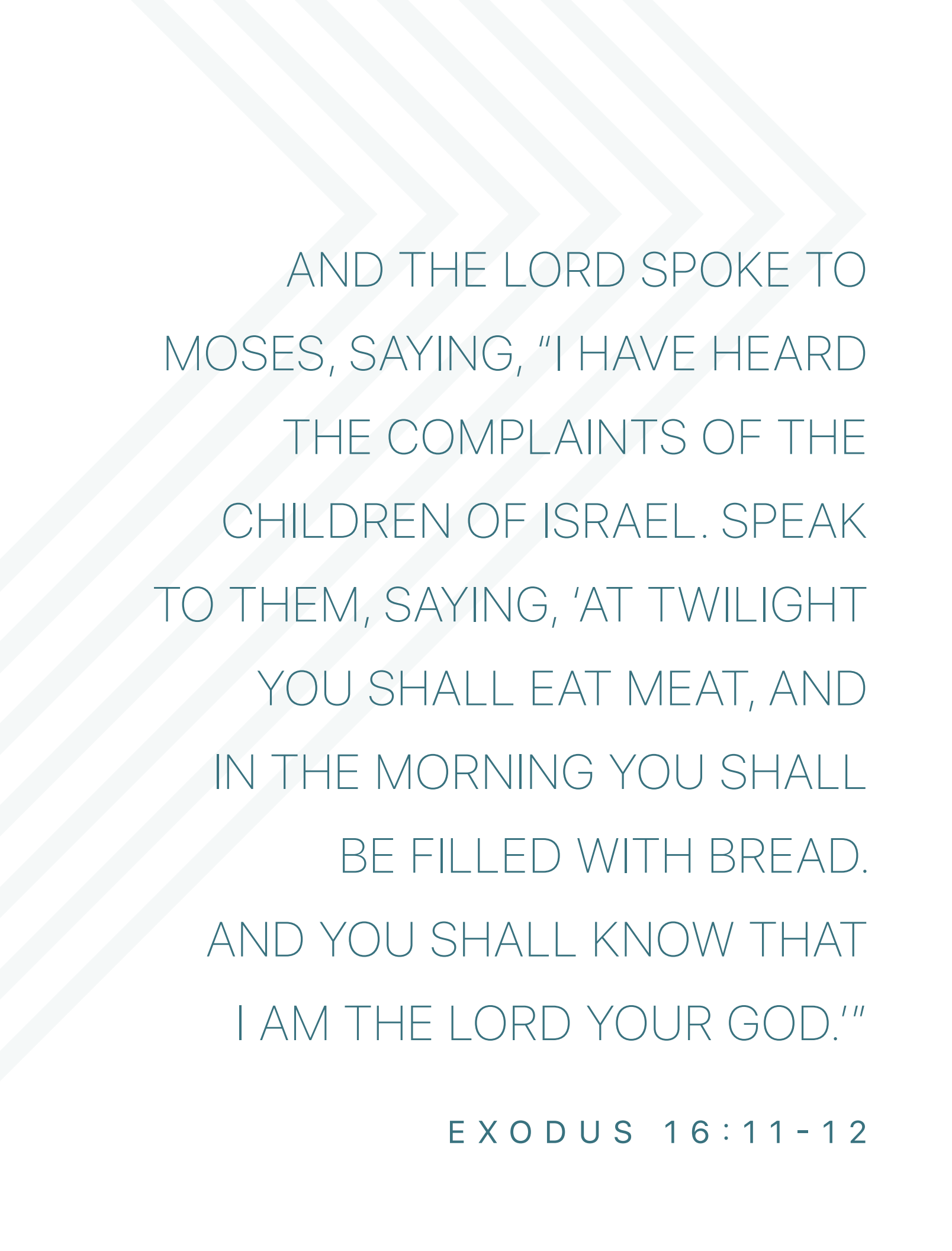
Like the Israelites, all of us are in danger of experiencing the wrath of God's judgment. We all are sinful, and because of our sin, we deserve death and Hell (*Romans* 3:23, 6:23). Tony Merida gives us more insight into the need for a perfect sacrifice: "This need for a perfect sacrifice reminds us of our own state. We, being corrupted by our sin, cannot save ourselves. Our good works are like the blemished lamb – unworthy before a holy God. We need One who serves as a substitute on our behalf. Jesus is the lamb for the household of God. Only through faith in Him are our sins covered. He alone is our hope."

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb whose blood was poured out on the cross for us. We can trust in Jesus as the perfect, unblemished substitute that stands in our place. We are invited by God to escape judgment and find mercy through the blood of Jesus. It is His desire that we flee the bitter bonds of sin. We can experience deliverance from our past – and deliverance from all of the things that will ensnare us in the future – through a better Lamb.

When we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives, we will escape God's judgment. God will "pass over" us, and we will be spared eternal death. Instead of receiving what we deserve, we will be given the gift of eternal life (*John* 3:16).

We follow the signpost of Passover to the cross. Our story as believers in Jesus Christ is the story of the Passover. It is the story of sacrifice. It is the story of blood. It is the story of faith, and it is a story of deliverance. The death of the Passover lamb changed the history of the Israelites. Jesus' death changes everything for our future. One day, we will arrive in Heaven, the land flowing with milk and honey, and all of God's people will sing, "Worthy is the Lamb!" (*Revelation* 5:12).

<sup>3</sup> Bock and Glaser, *Messiah in the Passover*.



AND THE LORD SPOKE TO  
MOSES, SAYING, "I HAVE HEARD  
THE COMPLAINTS OF THE  
CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. SPEAK  
TO THEM, SAYING, 'AT TWILIGHT  
YOU SHALL EAT MEAT, AND  
IN THE MORNING YOU SHALL  
BE FILLED WITH BREAD.  
AND YOU SHALL KNOW THAT  
I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD.'"

EXODUS 16:11-12

# DELIVERANCE

## FOR TODAY

### DATE

February 15 & 16

### WEEK

3 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Exodus 16:11-12

## SETTING THE STAGE

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, dismantling the institution of slavery and setting free all American slaves. Deliverance from oppression was – and is – to be celebrated. However, there was an unintended consequence. Slaves did not know where to go or what to do next.

Many slaves chose to stay with their masters simply because it was all they knew. Under their masters, slaves retained some level of certainty. At least they had food and shelter. Freedom and individuality might mean a better life, but there was no guarantee. The journey would involve new challenges and uncertainties. Those who stepped into freedom decided it would all be worth it.

We will see today that the Israelites found themselves in a similar situation. Over the last two weeks, we have followed the story of how God miraculously freed them from slavery and led them in their exodus out of Egypt. Now we will find out what happens next in their journey.

Like the American slaves, the Israelites did not immediately find themselves in the Promised Land. They faced new challenges that they had not anticipated. Without homes or resources, they found themselves wandering in uncertainty through the wilderness. At least in their slavery, they had some degree of security and stability. But now, in their independence, they struggled with how their immediate needs would be satisfied in a land of scarcity and desolation.

It seemed that God had abandoned the Israelites. But God had a glorious purpose for bringing His people into the wilderness instead of immediately into the Promised Land. As we join the Israelites in the wilderness, we will observe that the journey involves the temptation to look back, the faith to look up, and the patience to look forward. What might seem like a story of the people's daily grumbling is actually a story about God's daily grace.<sup>1</sup>

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. The Temptation to Look Back
2. The Faith to Look Up
3. The Patience to Look Forward

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Manna: miraculous bread from heaven; literally means, "What is it?"
- Omer: an ancient Israelite unit of dry measure equal to about nine cups



# DELIVERANCE

## FOR TODAY

### 1. THE TEMPTATION TO LOOK BACK

This week we will spend some time walking alongside the Israelites, observing how they handled their journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. As they packed up their camp in Elim and traveled through the Wilderness of Sin, we see that they began to feel insecure by the new uncertainties.

**EXODUS 16:1-3** *And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

**Skepticism of the future can cause us to look back at the past through rose-colored glasses.**

The wilderness made for a miserable trek. As the desert took its toll on the nation of Israel, the people were starving and parched. God had delivered them from Egypt, but now they feared they were left to fend for themselves and die in the wilderness. The desolate desert did not have enough natural resources to sustain a nation of 2 million and counting. The Promised Land was nowhere in sight. The Israelites grumbled and cried out to God on account of their thirst and hunger. Their greatest needs were food or water (*Exodus 15:24*).

Feeling an acute sense of uncertainty and insecurity with their basic needs, they did the unthinkable: They missed Egypt. They remembered the “pots of meat” and “bread to the full.” They missed the slight degree of certainty and security they had as slaves. The Israelites longed to be back in Egypt to satisfy their singular desire for food. Their lack of trust in God distorted their memory of the past so that it seemed better than it actually was. Their memory became selective. When they looked at their immediate circumstances, Pharaoh seemed to be a better leader than God.

They remembered Egypt through rose-colored glasses, forgetting it was an objectively horrible place. Under Pharaoh, they had been oppressed, slaughtered, enslaved, and manipulated. The Israelites had cried out to God constantly because of their plight (*Exodus 3*). But the wilderness presented a new, unfamiliar difficulty that made them want to turn back, even with the promise of Canaan ahead.

During their period of transition, the Israelites were tempted to look backward instead of forward because they could not see the future, with all of its prospects and opportunities. It was easier for them to miss, reminisce, and dwell on the past that they knew. But skepticism of the future can cause us to look back at the past through rose-colored glasses.

This is Satan’s strategy. He wants us to view God through our circumstances, which creates a small, pigeonholed view of God and a too-big view of our circumstances. It results in a faith as shaky and



<sup>1</sup> Peter Enns *The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, iBooks p. 838.



temporary as the changing circumstances in which we find ourselves. But God seeks to do the reverse: He wants us to view our circumstances through our view of God, producing a big view of God and a much smaller view of our circumstances.

## 2. THE FAITH TO LOOK UP

---

God heard the cries of His people. He provided water for the Israelites when they had none (*Exodus* 15:22-27), and then He rained down bread from heaven, *manna*, so that they would not starve. As the Israelites wandered, God miraculously provided for their immediate needs.

**EXODUS 16:4-15** *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.”<sup>5</sup> And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.”*

<sup>6</sup> *Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt.”<sup>7</sup> And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what are we, that you complain against us?”<sup>8</sup> Also Moses said, “This shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD.”*

<sup>9</sup> *Then Moses spoke to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.’”<sup>10</sup> Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*

<sup>11</sup> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,<sup>12</sup> “I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”*

<sup>13</sup> *So it was that quail came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.<sup>14</sup> And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.<sup>15</sup> So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.*

God wanted the Israelites to trust and depend on Him to meet their every need. In providing manna, He desired to show off His faithfulness if they would only wait, trust, and obey in their circumstance. However, there was a catch. Even more fascinating than *what* God provided is *how* He provided it. Moses explained to God’s people that God intended His daily provision of *manna* to rot by the end of each day.

**EXODUS 16:16-21** *This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.’”*

<sup>17</sup> *Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.<sup>18</sup> So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need.<sup>19</sup> And Moses said, “Let no one leave any of it till morning.”<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.<sup>21</sup> So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.*

**Their daily *manna* became more than just daily bread. It became a daily exercise of faith.**

It may be difficult to understand the purpose of this peculiar plan of provision. Why would a loving God set a 24-hour expiration date on something as vital as bread? After all, the Israelites were wandering through a desert with absolutely no resources. They were enduring longing, scarcity, discomfort, and displacement – all of the trials that are characteristic of the wilderness and times of transition.

The Israelites reacted by grabbing as much *manna* as they possibly could in one day, stockpiling it so that they would not have to worry about how much or how little they would have for other days. In other words, their thought was, “If God doesn’t provide tomorrow – for whatever reason – then we’ll be fine because our refrigerator will be all stocked to the brim.” (Although they obviously did not have a refrigerator.)

The reason that God set such a fast expiration on the *manna* is that He desired to grow the muscle of Israel’s faith. God caused the *manna* to rot by the end of each day to combat the temptation to disbelieve in His ability to provide. He did not want His people to become self-reliant. The discomforts served as invitations to rely on Him and know Him more deeply. He wanted them to stop gazing at their circumstances and to start gazing at Him, feeding their faith by affirming the truth of God. He wanted to teach Israel that He would provide enough for them every single day.

Their daily *manna* became more than just daily bread. It became a daily exercise of faith. It summoned their belief that God would take care of them for each new set of 24 hours. God provided exactly what they needed, every single day. In fact, He did more than that. The Israelites’ temptation to stockpile more *manna* than they needed for one day reveals a beautiful truth. If it were possible to take more than what was needed for one day’s provision, then that means God’s daily provision was more than they needed! His mercy was not just **sufficient** for the day; it was **abundant** for the day.

### 3. THE PATIENCE TO LOOK FORWARD

As we continue to journey alongside the Israelites, we see that God continued to meet their needs until they reached the Promised Land.

**EXODUS 16:31-35** *And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.* <sup>32</sup> Then Moses said, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” <sup>33</sup> And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.” <sup>34</sup> As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. <sup>35</sup> And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Finally, after a difficult period of transition, “they came to the border of the land of Canaan” (Exodus 16:35b). After 40 years of wandering, the Israelites reached the Promised Land. God had kept His

promise and had never wavered in His plan to bring them to Canaan. Even when God’s people did not know where they were going or what they were to do next, God kept the Promised Land in His sight. He made sure of their triumph.

But before the Israelites were to inherit the Promised Land, God wanted to give them something even better: a faith that knew and trusted the Promiser. He certainly cared that the Israelites had food for their physical sustenance, but more than that, He cared about their spiritual sustenance. If Israel had simply received the Promised Land immediately – or even received their resources and provision all at once – then they would never have had

**Before the Israelites were to inherit the Promised Land, God wanted to give them something even better: a faith that knew and trusted the Promiser.**

the opportunity to trust Him, rely upon Him, and know Him experientially as the God who counts all their needs and provides for them intimately and daily. It was in love that He would not let His people live on the fat of their circumstances with a crippled faith. He wanted to straighten and strengthen the faith of His chosen people so that they would be able to run in faith in any circumstance.

