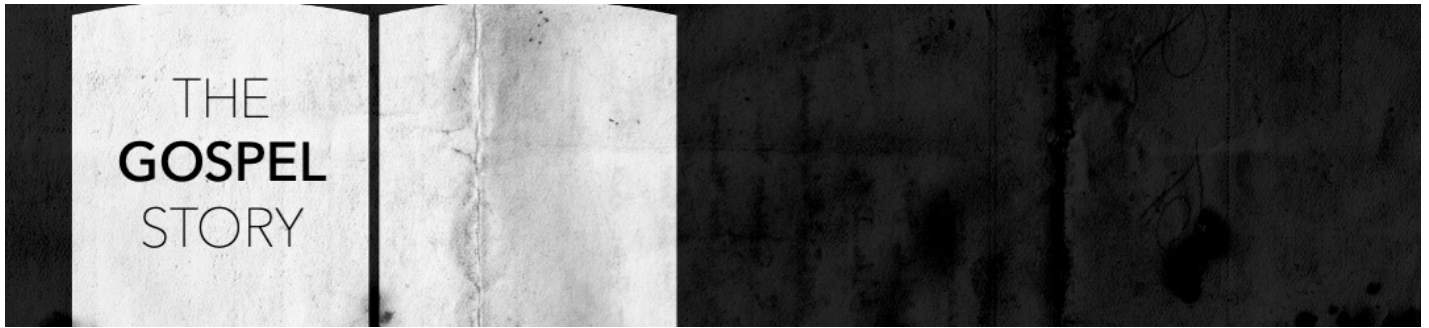


the
GOSPEL
story

66 books
1500 years
40 writers
1 complete story

a class book by Joshua Creel



Introduction	4
Lesson 1: "Let us make man in our image"	5
Lesson 2 "death through sin"	9
Lesson 3 "And he believed the Lord"	13
Lesson 4 "by a mighty hand"	17
Lesson 5 "if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant"	21
Lesson 6 "behold, it is a stiff-necked people"	25
Lesson 7 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne"	29
Lesson 8 "For I know the plans I have... to give you a future and a hope"	33
Lesson 9 "He has visited and redeemed His people"	37
Lesson 10 "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men"	41
Lesson 11 "this is my blood of the new covenant"	45
Lesson 12 "the righteous shall live by faith"	49



THE GOSPEL STORY

Introduction

The Bible begins with the account of how God created man, man enjoyed fellowship with God and then man lost that fellowship through sin. The Bible concludes with sin being eradicated and man's fellowship with God fully restored. The Bible, a volume comprised of sixty-six individual books written over the span of some 1500 years by forty different writers, is telling one complete story¹. It is the gospel story because it tells the good news of how what was lost can be found through Jesus Christ.

However, while the focus of the story is the salvation of man, the main character(s) is not man, but God. It was God who declared "let us make man in our image" at the beginning (Genesis 1.26) and it was God who determined "before the foundation of the world" that we would be redeemed by "the precious blood of Christ" (1Peter 1.19-20). Every good story has a hero, and the hero of the gospel story is God.

The aim of this work is to trace the narrative of the gospel story throughout the pages of Scripture. Rather than being an overview of all sixty-six books, this work will hone in on specific verses and events. Each lesson will focus on a particular verse or event, while giving the overall historical context. No doubt, many important verses and events will not receive the attention they deserve, but the purpose is not to cover ALL Scripture. The aim is two-fold: first to show the through-line of the gospel story throughout Scripture and second to unfold how the story transforms us. Let's take a closer look at the greatest story every told...

¹ The use of the term "story" does not imply fiction. My use of the term does not imply that any aspect of the Bible is made up or embellished. Rather, "story" is used to indicate that Scripture has an overarching narrative throughout.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 1 "Let us make man in our image"

Text Under Consideration: Genesis 1-2

Scriptural & Historical Context:

No dates are given for the events recorded in our text. By taking the genealogical information recorded in Genesis, we can know that Creation occurred at least 4000 years before the birth of Christ, but since no date is given in Scripture we would be foolish to assign one. What is affirmed throughout Scripture is that this world had a beginning; it was created by God in the span of six days (Genesis 1; Exodus 20.11; Psalm 19.1; etc.).

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 God creates the world and all life in six days by His word.
- 📖 God creates male and female in His image (Genesis 1.26-27). Man is created from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2.7) and woman from man's rib (Genesis 2.21-22).
- 📖 Man is placed in the garden and instructed to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2.17).
- 📖 Marriage is instituted by God (Genesis 2.24).