By walking with Israel to the border of the Promised Land, we see that God's people can trust that He knows where He is leading us, even when we cannot see the destination ahead. And we can trust His heart, even if we have to endure the wilderness to get to our destination. His *omers of manna* remind us that the way He sustained the Israelites is the way He can sustain us today. He wants His people to be set apart from the rest of the world – not because of what God gives but because of who God is. Ultimately, God seeks to develop in us an innate, reflexive faith in Him. He wants to affirm His loving heart towards us, His ability to provide for us, and His loving eagerness to do so – every day, in every circumstance.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Today, God's people are still tempted to believe that God will not take care of them. Where do you find yourself in life right now? Based on the lives of the Israelites, we can be assured that our lives have different seasons and chapters. The Israelites walked through a long chapter of wilderness, and many of us have experienced or will experience a chapter of wilderness. Some of us might feel like we have been wandering through a desert of limited provision and scarcity of preference for quite some time.

Regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can learn a lot from the story of the Israelites. As we walk through our own stories, Exodus 16 shows us the futility of looking at the past through rose-colored glasses. God's people can walk toward an uncertain future with confidence, knowing and having faith in our great Provider, resisting the temptation from Satan to long for the past. As John Piper once said, "Stop defining and limiting your future in terms of your past. Start defining it in terms of your God."

We can choose to look to God and trust that the supply for our needs will not run out today, for God's grace will be served hot and fresh again tomorrow, in abundance. So we can take and eat our fill for only today, and then take and share with others. We can go to sleep at night, knowing that His grace will cover the stresses and needs of tomorrow as well. If we begin to feel worn out and spiritually hungry, it is not because there is not enough food to eat and water to drink. It is because we are gazing and feasting on the wrong things. It is no wonder we sometimes feel weak and malnourished.

We see this daily provision and daily grace not just in Exodus but woven throughout the Bible. Jesus is called the very "Bread of Life" (*John 6:35*). He is the daily bread that we need. He is where spiritual sustenance and abundance is found. Be encouraged from these words: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).* Continued on page 60 >

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE *(Continued)*

In the Lord's Prayer, again we see Jesus invoke God's daily provision for the Israelites in the wilderness when He prays, Give us today our daily bread (*Matthew 6:11*). After the Lord's Prayer, He continues, *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"* (*Matthew 6:34*). Sufficient for the day is its own trouble, but the converse is equally true: sufficient for today are God's new mercies. In fact, one of the greatest promises of scripture is that God's mercies are new every morning, just like the manna that was new every morning for the Israelites.

**Sufficient for the day is its own trouble, but the converse is equally true: sufficient for today are God's new mercies.**

**LAMENTATIONS 3:21-24** *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore, I will hope in him."*

We can trust that God has His reasons for allowing each season. A difficult season is not a deviation of God's plan. It is an invitation to exercise the muscles of our faith in Him. He hears our every murmur, knows our every fear, and provides for our every need. God desires to open our eyes to His deep, tender heart for us and His eager, active hand in our lives. As we trust in Him, He will fill His believers with abundance. It is both a promise and a provision. May we rely on His Truth not for yesterday in seasons of harvest, but for today in seasons of drought and tomorrow in seasons of growth.

A DIFFICULT SEASON  
IS NOT A DEVIATION OF  
GOD'S PLAN. IT IS AN  
INVITATION TO EXERCISE  
THE MUSCLES OF OUR  
FAITH IN HIM.

# DELIVERANCE

## FROM OURSELVES

### DATE

February 22 & 23

### WEEK

4 of 4

### KEY VERSE

Exodus 20:1-3

### SETTING THE STAGE

Exodus 20 recounts one of the most familiar texts in the entire Bible: the Ten Commandments. Most people – Christian or not, church-going or not – are generally familiar with or have heard of the Ten Commandments. It is one of the oldest moral, ethical, and legal documents in all of human history. It is not only very old; its scope is also very wide.

The Ten Commandments can be found upon the walls of schoolrooms, courthouses, and non-profits alike. Most people would agree that these commandments outline and uphold certain moral principles, decencies, and expectations for members of a society to flourish. The Ten Commandments outline basic humanitarian laws that help individuals know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad, helpful and harmful.

However, while many people might generally be familiar with the content of the Ten Commandments, most are not as familiar with the context in which the Ten Commandments were given. The Ten Commandments were given by God to Israel after it became an independent nation. Before Israel arrived at the Promised Land, God met with Israel's leader, Moses, on Mount Sinai and gave him the Ten Commandments that would serve as the legal structure for the new nation.

In Exodus 20, we will examine the Ten Commandments and learn that they are not simply laws to live up to or to be condemned by. They are guidelines that help frame what our lives look like if we have truly grasped the grace and love of God for us in Jesus Christ. We will take a look at God's framework for the law, the format of the law, and the perfect fulfillment of the law.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. The Framework of the Law
2. The Format of the Law
3. The Fulfillment of the Law

### THINGS TO KNOW

- LORD: Translated from the Hebrew name of God, YAHWEH, communicating God's personal, relational, covenant-making nature

# DELIVERANCE

## FROM OURSELVES

### 1. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LAW

When we look at the Ten Commandments, it is easy to skim right through the first two introductory verses and head straight for the first commandment in verse 3. The first two verses in Exodus are perhaps the most overlooked, yet they are the most important in the entire chapter. It sets the framework for the entire Ten Commandments.

**EXODUS 20:1-2** *And God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup> “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”*

- **Who He Is**

God begins by powerfully communicating who He is: “*I am the LORD your God.*” The name that He chooses to describe Himself is LORD, or in Hebrew, YAHWEH. God has many names throughout the Bible, and each name describes one of His immutable, beautiful attributes. Of all of His names, His description of Himself in verse 2 as YAHWEH is not an accident or coincidence.

YAHWEH, or LORD, is the name of God that communicates His personal, covenant-making nature.

He uses this name whenever He discloses His personal love to others, His promise of the Gospel to them, and the nature with which He relates to people in a personal, intimate manner. His use of YAHWEH in connection with the Ten Commandments is highly significant. It means that when God gives the law, He is not approaching His people like a detached, demanding deity. It means He is a personal God of love and grace who acts on behalf of the people He loves. God’s law is an expression of His love.

God’s law is an  
expression of  
His love.

God’s intention is often misconstrued in a culture that sees personal autonomy as the highest good. Anything that interferes with individualism, including the Ten Commandments, is considered wrong. Therefore, many perceive God’s laws as less than loving, perhaps even the antithesis to love. But this view of freedom and love is too simplistic and shallow.

Anyone in a covenantal marriage relationship understands that the laws of emotional and sexual exclusivity are not there to restrict one’s individual freedom but to enhance and protect mutual love. In the same way, God does not provide the law for the express purpose of moralistic, impersonal arbitration. He provides the Ten Commandments to enhance and protect His covenantal relationship with His people as well as their charity with one another. In other words, God does not merely give the law to us, but for us. It is for the benefit and welfare of ourselves, others, and society.

Dr. Young uses an equation to illustrate how the love of God and the law of God work together as necessities. He says, “rules without a relationship equals rebellion.”

#### **Rules – Relationship = Rebellion**

Where there are only rules, laws, and expectations, we can expect rebellion. The rules will feel impersonal, restricting, and suffocating. But the converse is just as true. Relationship plus rules usually result in restoration.



## Relationship + Rules = Restoration

Rules have new meaning when they are framed in the context of relationship. They are seen as necessary structures and principles for upholding the beauty of a life-giving relationship. This is the framework of the Ten Commandments and the Gospel of God's love for us.

### • What He Has Done

There is another important observation in verse 2. Before God declares what His people should do, He declares what He has done for His people. He reminds them of His loving deliverance in rescuing the Israelites from Egyptian oppression through the plagues and parting of the Red Sea. Before He gives a moral imperative, God connects it to the Gospel. He declares what He has done, and then He reveals how His people should live in light of that.

**EXODUS 20:2** "...who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

God always connects moral imperatives with gospel indicatives. In fact, the structure of the entire book of Ephesians conveys this truth. Of its six chapters, the first three chapters declare what God has done for us, and its last three chapters reveal how we ought to live in light of that. Here are more examples of gospel indicatives connected to moral imperatives:<sup>1</sup>

**Indicative:** *"Having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness."*

**Imperative:** *Therefore, "now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification" (Romans 6:18-19).*

**Indicative:** *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."*

**Imperative:** *Therefore, "walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16, 24).*

Christianity communicates that whenever imperatives are given without indicatives, they actually become impossibilities.<sup>2</sup> Why? Because then the law will be inevitably appropriated by the motive of fear or pride, becoming all about self-preservation or self-exaltation.

### Moral Imperatives – Gospel Indicatives = Impossible Burden

But when we receive God's love and assurance before the law, our approach to the law is compelled by the motive of gratitude, not from fear or pride. The law will not feel like an impossible burden, but a possible joy.

### Gospel Indicatives + Moral Imperatives = Possible Joy

This Christian view of law stands distinctive from all other religious systems of law because it connects God's love for us with God's law for us. More specifically, God first declares His love for us in Jesus Christ, which is very the basis on which we obey from the heart. Christianity contextualizes all law within the framework of having been redeemed, delivered, forgiven, and loved—eternally, intimately, personally, and unconditionally.

Tim Keller puts it this way: "Religion says, 'Obey; therefore I am accepted.' But the Gospel says, 'I am accepted; therefore, I obey.'" <sup>3</sup> Christianity flips the order. Contrary to all other religions, salvation in

**"Religion says, 'Obey; therefore I am accepted.' But the Gospel says, 'I am accepted; therefore, I obey.'" <sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, Justin. *The Gospel Coalition*. "Imperatives – Indicatives = Impossibilities." <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/imperatives-indicatives-impossibilities/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. "Impossibilities"

<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *Gospel in Life Study Guide*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010, p. 16.



Christ does not happen on account of your following the law. Instead, God gives deliverance, then the law. Deliverance is not the reward for having obeyed the law; it is the power given in order to obey the law. The only way to really follow the law from the heart is to experience His grace in our hearts first. We are saved by works and righteousness – but not our own. We are saved and delivered by the work and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ in our place.

## 2. THE FORMAT OF THE LAW

---

In the context of God's love, we can approach God's law. Just as He was intentional in establishing His framework in verse 2, we see that He is intentional with the format in which the Ten Commandments are given.

- **The Flow of the Law**

The Ten Commandments are not listed in random, arbitrary order. There are a structure and a method in how they are given. The first three commandments address how we are to personally relate to God. They have a vertical dimension.

**EXODUS 20:3-7** *"You shall have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. <sup>7</sup> "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

The first three commandments provide instruction on our relations with God. The first commandment prohibits other gods, establishing the sanctity of ultimate allegiance to the one true God. The second commandment forbids graven images, establishing the sanctity of God's image. The third commandment bans taking His name in vain, establishing the sanctity of God's authority.

The fourth commandment is different. It concerns both God and ourselves, so it has both a vertical and horizontal dimension.

**EXODUS 20:8-11** *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*

The fourth commandment communicates the sanctity of time by honoring the Sabbath day of rest. It is practical instruction on living out the first three commandments. The Sabbath is a spiritual reality that God has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ that gives us rest with God, which directly affects how we relate both to God and others. Structurally, the fourth commandment serves as a fulcrum between the first three commandments (dealing with our relations with God) and the next six commandments (dealing with our relations with others).

The next set of commandments, the fifth through the tenth commandment, concern how we relate to others. They involve a horizontal dimension. <sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Notes on the Ten Commandments, taken from Dr. Daniel R. Heimbach's class.

"Introduction of Christian Ethics," Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC.



**EXODUS 20:12-21** “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.”<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.”<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.”<sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”<sup>18</sup> Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off<sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”<sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”<sup>21</sup> The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

The fifth commandment establishes the sacredness of parental authority by honoring parents. It is no coincidence that God addresses our relationship with our parents first. Our parents are our immediate authorities on earth outside of God, and one way we honor God’s authority is by honoring the parental authorities that God has ordained in our lives. The remaining commandments establish the sanctity of human life (sixth commandment), sanctity of marriage (seventh commandment), sanctity of property (eighth commandment), sanctity of truth (ninth commandment), and sanctity of motives (tenth commandment).

God gives the law in order to legislate the upholding of goodness and righteousness among His people. The Ten Commandments flow methodically from the first set of three commandments (how individuals relate to God) to the fourth commandment (how individuals relate to both God and themselves) to the last set of six commandments (how individuals relate to others.)

- **The Phrasing of the Law**

Reformer and theologian Martin Luther makes a very profound point in *Smaller Catechism* regarding the negative language of the Ten Commandments. They use the language of, “Do not do this. Do not do that.” We have a tendency to understand the Ten Commandments as such: “avoid this, refrain from that.”

But Luther comments that we should also read them positively. Instead of reading the Ten Commandments negatively about what not to do, focusing on what is **not** required of us, what if we read them positively about what we should do, focusing on what is required of us?

Try changing the wording of the commandments from negative to positive. Instead of reading the first commandment as, “You shall not have any other gods before me,” read it as, “Love God only with all your heart.” Instead of reading the second commandment as, “You shall not make any graven images,” read it as, “See God as He is and on His own terms, not according to your preference.” Instead of reading the sixth commandment as, “Do not murder,” read it as “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” And instead of reading the eighth commandment as, “Do not steal,” read it as, “Be generous.”

When we read the Ten Commandments positively instead of negatively, we realize a couple things. First, we begin to grasp the true height of the law. We can more clearly see that we are failing the law much more than we think we are. We see how high the demands really are—and how short we fall. Secondly, when we look at the law positively, we can sense the true heart of the law. The law is not given to keep us in a spiritual mode of avoidance, dismissal or moral passivity. It is there to outline what life looks like that is full of love, grace, kindness, and generosity. It serves as the standardizing tracks for ensuring that we are either on the right path or the wrong path.

### 3. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

Many Bible scholars believe that there are 613 unique commandments in the Old Testament, with the Ten Commandments serving as the foundational legal document that supports all the others. The Pharisees asked Jesus how one should differentiate and wisely follow all these laws. Jesus recognized that there are many laws throughout the Bible, but He said they all serve to accomplish two main things.

**MATTHEW 22:36-40** *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”<sup>37</sup> And [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Although Jesus is not mentioned in Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments resonate with the person and work of Jesus Christ. He loved God with all His heart, and He loved others as He loved Himself. Jesus came to live the life we should have lived by fulfilling the law perfectly. The law that was given on Mount Sinai to Moses was fulfilled on another mount in Jesus. He suffered a sinner’s death for the laws that were broken by Moses literally and broken by us legally. And on the mount, on the cross, Jesus – who fulfilled the law perfectly – was broken for us. He was broken for the laws we failed to live up to. In doing so, He took our penalty of death so that we could have His position of right standing with God by grace through faith.

The personal, relational, covenant-making YAHWEH who delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt is the same YAHWEH who gave the Ten Commandments as an expression of His love. When we rejected and broke His laws, He is the YAHWEH who gave His people something better – not more laws, but a person who would fulfill the law for us in love. He sent Jesus to deliver His people out of sin and death.

It has been said that the same God who makes the demands of us, meets the demands for us.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

How do we as believers personally fulfill the law in our lives?

We begin by accepting the fact that we fall short of the law and have not fulfilled it—nor will we ever fulfill the law. Jesus has fulfilled it for us. As we reflect on His grace, we begin to follow the law by responding in humble, grateful obedience in light of what He has already done for us.

God is not after obedience for obedience’s sake. He is after a different kind of obedience – one characterized by love, not fear; one defined by gratefulness, not drudgery. God does not simply want our behavioral compliance. He wants our hearts transformed.

God’s story of deliverance is not just about the Israelites. It is about us too. He came into my story and your story to deliver us from our sin and our death – and from the intense pressure to keep performing. In Jesus Christ, He stepped into our stories and performed in our place. He fulfilled all the laws and expectations that we could not fulfill and failed to fulfill. And then He delivered us from our sin and death by dying in our place for the sin that we committed. In Jesus, God has delivered us not only from being our very worst, but also from the pressure to be our very best.

Like the Israelites, we are freed from our greatest enemies and oppressors. We have been delivered. Therefore, let us obey and follow the One who has delivered us and wants only what is best for us.

**In Jesus, God has delivered us not only from being our very worst, but also from the pressure to be our very best.**

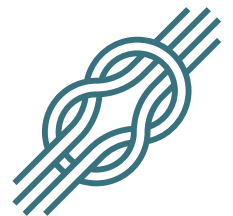
# THE STORY OF **DELIVERANCE**

**DELIVERANCE** FROM THE PAST

**DELIVERANCE** FOR THE FUTURE

**DELIVERANCE** FOR TODAY

**DELIVERANCE** FROM OURSELVES



*COMING UP NEXT:*

THE STORY OF **PROMISE**



GOD'S FAITHFULNESS  
TO HIS PROMISES  
REMAINS UNWAVERING  
THROUGH IT ALL.

# THE STORY OF PROMISE

Have you ever noticed that endings bring new beginnings? We have all had those “ending” moments in life that come in many ways: job loss, relocation, death of a loved one, divorce. Some endings are easier than others, some come as expected while others in unexpected ways. But one thing stands true no matter how the ending comes about, endings serve as a catalyst for new beginnings. Our choices in the face of new beginnings impact our future endings, just like they did for the Israelites in the days of old.

Over the next 5 weeks we will look at the Story of Promise, examining passages from Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, that tell the next part of the story of God’s plan to fulfill His promise to redeem and restore His people. With each step of the journey, we see endings, new beginnings and good and bad choices made by His covenant people. Yet, God’s faithfulness to His promises remains unwavering through it all.

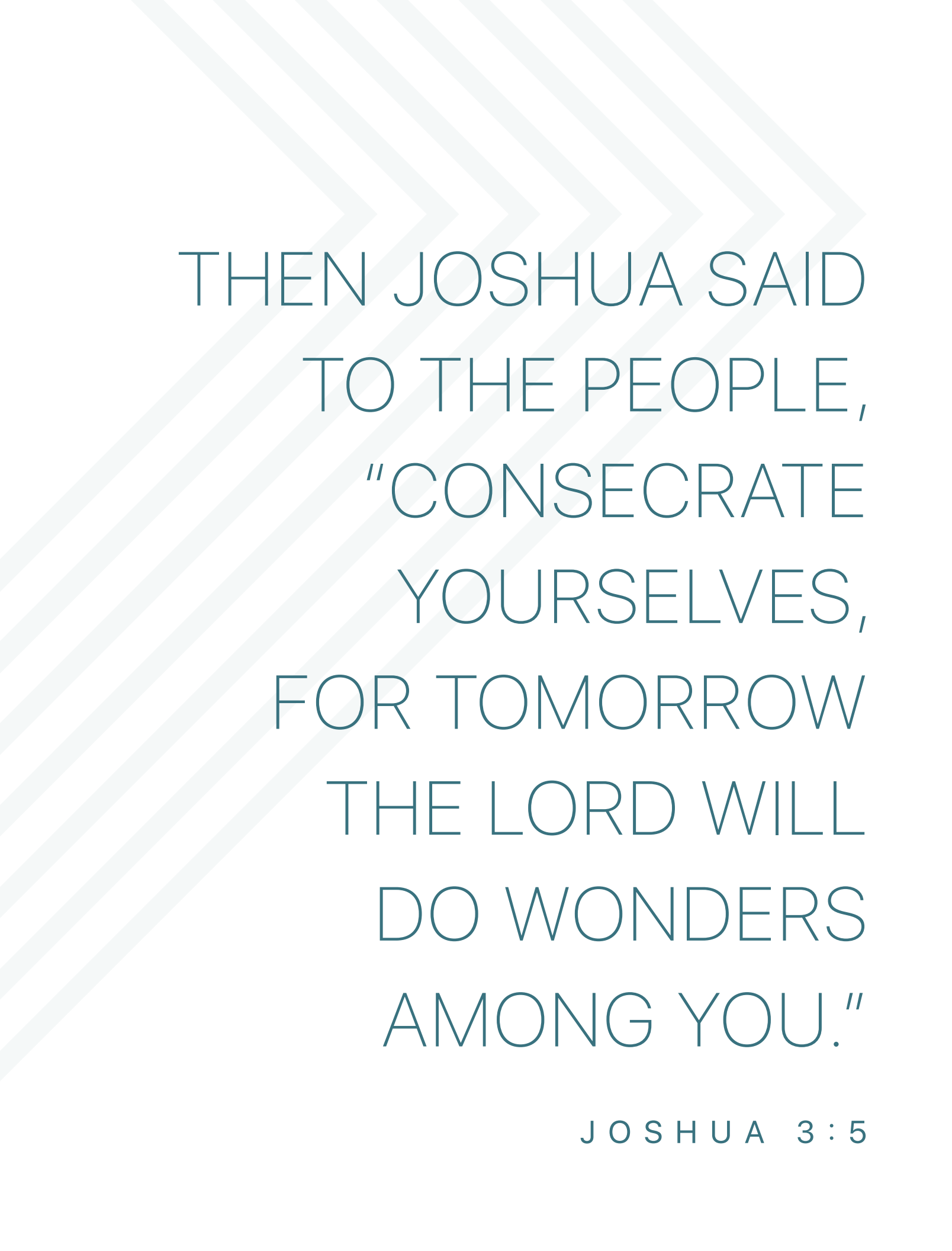
The book of Joshua tells us how God – in His time and in His way – fulfilled the promise of the land in the Abrahamic covenant by taking the Israelites across the Jordan River to a new beginning in Canaan, thus ending their time of 40 years in the wilderness. Under the leadership of Joshua, God fulfilled His promise through the conquest of the Canaanites and the allocation of the land amongst the twelve tribes of Israel. Once in the land, Joshua and the people of God had to make a choice on how they would live their lives before a “*living God*” who delivered them to the land of promise.

1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings give us insight on endings and new beginnings as we look at the life of King David, the Davidic covenant and God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to provide a King for the nation.

God’s promise to David started when David was a young teenager out in the field tending sheep. David was not on anyone’s radar as a potential leader. He was the youngest of the sons of Jesse. He was not trained in any special skill. He did not have an education that would lead to a prominent job or responsibility. Yet, God saw something in David that was special. God looked at the heart of David and saw a King. The promise God made to David at such a young age was never deterred, though there were many obstacles and challenges along the way. David was not perfect, but he was always repentant and willing to lay his heart before God in confession and obedience. In David’s life and lineage we will see God’s promise made, fulfilled and affirmed.

Join us for the next 5 weeks as we step into His Story, The Story of Promise!

Feb 29/Mar 1	Promise Kept - Joshua 3
Mar 7/8	Promise Committed - Joshua 24
Mar 14/15	Promise Made - 1 Samuel 16
Mar 21/22	Promise Fulfilled - 2 Samuel 7
Mar 28/29	Promise Affirmed - 1 Kings 11



THEN JOSHUA SAID  
TO THE PEOPLE,  
"CONSECRATE  
YOURSELVES,  
FOR TOMORROW  
THE LORD WILL  
DO WONDERS  
AMONG YOU."

J O S H U A 3 : 5

# PROMISE

## K E P T

### DATE

February 29 & March 1

### WEEK

1 of 5

### KEY VERSE

Joshua 3:5

## SETTING THE STAGE

From the beginning of creation, we were designed to live as God's people in God's land under God's righteous rule. Beginning in Genesis 3, man chose his own way over God's way and Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden; but, they were given a promise that a descendant would be born who would bring an end to the curse. From Genesis 3 through the end of Revelation we see the story, His Story, unfold. The story of God working out His plan to redeem and restore His people.

God would accomplish His plan from a small tract of land bridged between two continents. From this small area of the world, God's covenant blessing would extend worldwide.

Beginning with Abraham in Genesis 12, this Kingdom Promise of people, land, and blessing was given by the Lord to His servants (*Genesis 12, 13, 15; Exodus 3*). Let's take a look:

**GENESIS 12:1-3** *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

*Continued on page 72 >*

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Set Your Eyes On Him
2. Set Yourself Apart
3. Step Out In Faith
4. Step Into the Promise

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Joshua was Moses' assistant in Exodus.
- Joshua was a good leader of the people because he was a great follower of God.

# PROMISE

## KEPT

*Setting the Stage, continued >*

**GENESIS 13:14-17** *The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; <sup>15</sup> for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. <sup>16</sup> I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”*

This covenant promise is restated to Abraham in Genesis 15, this time with the following prophecy:

**GENESIS 15:13-16** *God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. <sup>15</sup> As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”*

The first part of this prophecy in verses 13-14 was fulfilled through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons as the Israelites became slaves in Egypt for 400 years. The last part – the return of the fourth generation – we will look at today in Joshua 3.

Again, the promise is reaffirmed to Moses hundreds of years later in Exodus 3:7-8, and repeated in Leviticus and Numbers:

As we saw in the Story of Deliverance, at the Red Sea, the Lord separated His people from their old life as they crossed over into new territory. At Mount Sinai, He brought them into a covenant relationship with Himself.

**EXODUS 3:7-8** *The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

As we saw in the Story of Deliverance, at the Red Sea, the Lord separated His people from their old life as they crossed over into new territory. At Mount Sinai, He brought them into a covenant relationship with Himself. But because of their unbelief and rebellion, that generation would not enter the Promised Land but wander in the wilderness for 40 years. As we begin the book of Joshua we see a new generation of Israelites poised at the edge of the Jordan River, preparing to cross into their new beginning and take possession of the land. The Promise is about to be fulfilled.

### Introduction

Joshua is first introduced to us as Moses’ assistant in Exodus. In Joshua 1 we see he is now the leader of the people as the Lord now speaks to him the promise of old:





**JOSHUA 1:1-3** Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. <sup>3</sup> Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

Then, God gives Joshua specific instructions for taking possession of the land:

**JOSHUA 1:5-7** No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup> Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

God kept His promise of people and blessing to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. And now, He will use Joshua to lead the Israelites in taking possession of the land. In the verses above, the Lord affirms that it is time for Joshua to step out in faith, step into His purpose, and lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. To take the first step toward a new beginning, Joshua believed the Word of God and he trusted the promises of God. Joshua's belief determined his behavior. He was ready for the next step. Warren Wiersbe writes: "Faith looks ahead with courage; unbelief looks back with complaint." <sup>1</sup>

**Joshua believed the Word of God and he trusted the promises of God. His belief determined his behavior.**

Up until this time the Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness, led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night eating manna day in and day out. The time had come for them to step out in faith, step into the purpose and promise of God, and take the land that He promised them. But are they ready for their next step?

Is the Lord calling you to step out in faith and step into a new purpose and promise that He has for your life? Is He calling you into a new beginning? Are you ready? Let's see what we can learn from the Israelites on how to be ready to take that first step into a new beginning.

## 1. SET YOUR EYES ON HIM

**JOSHUA 3:1-4** Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. <sup>2</sup> At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; <sup>3</sup> and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. <sup>4</sup> However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

Joshua was an early riser and ordered the camp to move alongside the Jordan River and lodge there for three days. We know that each of the tribes had an assigned place and an assigned order in the march. Since they had never come this way before, they needed the Lord to lead the way and guide them. The people were to remain 2,000 cubits, about 3,000 feet behind so that ALL could see the ark. If they crowded too close, only a few in the front could see it. When God told them "follow the ark," He was telling them, "Follow Me." Even today we need to make sure there are no obstacles or distractions that prevent us from following God, keeping our eyes on Him.

**The ark symbolizes God's presence with His people. When God told them "follow the ark," He was telling them, "Follow Me."**

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *With the Word*, Numbers, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991.

In Exodus 25:10-22 we see the instructions for building the ark of the covenant and verse 22 explains God's presence:

**EXODUS 25:22** *There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.*

The ark symbolizes God's presence with His people. He tells them, take the ark, with the priests leading the way. I am with you. God is letting them know that victory would come at the river and far beyond as they focused on and followed Him.