The Story

1. God is the all-powerful _____ who brought everything into existence by His word, and creation itself testifies to His eternal _____ and divine _____ (Romans 1.20).
2. Man is uniquely created in God's _____ (Genesis 1.26-27), setting humanity apart from all other created things.

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406-1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010-970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605-539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

3. The “image of God” involves God’s _____/breath being placed within man, connecting human life to the divine — and salvation would later be achieved through the giving of that same _____.
4. Man reflects God’s likeness through _____ and _____-_____, mirroring God’s own power and role as Creator (Genesis 1.28).
5. _____ is the primary aspect of God’s likeness man is called to emulate — both Testaments command, “Be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11.44; 1 Peter 1.16).
6. Marriage reflects the _____ of God — just as the plural God is perfectly united, husband and wife become _____ (Genesis 2.24), pointing toward divine unity and man’s unity with God.
7. God’s Word is life-giving _____, not merely _____ — and Jesus is that Word made flesh (John 1.14).
8. Obedience to God’s Word sustains _____, while disobedience brings _____ (Genesis 2.17), establishing a principle carried throughout Scripture.
9. The gospel story is rooted in Creation — who God is, what man is, and the relationship between them sets the foundation for everything that follows.

For Further Consideration

1. Read Matthew 22.20-21. Likeness implies ownership. If taxes were to be paid to Caesar because money bore his likeness, what does it mean to “render... to God the things that are God’s”?
2. Read Matthew 5.48. Jesus defines our true potential as being perfect like God. Given that we are created in His image, this makes sense. Do you believe you can be like Him? Do you believe in your true potential? If not, why not?
3. God forbade Israel worshipping the likeness of anything in heaven or on earth (Exodus 20.4). How does our creation on God’s image help explain His prohibition against idolatry?

The gospel story begins by introducing us to God. Significantly, God is introduced as the all-powerful Creator who brings all things into being by His word. This point is key for a couple of reasons. First, the created world bears testimony to the “eternal power and divine nature” of God (Romans 1.20). And since the world bears witness to the Creator, we should honor Him. Second, God created through His Word and the Word would become flesh (John 1.1-4,14). God’s means of creating life would be the means by which He gave new life!

Our main focus in this lesson is on the uniqueness of man’s creation. Genesis 1 records how the world and all life were created by God’s word, but after all other things had been made “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’.” (Genesis 1.26) The fact of man’s creation in God’s image will shape the rest of the gospel story.

A few points from the text show us the significance of man being made in God’s image. First, consider that the word translated as “Spirit” in Genesis 1.2 (Hebrew *rûah*) is also translated as “breath” in Scripture (see Genesis 6.17). The idea seems to be that man is created with God’s Spirit within (see Job 27.3; 32.8). Significantly, as we will see salvation is achieved through the giving of God’s Spirit (Ezekiel 36.25-27; John 3.5). Second, the idea of “image” is that of likeness. Thus, man being in God’s image indicates that we represent His likeness on earth. God’s instructions to man in Genesis 1.28 show how man is in God’s likeness: “And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’.” Genesis 1 presents God as both all-powerful and as the giver of life and His initial charge to man are to 1) produce life (be fruitful and multiply) and 2) exert dominion. Man bears the likeness of God! However, there is one aspect of God’s likeness that man is consistently called to emulate: His holiness. Both the Old and New Testaments declare that God’s people are to “be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11.44; 1Peter 1.16). Man is created in the image of a holy God and therefore should bear His holy likeness.

Some consideration must also be given to the institution of marriage, for it also shows how man is created in God’s image. The doctrine of the Trinity and Godhead are not fully developed in the Old Testament, but they are present from the beginning. First, the word for “God” in Genesis 1.1 is *ēlōhîm*, a plural noun. Second, we’ve already seen how God used plural pronouns when declared how He would make man in His image (Genesis 1.26). God is a plurality, but perfectly united (see John 10.30). Now consider that in marriage two distinct beings (man and woman) “become one flesh” (Genesis 2.24). Marriage is a testimony to the unity that exists in God, and ultimately to the unity that man should share with his God (see Ephesians 5.31-32). Marriage being an aspect of how man is created in God’s image also shows why the relationship is hallowed by God and is to be honored by man (Matthew 19.3-9; Hebrews 13.4).