In Matthew 28:20 at the end of the Great Commission, Jesus tells us, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Though we face an unknown future, His presence gives us the confidence to face whatever the future holds. Yet we need the Lord's guidance along the way. We need to keep our eyes and ears attuned to His leading. He goes before us; He is with us and He knows the way. When we set our eyes on Him, we can rest in His presence and easily take the next step, even when it is a way we have never passed before.

## 2. SET YOURSELF APART

---

**JOSHUA 3:5** *Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." <sup>6</sup> And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.*

"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you," was both an order and a promise. Some of God's promises are unconditional and require only that we believe them; other promises require certain conditions to be satisfied before the promise is met. <sup>2</sup>

**We are to set ourselves apart from sin and apart to God, giving ourselves fully to Him.**

Joshua was making sure the Israelites' hearts were ready for the next step through consecration. This process of bathing and changing clothes is symbolic of preparing for a new beginning. We saw this at Mount Sinai (*Exodus 19:9-15*), with Jacob (*Genesis 35:1-3*); after King David confessed his sin (*2 Samuel 12:20*) and it is carried over in the New Testament (*2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1*; *Ephesians 4:26-27*; *Colossians 3:8-14*). We are to set ourselves apart **from** sin and apart **to** God, giving ourselves fully to Him.

Joshua led a surrendered life. His example set the stage for the Israelites to lead a surrendered life as well. Joshua was faithful in his task and as long as Joshua was alive, the people followed the Lord.

## 3. STEP OUT IN FAITH

---

**JOSHUA 3:7-8** *Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you." <sup>8</sup> You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'"*

It was the responsibility of the priests to carry the ark of the covenant and go before the people as they marched. They were to lead by stepping out in faith, trusting God and relying on His faithfulness.

---

<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007, p. 390.

Joshua's authority came from the Lord, but just as He did with Moses, God would remind the people that Joshua was His chosen servant leader, giving him authoritative stature before them. The Israelites would face many challenges ahead and would need a strong servant leader to guide them through the days ahead.

**JOSHUA 3:9-13** *Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God."<sup>10</sup> Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite."<sup>11</sup> Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan.<sup>12</sup> Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe.<sup>13</sup> It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."*

Living faith always leads to action and requires the first step. Joshua reminds the people that they serve a living God who is able to do abundantly more than they can even imagine. Warren Wiersbe says it best:

"But Joshua's God was more than just the God of Israel. He was *"the living God"* (v. 10) and *"The Lord of all the earth"* (v. 11, 13). Because He is the living God, he can defeat the dead idols of the heathen nations that then inhabited the land (*Psalms 115*). Because He is the Lord of all the earth, He can go where He pleases and do what He wishes with every land and nation."<sup>3</sup>

True spiritual leadership constantly points people to the Lord and His greatness, minimizing, instead of magnifying the role of the leader. Joshua reminded God's people of His Word and encouraged them to trust and obey. He lived his life in the shadow of God's Word. Joshua was a good leader because he was a great follower of God.

**True spiritual leadership constantly points people to the Lord and His greatness, minimizing, instead of magnifying the role of the leader.**

**Joshua was a good leader because he was a great follower of God.**

#### 4. STEP INTO THE PROMISE

**JOSHUA 3:14-17** *So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people,<sup>15</sup> and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest),<sup>16</sup> the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.<sup>17</sup> And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.*

Most of the year, the Jordan River was about a hundred feet wide, but during flood season the river would overflow its banks and expand to about a mile wide.<sup>4</sup> For three days they were camped beside it, watching the impassable waters, hearing the rush of the river all hours of the day and night, not knowing how they were going to cross. It was a visible, tangible, natural obstacle.

But God's plan was simple - He told them, "Trust Me." As the priests led the way by stepping out in faith into the waters, the Lord responded with a miracle, stopping the flow of water. With each step,

<sup>3</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 390.

<sup>4</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 391.

the water rose up, many miles away. Commentators say Zarethan was 30 miles upstream! God made a wide path for His two million Promised Land people to take their next step.

We see in verse 15 that the feet of the priests were “dipped in the edge of the water” until they were standing on dry ground in the middle of the river. It was the smallest of steps, but it was enough to activate a mighty miracle. Through the obedient feet of the priests, stepping out in faith and into His promise, the way was opened for them all to move forward.

**Unless and until you are willing to step out in faith and step into the purpose and promise God has for you, your new beginning will only be in your future instead of your present.**

Is it time for you to get “your feet wet?” Unless and until you are willing to step out in faith and step into the purpose and promise God has for you, your new beginning will only be in your future instead of your present. Is there an area of your life where you are wandering aimlessly instead of claiming the inheritance He has for you?

Warren Wiersbe notes that many commentators and songwriters refer to the crossing of the Jordan as a picture of a Christian dying and going to heaven. Yet he contends that instead, it is a picture of the believer claiming their inheritance in Christ. <sup>5</sup> Joshua is a reflection of Christ representing Jesus as our Conqueror.

Our assurance that the “*living God is among us*” comes as we stand on the finished work of Christ, looking back at His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Jesus is our new beginning.

**HEBREWS 9:13-15** *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? <sup>15</sup> For this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

Is it time for you to leave the Jordan behind and claim your inheritance in Christ? For the Promised Land people, assurance that “*the living God is among you*” (Joshua 3:10) came as they stepped into the waters and then stood on dry ground looking back on the western bank of the Jordan from where they had come.

---

<sup>5</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, p.380

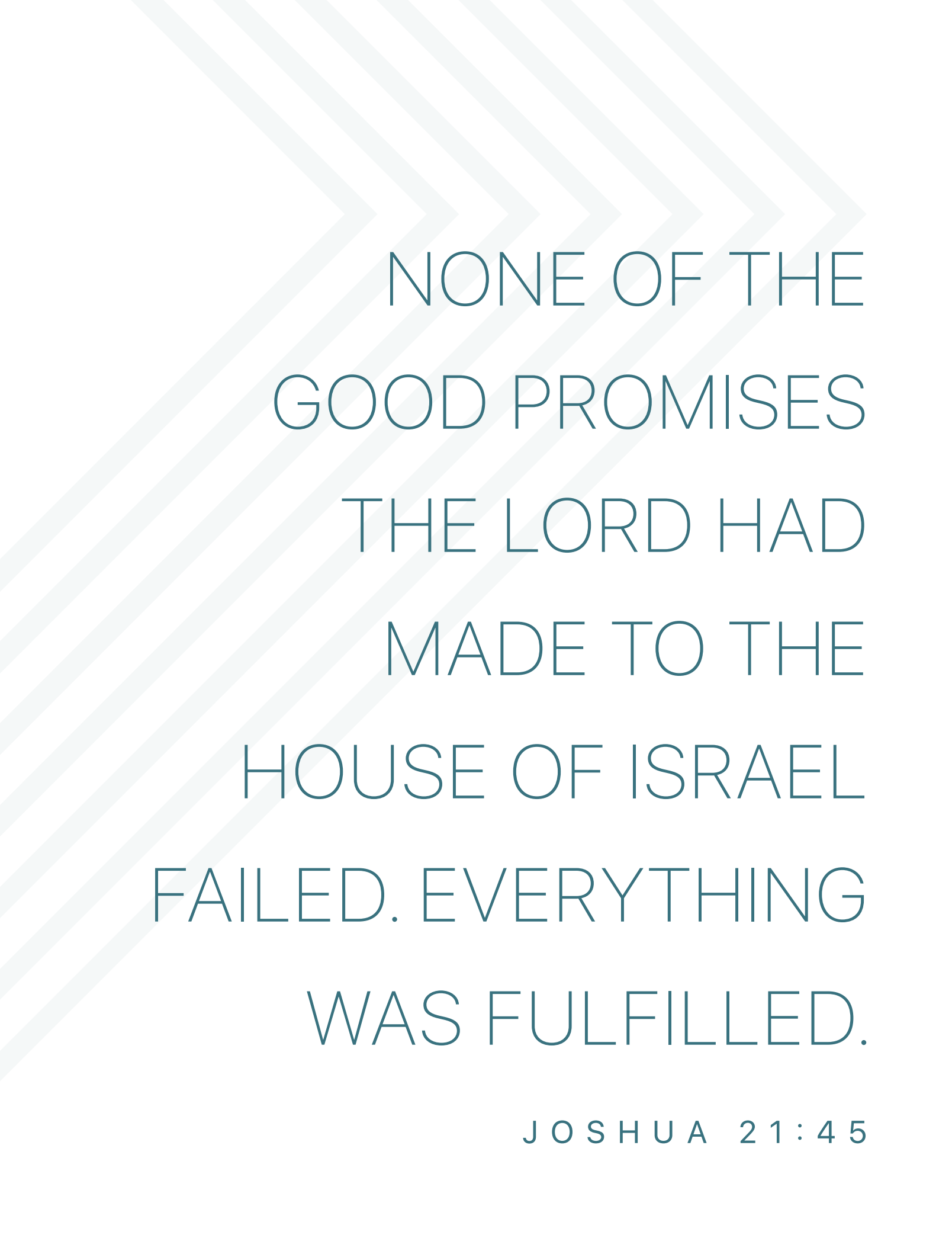
## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

With one small step of faith, God did for the Israelites what they could not do for themselves. And He continued to assist as they fought battle after battle to take the Promised Land. Oh, there were defeats along the way, but the promise of the land was fulfilled. Under Joshua, God delivered the land into the hands of His people as they trusted Him and obeyed. God calls us to trust and obey. To step out in faith, trusting Him to go before us, to come behind us and to lead the way. God's Word is sure. The Jordan is behind us and Canaan is before us. What awaits ahead if only we will take that next step of faith into the promise of His inheritance?

So often we become complacent because of the familiar. We want something new, something different. However, we get scared or nervous; not trusting ourselves or perhaps even God in the process. We want to change but the familiar is what we know, even though it may not be best.

The first step is always the hardest. The first step is often a bit shaky. If you have ever seen a little baby trying to take the first step, it is not always a pretty sight. There is some wobbling that takes place. There is some pausing that takes place. There is also some falling down that takes place. Yet, the baby keeps striving to take that first step, which leads to the second step, which leads to walking and eventually running.

We are still only a few months into the new year. A year we are focusing our influence. A year where God may be speaking to you in taking a first step to a new beginning. Do not let fear or doubt stand in your way. Be in prayer to see how God is leading. And perhaps God is going to use you in the life of someone else to help them in their new beginning. God fulfilled His promise to His people after 430 years of slavery and another 40 years in the wilderness. The promise fulfilled may not always be swift, but it always happens in God's timing. It starts with the first step; is it time for you to get your toes wet?



NONE OF THE  
GOOD PROMISES  
THE LORD HAD  
MADE TO THE  
HOUSE OF ISRAEL  
FAILED. EVERYTHING  
WAS FULFILLED.

J O S H U A 2 1 : 4 5

# PROMISE

## COMMITTED

### DATE

March 7 & 8

### WEEK

2 of 5

### KEY VERSES

Joshua 21:45 & Joshua 24:15

## SETTING THE STAGE

(TEACHERS - Since we are transitioning from the beginning of Joshua last week to the end of the book this week, consider sending out the link to the 8-minute Bible Project video of the book of Joshua as a teaser to this lesson. It will be on the [second.org/teachers](https://second.org/teachers) website)

The book of Joshua tells us how God – in His time and in His way – fulfilled the promise of the land in the Abrahamic covenant. Under the leadership of Joshua, God fulfilled His promise to give them land through the conquest of Canaan and the allocation of the land amongst the twelve tribes of Israel.

Last week we looked at Joshua 3 and how they were called to step out in faith and step into the promise of the land and cross the Jordan River. From Chapters 3 to 23, the Israelites engage in battles with the Canaanites who inhabit the land and by God's hand ultimately take possession of the land. In each battle, we see God's faithfulness and Israel's success when they follow His commands. Likewise, we also see the failure of Israel when they do not. Why did God seek to drive out the "ites" of the land? The culture of the Canaanites had become extremely morally corrupt, including child sacrifice. God did not want that influence on His chosen people. These stories are unique to this time in history, unique to the Israelites and limited to those possessing the Promised Land at that time.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. S - Surrender
2. E - Exalt God Only
3. R - Remember
4. V - Veracity - Serve in Truth and Sincerity
5. E - Engage - Hear God's Voice and Obey

### THINGS TO KNOW

- The Canaanites consisted of the following people groups, sometimes referred to as the "ites": Hivites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and more.

# PROMISE

## COMMITTED

### Introduction

God was committed to His promise. In Chapter 21:44-45 we see the key text of the book:

**JOSHUA 21:44-45 (HCSB)** *The LORD gave them rest on every side according to all He had sworn to their fathers. None of their enemies were able to stand against them, for the LORD handed over all their enemies to them. <sup>45</sup> None of the good promises the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled.*

God delivered their enemies to them. Everything He had promised concerning the land had been fulfilled. So, in Chapter 23-24, we see Joshua's final words to the people, calling them to respond to the fulfillment of God's ancient promise to Abraham.

Joshua calls the Israelites to turn away from Canaanite gods and commit to being faithful to the covenant that they have made with the Living God, the one true God.

Joshua reminds them of God's generosity, reviewing their history of how God brought them into the Promised Land and delivered it into their hands. Joshua calls the Israelites to turn away from Canaanite gods and commit to being faithful to the covenant that they have made with the Living God, the one true God. He explains that if they do so, it will lead to life and blessing. But if they are unfaithful, they will experience the same judgment as the Canaanites. In the end, Joshua calls them to make a choice. Let's look at Joshua 24:1-15 as God, through Joshua, reminds His people of the stories of grace, deliverance, and promise.

**JOSHUA 24:1-15** *Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup> Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. <sup>3</sup> Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. <sup>4</sup> To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. <sup>6</sup> I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. <sup>7</sup> But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. <sup>8</sup> Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you. <sup>9</sup> Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. <sup>10</sup> But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand. <sup>11</sup> You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. <sup>12</sup> Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow. <sup>13</sup> I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'*





<sup>14</sup> “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Each day we are confronted with countless choices. Some have minimal consequences, such as whether to press snooze or get up when the alarm goes off, while other decisions can be immediately life-changing. And while some of these moment-by-moment choices may impact our day, other choices may not affect us for years to come. But at the end of the day and the end of our lives, it is important to remember that we are a product of the choices we make. Each decision helps to define who we are, whose we are, and the impact we have on others. As believers, our destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice.

In Joshua Chapter 24, in his final words to the Israelites, Joshua calls for them to commit to a choice telling them, “choose this day whom you will serve.” It defines who they are, whose they are and their ultimate destiny. Moreover, it is somewhat of a misnomer because it is not initiating the choice as if it is their idea. It is responding to already being God’s chosen people. It is a choice, committing, responding, as ones who have already been claimed. And, contrary to popular opinion, this is not a one-time decision, but rather involves a daily commitment of choosing whom they will serve. It requires “a long obedience in the same direction.” Eugene Petersen says it best in his book by that same name:

**We are a product of the choices we make. Each decision helps to define who we are, whose we are, and the impact we have on others.**

“The central reality for Christians is the personal, unalterable, persevering commitment God makes to us. Perseverance is not the result of our determination; it is the result of God’s faithfulness. We survive in the way of faith not because we have extraordinary stamina but because God is righteous, because God sticks with us.” <sup>1</sup>

The people respond to Joshua’s question with a resounding YES:

**JOSHUA 24:16-18** *The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup> for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. <sup>18</sup> The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”*

What does it mean to choose to “serve the Lord?” Though the details may look different today than they did during Joshua’s time, the principles remain the same. Using SERVE as an acronym, let’s take a look at what Joshua chapter 24 tells us about how to SERVE:

## 1. S - SURRENDER

Though the people spoke their affirmation with a resounding yes, Joshua knows this cannot be merely a decision of the mind. It must also be a decision of the heart. Because of sin, man is not capable of perfectly serving God in his own power and strength, it requires divine intervention. Look at Joshua’s response:

**JOSHUA 24:19** *Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. <sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has*

<sup>1</sup> Eugene Petersen, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Commemorative Edition, Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2019.

done good to you.” <sup>21</sup> The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.” <sup>22</sup> Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” <sup>23</sup> “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” <sup>24</sup> The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.” <sup>25</sup> So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. <sup>26</sup> **And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.** <sup>27</sup> Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.” <sup>28</sup> Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

**Surrender is exchanging our self-dependency for God-dependency.**

To serve the Lord requires you to wholly surrender to Him each and every day. It cannot be just part of you that surrenders nor can it be only on Sundays and Wednesdays. Surrender is exchanging our self-dependency for God-dependency. Yielding to God. This is not an act of weakness, rather it is a step of strength because it is surrendering to the authority of someone greater, stronger, wiser and more capable than us. It is surrendering to God. When we do not surrender, we act as our own roadblocks to all that God has for us. Surrendering is choosing to recognize that God’s plan for our lives is better than any version we can dream up on our own. And as Christ-followers, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us along the way. Joshua was told to be strong and courageous at the beginning of the book in chapter 1, and that some strength and courage led him to surrender to the Lord.

## 2. E - EXALT GOD ONLY

Look again at Joshua’s words to the Israelites in verses 20-23:

**JOSHUA 24:20-23** *If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.”* <sup>21</sup> The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.” <sup>22</sup> Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” <sup>23</sup> **“Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”**

**Throughout the Bible, we see the greatest temptation for the other nations and God’s chosen people was not to simply reject YAHWEH outright but to add Him to their worship of other gods.**

Many of the people the Israelites encountered in Canaan believed in regional or limited gods. For example, they believed one of their gods was in control of the Jordan River and protected them from invaders. This is part of the reason why God’s miraculous act in drying it up for the Israelites to cross had such a huge impact on the Canaanites. (see Joshua 5:1)

Throughout the Bible, we see the greatest temptation for the other nations and God’s chosen people was not to simply reject YAHWEH outright but to add Him to their worship of other gods. To add Him alongside Baal, Asherah and others.

We may not have personal names or statues of little gods in our society today, but we all are equally as guilty of allowing God to be in charge of some parts of our lives but not others, or allowing the important spiritual things to rule us on Sundays but other things to rule us Monday - Saturday. To serve Him we must exalt Him only.

## 3. R - REMEMBER

**JOSHUA 24:16** *The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup> for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land*

*of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.*

<sup>18</sup> *The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."*

In verses 2-13, The Lord recounts, through Joshua, all that the Lord had done for Israel from the time He had first called Abraham and promised to provide the land to his descendants to the present. In verse 13 he poignantly explains that they had land they had not labored for, lived in cities they had not built and had a vineyard and olive grove harvest they had not planted themselves, all by God's mighty hand. In verses 16-18, the people acknowledge the work of God, remembering all that He has done for them. Then they respond with their commitment, *"We will serve the Lord for He is our God."*

In serving God, it is essential to remember all that He has done. His Word recounts His grace, deliverance, and promises and actions on our behalf since the beginning of time. Studying His Word embeds these stories in our minds so that we can remember and recount them to others.

**In serving God,  
it is essential to  
remember all that  
He has done.**

In the very next segment of history after Joshua dies, comes one of the saddest texts in the bible found in the Book of Judges.

**JUDGES 2:10** *All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.*

<sup>11</sup> *Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals...*

Within one generation they had forgotten the commitment that they had made. At any point in time, we are one generation away from not remembering the work which the Lord has done for His people. To serve we need to remember and to recount to our children and grandchildren all that the Lord has done in our lives and the lives of those who have gone before us.

#### 4. V - VERACITY - SERVE IN TRUTH AND SINCERITY

**JOSHUA 24:14** *"Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*

The Dictionary defines veracity as "habitual observance of truth ..." <sup>2</sup> The synonyms listed are truthfulness, sincerity, authenticity, integrity, trustworthiness. Serving the Lord in truth and sincerity means serving Him for His glory, not our own. Serving to honor Him, not to honor ourselves or to pat ourselves on the back. Joshua exemplified this type of service throughout his lifetime. He was telling them how to live in the presence of God, serving Him only. Fear of the Lord is a humble reverence. We are told in Proverbs that fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. (Proverbs 9:10)

**Serving the Lord in  
truth and veracity  
means serving Him  
for His glory, not  
our own.**

This principle, like the others, is as true for us today as it was for the Israelites. God calls us to serve Him in sincerity and in truth, standing upon His Word, boldly declaring our faith as His servant, walking in His ways.

---

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary.com/veracity

## 5. E - ENGAGE - HEAR GOD'S VOICE AND OBEY

---

**JOSHUA 24:23** *"Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."*<sup>24</sup> *The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice."*

It is easy for God's voice to get muffled. Our ears tune in to secular noise so easily that we tune God out subconsciously. It takes intentional engagement to hear and obey. As Chuck Swindoll says, "thinking right always precedes acting right."<sup>3</sup> Serving requires engaging the heart and the mind to hear from the Lord, then carrying out His commands.

### HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

God gave the land He had promised to the nation of Israel. Joshua did his best to lead and guide them in taking possession of the land. Yet, the people allowed some inhabitants to remain despite the commands of the Lord. Ultimately, the Canaanite people groups became a damaging influence on Israel.

In Joshua's lifetime, the Israelites honored the commitment they made at Shechem that day to serve the Lord but then fell away from the Lord after his death. The good news for us is that because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (*Romans 8:37*)

Serving the Lord does not just happen by accident; it only happens with intentionality. You can choose how to live your life. You can choose what to make your priority. You can choose when to make a change. It always comes down to choice. And once you make that choice you have to decide if you are committed to following through. Joshua was committed to his choice of serving the Lord. Joshua was committed to his choice of leading the people of God. Joshua was committed to his choice of making a difference in the lives of others.

We can choose to commit to who we will serve. We can commit to stand with Joshua and say, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Remember, it is a daily choice.

---

<sup>3</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*, Nashville: Word Publishing, 1981.

# PROMISE

## M A D E

### DATE

March 14 & 15

### WEEK

3 of 5

### KEY VERSE

1 Samuel 16:7

## SETTING THE STAGE

Have you ever noticed that endings always bring new beginnings? We have all had those “ending” moments in life. Endings come in many ways: job loss, relocation, death of a loved one, divorce, etc. Some endings are easier than others and some come as expected while others are unexpected. Whatever the case, we have all experienced endings that were the catalyst to new beginnings. As we study 1 Samuel 16 the nation of Israel by way of King Saul had just experienced an ending of sorts. King Saul openly disobeyed God, building a literal wall between himself and God, and himself and God’s prophet, Samuel. In Samuel 15, God rejects Saul as the King, setting up a tragic ending for Saul and for Israel (*see 1 Samuel 15:16-26*).

This caused anxiety for God’s chosen people of Israel as Saul continued to rule until his death, though rejected by God as king. The rest of 1 Samuel chronicles the deterioration of King Saul and the development of King David, as Saul’s rule comes to an end.

But endings bring new beginnings and in 1 Samuel 16 the nation of Israel is given hope for a new beginning as young David is anointed as King of Israel. Though the Spirit of the Lord came on him that day (*1 Samuel 16:13*), his reign would not begin for several years. God is faithful to keep His promises and He promised to raise up a king for His people, Israel. Throughout history, Christians have struggled to turn loose of things from the past and move forward into the future God has purposed for us. In this lesson we will look specifically at 1 Samuel 16 and see how we can embrace new beginnings as God leads.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Do Not Stay In the Endings of Life
2. New Beginnings Start with Going
3. New Beginnings Do Not Always Look the Way We Think They Should

### THINGS TO KNOW

- David (“beloved”) was the eighth child in his family.
- David was from the tribe of Judah. His lineage would lead to the birth of Jesus Christ.

# PROMISE

## M A D E

### 1. DO NOT STAY IN THE ENDINGS OF LIFE

**1 SAMUEL 16:1a** *The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?”*

David was chosen by God from eternity past to be the ruler of Israel. The rejection of Saul did not force the LORD to a new course of action. Rather, God’s action followed His omniscient plan as He used Saul’s disobedience as the human occasion for implementing His higher plan. God permitted the people to have the king of their choice. Now that their mistake in choosing him had been clearly manifested, God, in the superiority of His own wisdom, raised up a king who would fulfill His perfect will.

This ending for the nation of Israel was not easy. Samuel was in mourning (*1 Samuel 16:1*) and was clearly grieved by what had taken place. But God admonishes Samuel to mourn no longer. Saul’s rejection has become final, and God’s prophet must sacrifice his personal feelings, and prepare to carry out the purpose of God’s plan (*1 Samuel 13:14; 15:28*).

Like Samuel, we too must be careful not to stay in the endings that take place in our lives. We should process them and move forward in a healthy way; but, to stay in the endings will rob us of the new beginnings that God will bring. It is important to remember that the endings we will experience in life are not the ending of our lives. Stay vigilant and watch for the new beginning that God is bringing. Then, follow Samuel’s lead in going forward into God’s perfect plan.

### 2. NEW BEGINNINGS START WITH GOING

**1 SAMUEL 16:1b-5** *Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”<sup>2</sup> And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’<sup>3</sup> And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.”<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, “Do you come peaceably?”<sup>5</sup> And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

As Samuel grieves, notice the Lord tells him to “Go.” In other words, take action. For some of us, the biggest barrier in moving from an ending to a beginning is simply taking the first step. God tells Samuel exactly what to do in verses 3-5. Samuel has questions and is probably a bit cautious in doing what the Lord has instructed. God unfolds His plan and Samuel is saying, “Wait, what? You want me to go where?” Here is the secret: when God brings you to a new beginning you will rarely be able to play it safe. What God calls us to may be uncomfortable, it may cost us friends, business deals, etc. It is in these times we must trust God over our feelings. As Paul told the Corinthians, we are to “walk by faith, not by sight” (*2 Corinthians 5:7*).

For some of us,  
the biggest barrier  
in moving from  
an ending to a  
beginning is simply  
taking the first step.



Faith is simply taking God at His word.

Practically, we must remember that we are a part of God's plan and make sure that we are not simply trying to make Him a part of our plan. It is His plan, our purpose.

In verse 4 we see Samuel following the Lord's command to go see Jesse the Bethlehemite. Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz (*Ruth 4:18–21*), and so was in the lineage of the promised King. As the wives of Jacob gave birth to a royal house (*Genesis 35:11; 49:10*), so Ruth would produce the Davidic dynasty (*Ruth 4:11*).

Bethlehem was not part of Samuel's regular territory and so he was reticent to go. So, God gave him a cover story. God did not tell Samuel to be deceptive, but rather to combine the anointing with the business of sacrificing (*1 Samuel 16:2*). The elders in Bethlehem came to him, trembling. They may have wondered if Samuel had come for judgment (v. 4).

Where is God calling you to take action? Is He calling you to get up and go? It has been said that any journey starts with a step ... do you need to take a step of action today?

Samuel had a purpose for going and it was to unfold the new beginning for Israel. He was to anoint a future king. It was a new beginning that started with Go, which Samuel obeyed. But Samuel had to see beyond what was before his eyes to fulfill God's purpose.

**Faith is simply taking  
God at His word.**

### 3. NEW BEGINNINGS DO NOT ALWAYS LOOK THE WAY WE THINK THEY SHOULD

**1 SAMUEL 16:6-13 (ESV)** *When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." <sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." <sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." <sup>9</sup> Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." <sup>10</sup> And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." <sup>11</sup> Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." <sup>12</sup> And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." <sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.*

The year would be around 1029 B.C. and David would be about eleven years old at the time of Samuel's visit. Samuel's purpose was to anoint the next king of Israel- a new beginning indeed! Seven of Jesse's sons were lined up for Samuel to look at and the Lord, through Samuel, rejects them all. They all had great outward characteristics, but this key verse in 1 Samuel holds as true today as it did then: "*For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart*" (v. 7). This must have shocked Samuel and Jesse. They had an idea of what was going to happen, but their plan was not God's plan. In a surprising turn of events, Samuel asks if there are any other sons (v. 11).