Finally, we must note the relationship between God and His word. Genesis 1 shows that God's word is more than mere speech, but the very power by which He creates and gives life. That doctrine is developed further in John 1 where we see that Jesus is the Word and "all things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1.3). And if God's word gave life, then it would stand that following His word would sustain life. Thus, we should not be surprised that the result of disobeying God's word was death (Genesis 2.17). Man was created in the image of God, but to remain in His likeness would require adherence to His word.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 2 "death through sin"

Text Under Consideration: Genesis 3-11

Scriptural & Historical Context:

A couple of matters need to be kept in mind when studying the early chapters of Genesis. First, God was not trying to establish a definite historical timeline. We simply do not know exactly when the events of Creation, the Fall or the Flood occurred. Taking the genealogies recorded in Genesis 5 & 11, along with other chronological information in Scripture, we can ascertain that Creation occurred at least 4000 years before the birth of Jesus and the Flood occurred at least 2500 years before. Second, God was not trying to give us a complete history of humanity in Genesis. Well over 1000 years elapsed between the Fall and the Flood and that large span of time was covered in only two chapters! Rather, God recorded the information we needed in order to realize a fundamental truth: we need salvation because death comes through sin (Romans 5.12)!

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Man and woman sin by disobeying God's command and are cast out of the Garden (Genesis 3).
- 📖 Because of the sinfulness of mankind, God sends a flood to destroy the earth. Righteous Noah and his family are saved (Genesis 6-10).
- 📖 Man continues to rebel against God, building a tower so they will not be dispersed on the earth. God confuses man's language (Genesis 11).
- 📖 "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15, ESV) The first promise of how the Messiah would redeem man.

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
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Return from Captivity
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Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

The Story

1. God reveals what we _____ to know — not everything we're _____ about, but what's necessary for understanding His will and law.
2. Satan's three tactics — _____ God's words, directly _____ them, and casting _____ on God's character — remain effective throughout history.
3. Sin's root cause — mankind chose fleshly _____, _____ of the eyes, and _____ over obedience to God, falling for Satan's deceptions.
4. True death is _____ from God — not just physical death, but removal from God's presence, which explains both Hell and earthly suffering.
5. The _____ on creation — pain, sorrow, and suffering in the world result from mankind's _____ from God; they disappear when man is ultimately _____ with Him.
6. Sin is a _____ problem — from Cain's murder to the Flood to the Tower of Babel, Genesis 4–11 shows humanity repeatedly and increasingly departing from God.
7. All men sin _____ — Scripture teaches personal accountability for sin rather than inherited guilt, yet sin has spread to all people and always leads to death.
8. The gospel is _____ — the good news is that man can be forgiven and restored to relationship with God.
9. Noah as proof of _____ — God's rescue of righteous Noah demonstrates that He can and will save the godly.
10. The first gospel _____ — Genesis 3:15 introduces the coming of God's Son, whose victory over Satan is the thread running through the entire gospel story.

For Further Consideration

1. How do you see Satan using his tactics in your life? How does he distort God's word, contradict His word and/or prompt us to doubt God?
2. Why is it important to realize that each one of us is responsible for our own sins (Romans 3.23; James 1.14-15)? What happens if we don't take responsibility for our actions?
3. Read Hebrews 2.14-15. How did Jesus fulfill God's promise in Genesis 3.15?

Before we lay out the important aspects of the gospel story contained in these chapters, consider these words delivered by Moses: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29, ESV) The point is that God doesn't reveal everything we might want to know, He reveals what we need to know. This is an important point to remember when reading Genesis, for while we might want to know exactly what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is or what was Satan's origin story, God simply did not reveal that to us. What He did reveal was that man fell for Satan's lies, resulting in catastrophe!

Satan's tactics are on full display in Genesis 3. They are important to note because he continues to use these tactics, with great effect. First, Satan distorted what God actually said (Genesis 3.1). Remember, God had forbidden man to eat from one tree (Genesis 2.17), but Satan changed that to "any tree". Second, Satan plainly contradicted what God said (Genesis 3.4). Finally, Satan cast aspersions on God's character, creating doubt rather than faith (Genesis 3.5). The result was that mankind saw what they wanted (Genesis 3.6) and disobeyed God's command. Jesus described Satan as "the father of lies" (John 8.44) and man has constantly fallen for his deceptions by choosing "the desire of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life" (1John 2.16) rather than obedience to God's will.

God had warned man that "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2.17). Significantly, while physical death did result from man's sin (Genesis 3.19) true death isn't the cessation of physical life, but removal from the presence of God (Genesis 3.22-24). This point is significant in understanding both the pain and suffering that exist in the world, as well as the doctrine of Hell. God decreed that as a result of man's sin, "cursed is the ground because of you" (Genesis 3.17). That curse is the result of creation's separation from its Creator and the reason why this life is filled with pain and sorrow. Significantly, these all disappear when man is ultimately reunited with his God (Revelation 21.3-4). Furthermore, Hell is described as the "second death" (Revelation 20.14; 21.8) and "eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord" (2Thessalonians 1.9). If Heaven is man being reunited with his God, it makes sense that Hell is the result of man forever being separated from God.