David, the youngest of Jesse's boys, was out back with the sheep. Kings were often described as shepherds both in Israel and in the ancient Near East. Hence the irony here is that the one who had not been permitted by his father to attend the festivities with Samuel was engaged in duties which symbolize metaphorically his great future. Nobody expected God's man to be David.

**Nobody expected  
God's man to be  
David.**



So many times, in life we have an idea of how things should be, but God does not operate that way. Many times, the new beginnings that God brings us look nothing like we imagined, but they are exactly what we need.

There have been jobs and friendships that appeared to be one thing, yet I saw were something else when I allowed God to shape my purpose. God always has a plan, even though it may not seem the most logical or practical. Honestly, God's plan may not even seem the most spiritual, but God's plan is the most perfect. In Jeremiah when God's people were in exile, a dark time in history, God had a plan for their purpose. Jeremiah 29:11 says, *"For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."* Like with the exiles, God knew what He wanted to accomplish in the anointing of David – he was a future and a hope for Israel. God knew the plan and purpose for this exercise of Samuel going to the house of Jesse.

**God knew what  
He wanted to  
accomplish in the  
anointing of David  
– he was a future  
and a hope for Israel.**

After looking at Jesse's seven sons, Samuel at last found the man of God's choice, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). It is interesting that David ("beloved") was number eight because, in Scripture, eight is often the number of a new beginning. God did use David to bring a new beginning to Israel, both governmentally and spiritually.

In verse 16b, it says, *And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."* This is a benchmark of significance both in the life of David and Samuel. In Scripture, only prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, and the anointing had to be performed by a person authorized by the Lord, which Samuel was. In biblical imagery, oil can symbolize the Holy Spirit and the endowment of His power upon His servants (Zechariah 4). The Hebrew word "Messiah" and the Greek word "Christ" both mean "anointed." The Spirit of God came upon young David in great power, and ever after that, David was God's chosen man, but at the same time, the Spirit of God departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). Without the power of the Spirit, the servant of God is helpless to do the will of God and glorify Christ. As we abide in Christ, we receive the power we need, for Jesus said, *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5, NKJV).

Notice what it says in verse 13, *"And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward."* Can you imagine what that must have felt like? Following the obedience of both Samuel and David, there was no hesitation on the part of the Spirit of the Lord. There is an excitement that comes with the word "rushed." There is movement that comes with the word "rushed." There is purpose that comes with the word "rushed." David was a young man with purpose based on God's plan. It was a new beginning that ultimately changed a nation.

When it comes to new beginnings, God calls people who are busy, not people looking for ways to avoid responsibility. Moses (Exodus 3), Gideon (Judges 6), Elisha (1 Kings 19:19–21), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1), Amos (Amos 7:14–15), Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Mark 1:16–20), and Matthew (Matthew 9:9–13) were all busy when the Lord called them. God's pattern for leadership is stated in Matthew 25:21, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."* David had been faithful as a servant over a few things and God promoted him to a ruler over many things. David went from shepherding a flock to a whole nation!

Surely, no one would have ever expected this new beginning to start with an 11-year-old shepherd. Most times when God does something it is rarely in a way we could have thought or imagined. Our new beginnings may not always be what we want, but with God as the author, they will be exactly what we need when we need them.

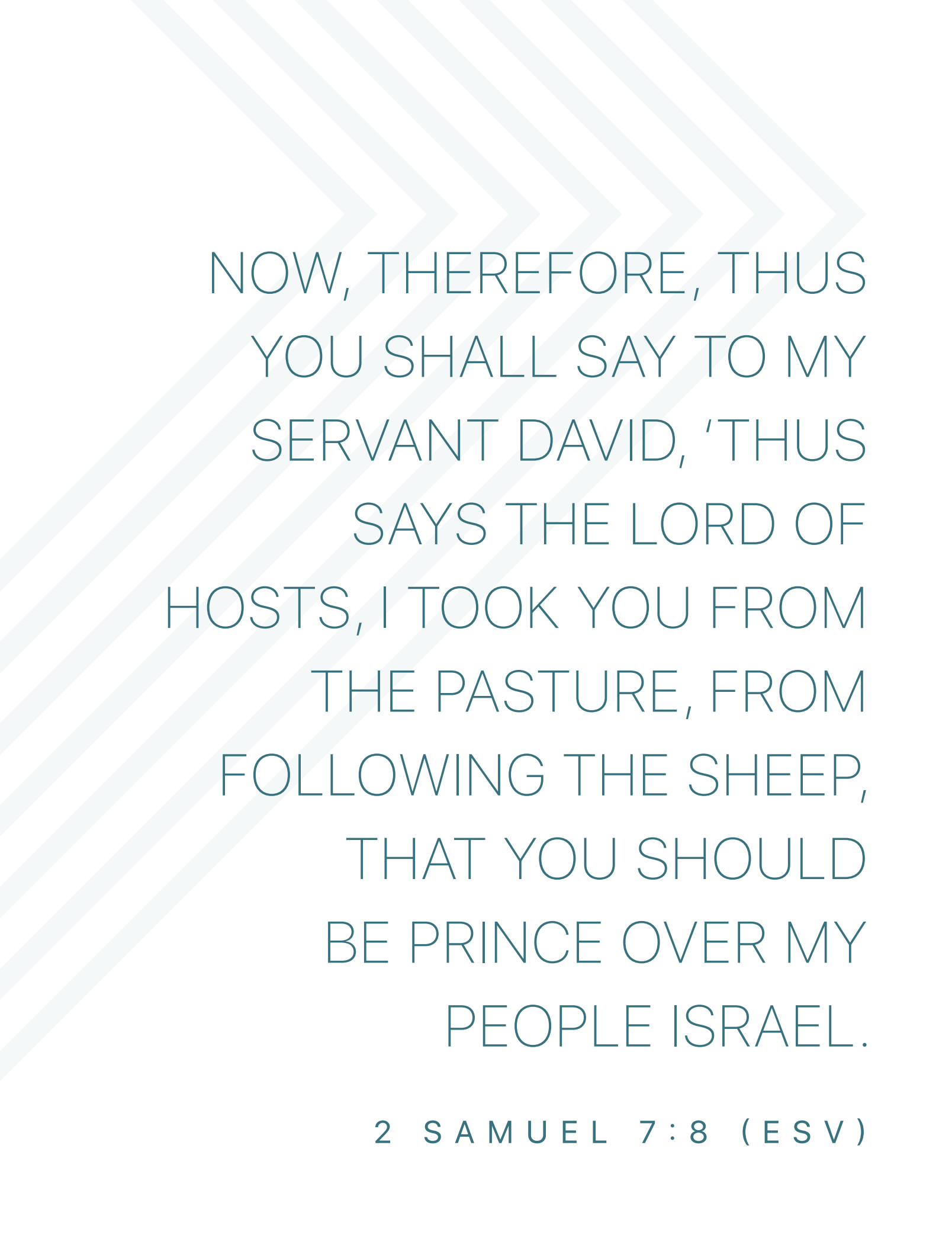


## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

So often we think we know what is best for our lives to the exclusion of God. We might subconsciously think God is too big to care or too big to know what we need. We tend to marginalize some decisions and overemphasize others. Regardless of the size of the decision, as Christ-followers we need to be willing not to stay in the endings of life. There are some things that come to an end for a very specific purpose. We must be willing and ready to step forward, and “Go” as the Lord leads. Often the road the Lord leads is not what we expect. There are curves along the way, even potholes that catch us off guard. The life of David had lots of curves and potholes some self-inflicted others not. David’s life was a rollercoaster of a journey, yet God had a plan and David had a purpose. God even used those detours along the way to shape David into a man after God’s own heart.

It is probably safe to say that none of us will be anointed as a king. But each of us as Christ-followers have the Holy Spirit. And perhaps it is time for you to allow the Spirit of the Lord to rush upon you in a fresh way and move you forward. Never underestimate what God wants to accomplish in your life. David was the youngest boy out in the field taking care of sheep yet God chose him. God is in the life-changing business. Remember the words of the Lord found in Isaiah:

**ISAIAH 55:8** *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.*



NOW, THEREFORE, THUS  
YOU SHALL SAY TO MY  
SERVANT DAVID, 'THUS  
SAYS THE LORD OF  
HOSTS, I TOOK YOU FROM  
THE PASTURE, FROM  
FOLLOWING THE SHEEP,  
THAT YOU SHOULD  
BE PRINCE OVER MY  
PEOPLE ISRAEL.

2 SAMUEL 7:8 (ESV)

# PROMISE

## F U L F I L L E D

### DATE

March 21 & 22

### WEEK

4 of 5

### KEY VERSE

2 Samuel 7:8

## SETTING THE STAGE

The establishment of the house of David is an integral part of God's master plan to fulfill the promise made in Genesis to defeat the enemy and crush the head of the serpent. At this point in God's plan, He has brought His people out of Egypt and has given them a good land. He has driven out their enemies, making His presence through guidance and assistance in their battles. But because of their sinfulness in the days of the Judges, God was angered and delivered them into the hands of their enemies. And then, Psalm 78 tells us that God came to their rescue, established sanctuary and remedied their sin. He paved the way for righteousness in setting up His servant David as the shepherd of Israel, and as the Servant King on the throne.

The Davidic Covenant represents one of the most significant moments in His Story and in defining His Plan-Our Purpose as the people of God. Psalm 78, verses 67-72, makes it clear that the placement of David on the throne was of major significance in God's redemptive purpose and was essential to the establishment of a godly rule in Israel. *Continued on page 92 >*

### PSALM 78:67-72

*He rejected the tent of Joseph;  
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,  
<sup>68</sup> but he chose the tribe of Judah,  
Mount Zion, which he loves.  
<sup>69</sup> He built his sanctuary like the high heavens,  
like the earth, which he has founded forever.  
<sup>70</sup> He chose David his servant  
and took him from the sheepfolds;  
<sup>71</sup> from following the nursing ewes he brought him  
to shepherd Jacob his people,  
Israel his inheritance.  
<sup>72</sup> With upright heart he shepherded them  
and guided them with his skillful hand.*

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. The Covenant's Explanation
2. The Covenant's Establishment
3. The Covenant's Meaning Today

### THINGS TO KNOW

- In Hebrew, the word for house (bayith), can also mean palace.<sup>1</sup>
- In Hebrew, the word for temple and house is the same word for dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

# PROMISE

## FULFILLED

*Setting the Stage, continued* > The succession of the Davidic kings under the Old Covenant was a pre-illustration of the unbroken eternal reign of the Lord Jesus, who, even now, reigns at the right hand in heaven. Let's take a look at the Davidic Covenant, its explanation and its meaning for us today.

### The Davidic Covenant - A Summary

**The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant, meaning its fulfillment does not depend on David's actions, or the actions of any of the members of his household.**

The Davidic Covenant is a covenant that took place between King David and God, when King David made plans to build God a house of cedar. The kingdom of Israel was at rest from their enemies, had been blessed and was prospering, and David realized that he, the King, was dwelling in a house of cedar, but God was still dwelling in a tent. The King shared his thoughts with the prophet, Nathan, who encouraged him to “*do what he planned*” (2 Samuel 7:1-3). Later that night, God spoke to Nathan, telling him to tell David that He did not want David to build Him a house of cedar, instead, God promised to build David a house. Metaphorically, this meant God would establish the lineage of David. First, He would bless the kingdom of David's son, Solomon. God promised to be a father to Solomon, disciplining him, but also never forsaking him (2 Samuel 7:11-16). Secondly, God promised that David's throne would be “*established forever*,” and this was fulfilled through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was a descendant of the house of David, and whose kingdom will reign forever (Psalm 45:6-7; Psalm 89:3-4; Revelation 1:5-6).

The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant, meaning its fulfillment does not depend on David's actions, or the actions of any of the members of his household. Both David and Solomon committed grievous sins (2 Samuel 11:1-27; 1 Kings 11:4-8), and though these sins were displeasing and hurtful to God, He would still honor His promise to establish David's house eternally. God had purposed to do it, and He would accomplish His promise, despite the sinful actions of men (2 Timothy 2:13).

Jesus Christ was called the Son of David, referring to the everlasting kingship of David's house, according to the Davidic Covenant. The promise that David's house and throne would be established eternally is a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah, specifically, that He would come from the house and lineage of David (Matthew 21:9).

**Jesus Christ was called the Son of David, referring to the everlasting kingship of David's house, according to the Davidic covenant.**

When God makes a covenant, He is, in essence, writing His own job description of things to come. The reason we study the covenants is because in them we see the biblical proof that God's job description does indeed include the responsibility to withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly, and to work for those who wait for Him. He turns every strep throat, smashed car and stinging put-down for our eternal good. A simple definition of God's covenants would be: “when God makes a covenant He reveals His own job description and signs it.” In almost every case He comes to the covenant partner, lays His job description out and says, “This is how I will work for you with all my heart and

with all my soul and with all my strength if you will love Me as I am, cleave to Me, and trust Me to keep My word.”



Today as we look at God's covenant with David we will see:

1. The covenant's explanation.
2. The covenant's establishment.
3. The covenant's meaning today.

## 1. THE COVENANT'S EXPLANATION

**2 SAMUEL 7:1-11 (ESV)** *Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup> the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." <sup>3</sup> And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you." <sup>4</sup> But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, <sup>5</sup> "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?' <sup>6</sup> I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. <sup>7</sup> In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' <sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup> And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.*

**David sensed the incongruity of his living in an impressive palace while the Ark of God was still in a tent.**

David pours the thoughts of his heart out to his faithful prophet Nathan. He says, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains." David sensed the incongruity of his living in an impressive palace while the Ark of God was still in a tent. I mean, if David was in a palace of cedar, surely, God's ark ought to be an impressive structure! David's own humility and his love for the Lord moved him with the desire to bring about a change in that situation and he shared that desire with Nathan, his friend, his prophet. And Nathan, perceiving the king's sincere motivation, gave his blessing on the project, implied in his words to David. Nathan said, "go and do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."

**The Lord's wisdom and kindness are seen in the way that He delivers His message to David through Nathan.**

In verses 4-7, we see the Lord's gracious response. The same night that David shared this with Nathan and Nathan instructed him, "Go and do it, the Lord is with you," the Lord came to Nathan and instructed him to put a question to David. God said, "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?'"

Now, look at how good and wise our sovereign Lord is in the way He sends these words to David. God gives these words to David from the mouth of Nathan and not from another prophet, so that the reputation of Nathan would not be impugned. I mean, what would it have been like, if God had sent another prophet to tell this to David. It would have appeared that Nathan had spoken falsely. But God is good, and He allows Nathan to be the one to deliver this news. Just think how perplexing it would have been to David to have had Nathan tell him one thing during the day, then another prophet shows up and says not to do it. The Lord's wisdom and kindness are seen in the way that He delivers this message to David. David is not confused, and Nathan's reputation is not damaged.

In fact, we later find out from the lips of David's son, Solomon, that the Lord told David that He was pleased with what David wanted to do. Turn with me to I Kings.

**I KINGS 8:18-19** *But the LORD said to my father David, “Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart.”*

Solomon tells us that the Lord told David that He was pleased with the desires of his heart. Then, in 2 Samuel 7:6, the Lord reminds David of an important spiritual truth. He says, *“For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.”*

Stop for a moment and think how profound those words are.

**The sovereign  
God of Israel is not  
removed from  
His people, He is  
near to His people.**

First, they point to God’s willingness to identify with His people. If His people must travel in the wilderness in tents, God is going to be there with them. The sovereign God of Israel is not removed from His people, He is near to His people, and He even shares in their humiliations. Is this not a foretaste of Christ’s tabernacling with His people? And yet, you see it here in the sovereign God of Israel.

Secondly, these words emphasize God’s continual presence with His people. He is not distant or unconcerned. But He is near. He is in the midst of His people. And our glorious Lord Jesus Christ would one day show forth beyond all human expectation, the extent of God’s commitment to be with His people, as John tells us in John 1:14, that *“He was made flesh and He dwelt, He tabernacled among us.”*

In 2 Samuel 7:8-17 the covenant which God inaugurates with David is explained and established. The Lord surpasses Himself in blessing David. He reminds David that it was He who chose him and made him ruler, telling him in verse 8, *“I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.”*

God has been with David, He has given him victory over His enemies. God is the one who has made David great, He is the one who will continue to make David great. The Lord reminds him in verse 9, *“And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.”*

Furthermore, God says in verse 11 that He will establish His people in their own land, and He will give them rest from their enemies. And ultimately, that the Lord Himself will build David a house. *“From the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.”*

**The Lord was not  
speaking of building  
David a house of  
cedar. He was  
speaking of building  
David a dynasty.**

Notice that Nathan tells David “God will make you a house.” There is an intentional play on words happening here in the Hebrew language. David begun this passage by saying, that he wanted to build a *house* for the Lord. Of course, by that, he meant a temple. In Hebrew, the word for *house* (bayith), can also mean *palace*. Interestingly, the word for *temple* and *house* is the same word for *dynasty* in Hebrew.<sup>1</sup>

And so there is a play on words going on here. David says “Lord, I want to build you a **house**,” meaning a temple, “because it is not right for me to be in a **house**,” meaning a palace, “and You dwell in a tent.” And God replies, “David, you will build Me a **house**?” meaning a temple. “No. I will build you a **house**,” meaning a dynasty.

On one hand, you had a king building a house of cedar for God; good intentions and well-meaning heart.

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew noun (in the common singular) used for house in v. 7, 11, 13, 16 is the same word (bayith in English) and takes the meaning: dwelling, house, palace, temple, receptacle, family, or dynasty. See Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Halot) pg 124.

On the other hand, you have the Creator of the Universe wanting to build a house for you that is not limited to time or geography. Which one has a bigger vision? From the time that God saw David in the pasture tending sheep as the youngest of 8 boys, God saw beyond the pasture. God saw a dynasty, a lineage, a bloodline that would change history for all time.

The Lord was not speaking of building David a house of cedar. He was speaking of building David a dynasty. That is something Saul wanted but did not get.

Saul wanted Jonathan to sit on the throne and God told Saul that Jonathan would not sit on the throne of Israel. But now God is saying to David, “David, your sons will sit on the throne of Israel.” So, the Lord says, “You will not build Me a house, a temple, but I will build you a house, a dynasty.” He would establish David and his seed after him, as the monarchs of the people of God.

## 2. THE COVENANT’S ESTABLISHMENT

**2 SAMUEL 7:12-17 (ESV)** *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” <sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.*

With these words we have the formal inauguration of God’s covenant with David, though the word covenant is not found here. Other passages explicitly state that this was a covenant inauguration. For instance, in Psalm 89:

**PSALM 89:3-4 (ESV)** *I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to David, My servant, your seed will I establish forever and build up your throne to all generations.*

You will also find this type of verbiage in Psalm 132. The covenant insures a number of blessings to David:

1. First, his own flesh and blood will occupy the throne. “*And when thy days be fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and I will set up thy seed after thee which shall proceed out of your body, I will establish his kingdom*” (v. 12). This is no small promise, given the political instability of the near east kingdoms of David’s time, or for today for that matter.

2. Secondly, David’s heir will fulfill David’s desire by building a house for God. “*He shall build a house for My name.*” (v. 13)

3. Third, David’s heir will stand in unique relationship to God. God will be his father, and he will be His son. Nathan proclaims this amazing word, “*I will be his father and he will shall be My son.*” (v. 14) <sup>2</sup>

4. Fourth, David’s heir may experience punishment for sins, but he will not be cast off like Saul. Look at that second phrase in verse 14, “*when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the*

**David’s dynasty is without parallel in length of duration.**

<sup>2</sup> Now, we who live under the New Covenant, and who have the precious privilege of addressing God as Father, may not be too startled by that statement, but to the Hebrew ear, it would have been unbelievable. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is an individual so clearly designated a son of God. And yet that is the blessing of David’s covenant.

*rod of men and strokes of the sons of man.*” On the surface, that looks very negative. However, you need to understand that in the context of Saul’s having been cut off, that is actually a very positive thing that is being said. He is saying, “If he stumbles, and he will, like Saul, I will not cut him off. I will discipline him, but I will not cut him off.” This of course, proved important in the days of Solomon’s disobedience as well as for many of the kings of Judah.

5. Fifth and finally, God makes the astonishing promise that David’s kingdom will last forever in v. 16. *“Your house, your kingdom will be established forever before Me. Your throne will be established forever.”* It is worth noting that David’s dynasty is without parallel in the ancient near east in length of duration. His house ruled Judah for over four hundred years, for longer than the greatest Egyptian dynasty, and in stark contrast, to the numerous ruling families in the Northern kingdom. There has never been a longer reign of a single dynasty in any land in the history of the world than David’s four-hundred-year dynastic reign.

The promise was not that the lineage of David would reign for a long time, but that it would reign forever. That very fact leads the prophets of the Old Testament to say that this Davidic promise would only be fulfilled in the Messiah. That, of course, is exactly how the New Testament interprets it. This reign is ultimately fulfilled in the reign of the son of David, Jesus Christ and His eternal messianic rule. The succession of the Davidic kings under the Old Covenant was a type. It was a shadowy figure. A pre-illustration of the unbroken eternal reign of the Lord Jesus, who, even now, reigns at the right hand in heaven. This promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in the reign of Christ.

### 3. THE COVENANT’S MEANING TODAY

---

The mission of the church today is to submit ourselves to the Son of David who now rules invisibly from heaven until He puts every enemy under His feet. And, our mission is to announce the good news to people in every neighborhood and every nation that they can be happy subjects of Christ’s kingdom forever if they transfer their allegiance from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of Christ.

**Jesus Christ, the  
Son of David,  
the eternal King  
of the world will  
come from heaven  
and establish a  
reign of joy and  
righteousness  
and peace over all  
his loyal subjects  
forever and ever.**

To put it another way, personal holiness means learning the attitudes and customs of a new kingdom: the kingdom of Christ. And personal evangelism means telling people that the rightful king of the world against whom they have rebelled is willing to grant amnesty to all who return and live under His rule. Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the eternal King of the world will come from heaven and establish a reign of joy and righteousness and peace over all his loyal subjects forever and ever. And until He comes, the worldwide mission of the church is to extend complete, free, universal amnesty to people from every nation.



## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Look at Isaiah 55:1-3. The point of this invitation is that the very sovereignty, wisdom and love of God which assured David of an eternal kingdom can also assure you of God's eternal kindness as a part of that kingdom. Isaiah 55:1-3 says,

**ISAIAH 55:1-3 (NIV)** *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.*

*<sup>2</sup> Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. <sup>3</sup> Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David."*

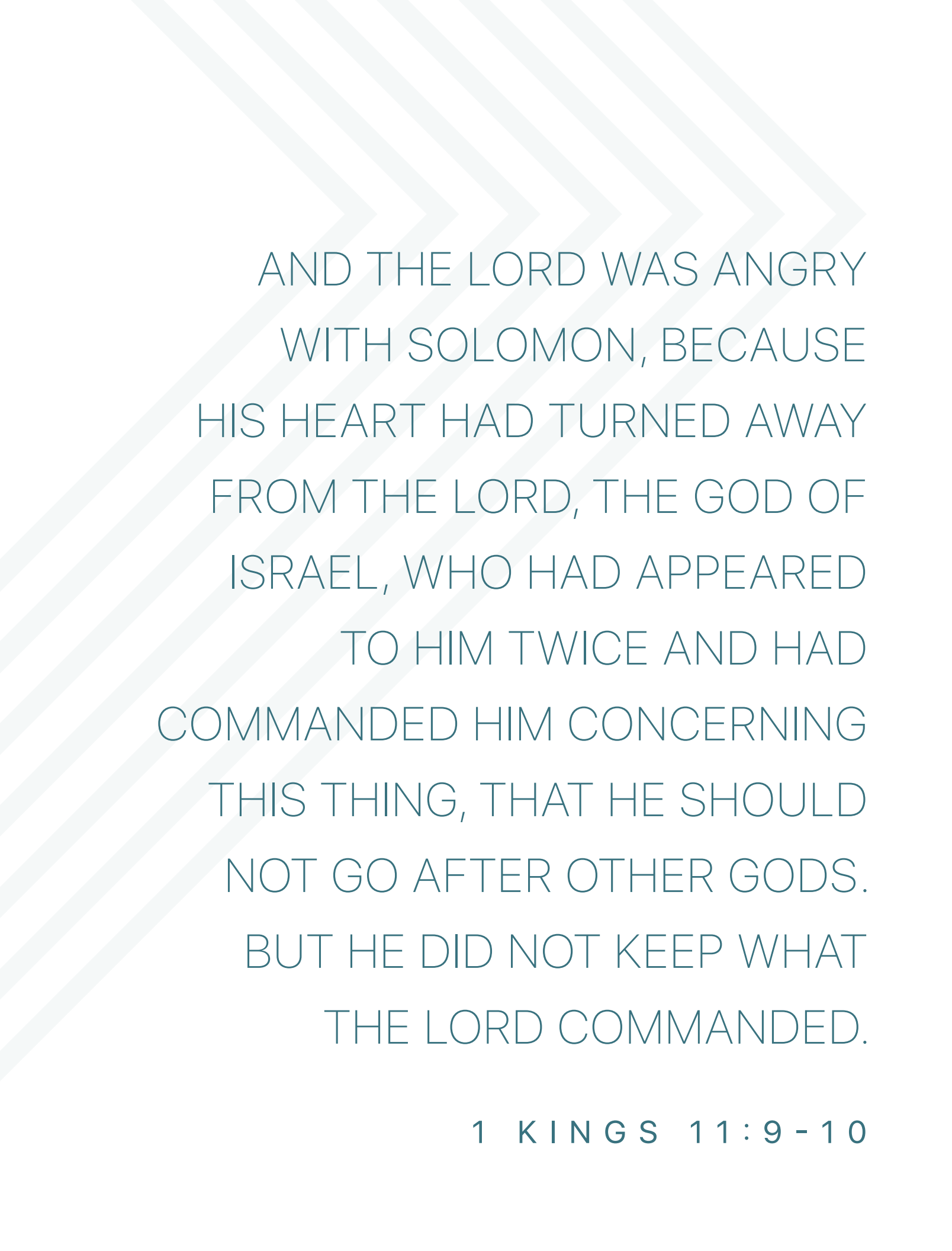
The very mercy and faithfulness that guarantees David an eternal kingdom can guarantee you all the joy and righteousness and peace of that kingdom. It is a promise made by God. God is saying to you this morning: "if you will come to me empty-handed and hungry, willing to receive what I give, then I will write for myself in your presence a job description and bind myself with an oath to treat you forever with the same mercy and faithfulness that I have demonstrated in my covenant with David."

Hear the entreaty of the Lord Jesus Himself in the last chapter of the Bible:

**REVELATION 22:16 (ESV)** *I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.*

Come to the Son of David, come to the King of Kings, and He will sign with His own blood your personal copy of the job description He has written for Himself- to be God to you. And He will give it to you as an eternal covenant, never to turn away from doing you good.

The choice is yours. What will you do with God's covenant promise?



AND THE LORD WAS ANGRY  
WITH SOLOMON, BECAUSE  
HIS HEART HAD TURNED AWAY  
FROM THE LORD, THE GOD OF  
ISRAEL, WHO HAD APPEARED  
TO HIM TWICE AND HAD  
COMMANDED HIM CONCERNING  
THIS THING, THAT HE SHOULD  
NOT GO AFTER OTHER GODS.  
BUT HE DID NOT KEEP WHAT  
THE LORD COMMANDED.

1 KINGS 11:9-10

# PROMISE

## A F F I R M E D

### DATE

March 28 & 29

### WEEK

5 of 5

### KEY VERSE

1 Kings 11:9-10

## SETTING THE STAGE

For 33 years David aggressively guided God's united people to greatness, forging a powerful empire. As David grew older, his sons disputed over the succession. But God had revealed to David that He had chosen Solomon to succeed him (*see 1 Chronicles 22:9-10*).