This helps us understand why the punishment for sin is so severe. We noted in the first lesson that God is holy and man is called to emulate His holiness. Man was created in God's image (Genesis 1.26-27) and was thus described as very good (Genesis 1.31). But when man failed to trust God and disobeyed His word, man was no longer holy like his God. Scripture declares that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1John 1.5-6). God is light, and the only way to be with Him is to walk according to the truth of His word. When we depart from His word we are not in fellowship with Him... and that is death!

Genesis 4-11 show how sin is a universal problem. Man didn't improve after his punishment was decreed, rather he continued to depart from God's word.

» Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4.8).

- » Lamech boasted of murder (Genesis 4.23).
- » Man's thoughts became so bent on evil that God destroyed the earth with a flood (Genesis 6).
- » Man continued in rebellion by constructing a tower so they would not be dispersed (Genesis 11).

While Scripture does not support the doctrine that man inherited the guilt of Adam's original sin (note Genesis 4.6-7; Ezekiel 18.20; etc.) the Bible does show that since the beginning sin has spread to all men; "sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Romans 5.12; see also James 1.14-15). Sin is a universal problem, and sin always leads to death (Romans 6.23).

The gospel story is the good news of how man can be redeemed; he can be forgiven of his sins and restored to his relationship with God. That story comes through even during the bleak events of Genesis 3-11. Consider that while the world was destroyed in the Flood, God saved righteous Noah and his family (Genesis 6.9-22). The salvation of Noah furnishes proof that the Lord can and will save the godly (see 1Peter 3.20-22). But how could holy God save unholy man? God would do so by sending His Son to become man. The coming of God's Son was first foretold in Genesis 3.15 (the seed of woman would one day crush the head of Satan) and we will see how this promise is developed throughout the gospel story.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 3 "And he believed the Lord"

Text Under Consideration: Genesis 12-22

Scriptural & Historical Context:

In the midst of sin and devastation, God made a promise that a time would come when He would redeem man; the seed of woman would one day bruise the head of Satan (Genesis 3.15). However, the next 2000+ years of human history (recorded in Genesis 3-11) passed with no sign of this redemption. Rather, man departed further into sin and a world-wide flood was God's means of punishing the wicked while saving righteous Noah and his family. Coming to Genesis 12 the narrative slows down as we learn about Abraham and the wondrous promises the Lord made to him. Chief of those promises was that in Abraham "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12.3). God was starting to reveal how He would keep the promise He made in Genesis 3.15.

Note: we don't possess specific dates for the life of Abraham, but taking information from the rest of Scripture we can surmise that Abraham lived ~2000 years before Jesus was born. God chose to not reveal much regarding human history before Abraham, but with Abraham the narrative slows down considerably.

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 God calls Abram to leave his country; makes promises that Abram would become a great nation, inherit the promised land and ultimately bless all families (Genesis 12.1-3).
- 📖 God makes a covenant with Abraham, giving certainty that He would keep His word (Genesis 15).
- 📖 Isaac is born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old (Genesis 21).

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406-1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010-970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605-539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

📖 Abraham's faith was tested when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22).

📖 "And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15.6).

The Story

1. God called Abraham even though he was an _____ man.
 - » May have worshipped _____ (Joshua 24.2).
 - » Resorted to _____ at times (Genesis 12.11-13; 20.13).
 - » Took matters into his own hands regarding his _____ (Genesis 16.1-3).
 - » _____ when promised a son in his old age (Genesis 17.17-18).
2. The distinguishing feature of Abraham was his _____ (Genesis 15.6).
 - » He believed in what he could not _____ (Hebrews 11.1).
 - » He _____ God despite his _____ (Romans 4.20).
 - » His faith prompted _____ (James 2.22).
3. Abraham's faith was counted as _____ (Genesis 15.6).
 - » Genesis 15 takes place in a setting of _____ (vss. 3,8).
 - » The Lord told Abraham that he could "know for _____" (vs. 13).
 - » The Lord assured Abraham by making a _____ (vs. 18).
 - » Righteousness = fulfilling covenant _____. Abraham's covenant obligation was _____.
4. The true _____ of Abraham are those who share his faith (Galatians 3.7-9).

For Further Consideration

1. Paul states that "those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Galatians 3.9). What does it mean to have the same kind of faith as Abraham?
2. Read Hebrews 11.13-16. What reward was Abraham (and other people of faith) seeking?
3. Read