David had shared this revelation with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (*1 Kings 1:13, 17*). He had even announced it to the nation (*1 Chronicles 22:5; 29:1*). Still, Solomon was not the oldest of David's living sons. There were older brothers who understandably disputed his right to the throne.

Finally, one of David's older surviving sons, Adonijah, took steps to gain the succession. Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba insisted that David act. David did. He made Solomon coregent. When Adonijah heard, his supporters deserted him and the young man rushed to the altar of sacrifice to claim sanctuary. His life was spared, and Solomon was secure on the throne.

The story of Solomon is, in many ways, a wonderful success story. He is the wisest man who ever lived. His wealth and power were known to all who lived in Israel and most of those who lived beyond its borders. Solomon was a prolific writer, composing 1,005 songs and 3,000 proverbs. In spite of all this, Solomon's life ended as a disaster. His many foreign wives succeeded in turning his heart from the Lord, which cost Solomon's son much of his kingdom and divided Israel for centuries to come. The lessons we learn from Solomon are largely negative lessons-how not to make the same mistakes Solomon did.

### LESSON OUTLINE

1. Solomon Focused on the Wrong Things.
2. Solomon Tuned God Out.
3. Solomon Trusted Himself Instead of God.
4. Solomon Refused to Listen to People Around Him.

### THINGS TO KNOW

- Solomon was a prolific writer, composing 1,005 songs and 3,000 proverbs.

# PROMISE

## A F F I R M E D

### Introduction

1 Kings 11 clearly catalogs the sinful shortcomings of Solomon, but it also highlights the faithful promises of God. God gave Solomon unusual wisdom, incredible wealth, and great opportunities, but in his older years, he turned from the Lord, made foolish decisions, and did not end well. “A man’s own folly ruins his life” (Proverbs 19:3). Solomon wrote those words and probably believed them, but he did not heed them.

It is not difficult to trace the steps in Solomon’s downward path. Let’s take a look:

### 1. SOLOMON FOCUSED ON THE WRONG THINGS

**1 KINGS 11:1-8 (ESV)** Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, <sup>2</sup>from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. <sup>3</sup>He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. <sup>4</sup>For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. <sup>5</sup>For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. <sup>6</sup>So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. <sup>7</sup>Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

The danger of marrying pagan unbelievers is spelled out in v. 2, which is a quotation from Deuteronomy 7:4: “they will turn away your heart after their gods.” That is exactly what happened to Solomon (v. 3, 4, 9). The Ammonites and Moabites were descendants of Abraham’s nephew, Lot (Genesis 19:30). The Ammonites worshiped the hideous god Molech and sacrificed their infants on his altars (Leviticus 18:21; 20:1–5; and see Jeremiah 7:29–34; Ezekiel 16:20–22). Chemosh was the chief god of the Moabites, and Ashtoreth (Astarte) was the goddess of the people of Tyre and Sidon. As the goddess of fertility, her worship included “legalized prostitution” involving both male and female temple prostitutes, and that worship was unspeakably filthy. (See Deuteronomy 23:1–8; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46.) The Babylonians also worshiped this goddess and called her Ishtar.

Solomon’s compromise was not a sudden thing, for he gradually descended into his idolatry (Psalms 1:1). First, he permitted his wives to worship their own gods; then he tolerated their idolatry and even built shrines for them. Eventually, Solomon began to participate in pagan practices with his wives. His sensual love for his many wives was more compelling than his spiritual love for the Lord, the God of Israel.

This is an important reminder for us: sin starts small and then grows. What are the seemingly small sins in our lives that have the potential to grow out of control? If it could happen to the wisest man in the Bible, it can surely happen to you and me.

This is an important reminder for us: sin starts small and then grows. What are the seemingly small sins in our lives that have the potential to grow out of control? If it could happen to the wisest man in the Bible, it can surely happen to you and me.



Warren Wiersbe explains, “His love for spiritual values was replaced by a love for physical pleasures and material wealth, and gradually his heart turned from the Lord. First, he was friendly with the world (*James 4:4*), then spotted by the world (*James 1:27*), and then he came to love the world (*1 John 2:15–17*) and be conformed to the world (*Romans 12:2*). Unfortunately, the result of this decline can lead to being condemned with the world and losing everything (*1 Corinthians 11:32*). That’s what happened to Lot (*Genesis 13:10–13; 14:11–12; 19:1ff*), and it can happen to believers today.”<sup>1</sup>

## 2. SOLOMON TUNED GOD OUT

**1 KINGS 11:9-13 (ESV)** *And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. 11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. 12 Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”*

God was angry with Solomon. Twice before, God had appeared to him and warned him of the dangers of disobedience (*1 Kings 11:9-10*). God told Solomon that his persistent disobedience would cost him most of his kingdom. For the sake of David, God would put off judgment on Solomon’s house until after his death. One tribe would be left for Solomon’s son to reign, but ten tribes would follow someone else (*1 Kings 11:11-13*).

Were it not for God’s covenant with David and His love for Jerusalem, the city where His temple stood, He would have taken the entire kingdom away from Solomon’s descendants. God promised David a dynasty that would not end, and therefore He kept one of David’s descendants on the throne in Jerusalem until the city was taken by the Babylonians and destroyed. Of course, the ultimate fulfillment of that covenant promise is in Jesus Christ (*Luke 1:32–33, 69; Acts 2:29–36; Psalm 89:34–37*). God’s name was upon the temple (*1 Kings 8:43*), so He preserved Jerusalem, and God’s covenant was with David, so He preserved David’s dynasty. Such is the grace of God, affirming His promise.

In the midst of great sin, it is easy to become blinded to reality. When we stop listening to God, we will lose the sense of conviction that comes from following Christ. It is like when we burn our hand on a stove - it hurts! But if you continued to do it, eventually a callous would form and you would lose feeling. This is a great picture of what becoming dull to sin looks like. It hurts at first, but if you don’t learn from it and stop, we will eventually become callous to it.

**When we stop listening to God, we will start resisting God.**

When we stop listening to God, we will start resisting God. This is exactly what happened to Solomon as recorded in *1 Kings 11:14-25*. Because of this, God raised up adversaries to oppose Solomon.

## 3. SOLOMON TRUSTED HIMSELF INSTEAD OF HIS GOD

**1 KINGS 11:14-25 (ESV)** *And the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. He was of the royal house in Edom. 15 For when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, he struck down every male in Edom 16 (for Joab and all Israel remained*

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Responsible*, “Be” Commentary Series, Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2002, p. 79–80.

**Choices  
always have  
consequences.  
Forgiveness  
does not erase  
consequences.**

there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom). <sup>17</sup> But Hadad fled to Egypt, together with certain Edomites of his father's servants, Hadad still being a little child. <sup>18</sup> They set out from Midian and came to Paran and took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house and assigned him an allowance of food and gave him land. <sup>19</sup> And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. <sup>20</sup> And the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh. <sup>21</sup> But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country." <sup>22</sup> But Pharaoh said to him, "What have you lacked with me that you are now seeking to go to your own country?" And he said to him, "Only let me depart." <sup>23</sup> God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his master Hadadezer king of Zobah. <sup>24</sup> And he gathered men about him and became leader of a marauding band, after the killing by David. And they went to Damascus and lived there and made him king in Damascus. <sup>25</sup> He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, doing harm as Hadad did. And he loathed Israel and reigned over Syria.

Anytime we get into this kind of sinful action in life- where we are openly sinning and not fully trusting God - there will be consequences. Those consequences were brutal for Solomon.

God did bring about certain consequences during Solomon's lifetime. He raised up adversaries who opposed Solomon: Hadad the Edomite (v. 14-22); Rezon son of Eliada (v. 23-25); and Jeroboam son of Nebat, who would eventually rule over ten of the tribes of Israel (v. 26-40). Jeroboam was assured that God would give Jeroboam a lasting dynasty if he only obeyed His rules and commandments. This divided kingdom would not be forever.

We must remember that choices always have consequences. Equally as important is that forgiveness does not erase consequences. Say you steal my car from the church parking lot. You take it for a spin and have a good time. In the meantime, I have called the police and made a report of a stolen vehicle. Eventually, you return with my car. Now, because I understand forgiveness, I am going to forgive you, but you are still going to jail for auto theft. Forgiveness does not erase the consequences.

This is so clear with Solomon, but even more so in our lives and in the lives of people we know and love.

#### 4. SOLOMON REFUSED TO LISTEN TO PEOPLE AROUND HIM

**1 KINGS 11:26-43 (ESV)** Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also lifted up his hand against the king. <sup>27</sup> And this was the reason why he lifted up his hand against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the breach of the city of David his father. <sup>28</sup> The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. <sup>29</sup> And at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had dressed himself in a new garment, and the two of them were alone in the open country. <sup>30</sup> Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. <sup>31</sup> And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes' <sup>32</sup> (but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), <sup>33</sup> because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my

rules, as David his father did.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes.<sup>35</sup> But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and will give it to you, ten tribes.<sup>36</sup> Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name.<sup>37</sup> And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel.<sup>38</sup> And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.<sup>39</sup> And I will afflict the offspring of David because of this, but not forever.' ”<sup>40</sup> Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.<sup>41</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon?<sup>42</sup> And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.<sup>43</sup> And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

These verses capture a long warning from God to Jeroboam (one of Solomon's key leaders) by way of Ahijah.

Ahijah dramatized his message by tearing Jeroboam's new garment into twelve parts and giving him ten of them. This was God's way of saying that Jeroboam would become king of the ten northern tribes of Israel. Ahijah explained why two tribes were still reserved for the house of David and also why Solomon's son was being given only those two tribes. Solomon had sinned greatly by introducing idolatry into the land, a sin that would eventually destroy the nation and lead them into captivity.

It was for David's sake that God protected Judah and Jerusalem. Solomon had not kept the terms of the covenant God made with his father (2 Samuel 7), but God would be faithful to His Word (2 Samuel 7:11–13). The lamp would burn for David until the end of the Jewish monarchy with the fall of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25; see 1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 21:7; Psalm 132:17).

Ahijah closed his message by warning Jeroboam that what happened to him was wholly of God's grace. He had better take his calling seriously and obey the Word of the Lord, or God would discipline him just as He had to discipline Solomon.

One cannot read the story of Solomon without asking the question, “How is it possible for a man who was so wise to become so foolish?” As we have spent the last 3 weeks studying David and Solomon, let me suggest that the key may be found in the contrasts between Solomon and his father, David.

- **David** is credited with 73 of the Psalms – almost half of them. Of **Solomon's** 1005 songs, only 1 (or at the most 2) of them are “published” in the Book of Psalms.
- **Solomon's** wisdom was, to one degree or another, wisdom that dealt with somewhat secular matters. These are important matters- construction, botany, biology, government, justice – but we do not see his wisdom focused on the revealed Word of God, the Law of Moses. One would think that his wisdom could have provided great insight into the Law. Psalm 119 makes it clear that there is a great wealth of truth to be found here, but **Solomon** does not seem to have spent as much time here as he did elsewhere.
- **David** sought to know and to worship God; **Solomon** sought to know much about God's creation and what God established.
- **David** was a “man after God's own heart;” **Solomon** was after his own fleshly desires.

**Solomon had sinned greatly by introducing idolatry into the land, a sin that would eventually destroy the nation and lead them into captivity.**



- **David** was a servant, who was rejected (to some degree) by his brothers. He learned to serve God faithfully, in menial ways. **Solomon** seemed to have been born into royalty and position.
- **David** suffered much in his life; **Solomon** suffered little, if at all.
- **David** fought many battles; **Solomon** was a man of peace. He did not attempt to rid the land of the remaining Canaanites.
- It was **David** who became the standard by which all subsequent kings in Israel were measured; it was not **Solomon**, even though his kingdom was greater than that of **David** by external standards.

**There was one crucial difference between David and Solomon. David had a heart for God.**

There was one crucial difference between David and Solomon. David, though not perfect, had a heart for God. He became the standard by which all subsequent kings were measured. Solomon had a more intellectual relationship with God. He was more detached, more philosophical about his relationship with God. It was an “upper story faith,” rather than an intimate, daily, passionate relationship with God. As we have watched biblical scholars rise and fall, the two major causes have been sexual immorality and intellectualism – an infatuation with one’s own intellectual powers.

The Bible has words of wisdom for all of us, words that the life of Solomon illustrates:

**1 CORINTHIANS 8:1 (ESV)** *With regard to food sacrificed to idols, we know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*

I fear that many of us (including me) are more “Solomonic” in our relationship with God than “Davidic.” It is wonderful for us to pursue truth (biblical or natural), but it is no substitute for simple childlike faith in God. Let us give serious thought to those things which caused both David and Solomon to fall.

Let us learn from their experiences so that we need not learn from our own.

## HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Let us turn from mere men and their failures to the impeccable Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the fact that Israel’s two greatest kings fell; they fell far short of the standard God had set for the Messiah. If God’s promises to David – promises of an eternal kingdom through the offspring of David – are to be fulfilled, it will not be by mere men, no matter how great they may be. Israel wanted a king, and they got one, and then another, and another...The only king who will ever fulfill God’s promises and our hopes is God Himself. God fulfilled His promises to David in the person of Jesus Christ.

There are times when we feel so defeated in our circumstances, or that we messed up so badly that there is no hope of a positive outcome. It is in the midst of these difficulties that we can rely on God’s promises. Throughout His Story, we have seen God be faithful in the midst of unfaithfulness. God has been gracious in the midst of rejection. God wants to love you in a way that is truly life-changing regardless of what you have done or not done, good or bad. Be confident in what God wants to accomplish in your life through Jesus Christ. As a Christ-follower, you are part of the family of God. God is not going to give up on you, nor turn his back on you. God is going to complete that which He started in your life.



# THE STORY OF **PROMISE**

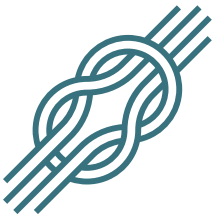
**PROMISE** KEPT

**PROMISE** COMMITTED

**PROMISE** MADE

**PROMISE** FULFILLED

**PROMISE** AFFIRMED



*COMING UP NEXT:*

THE STORY OF **FAITH**

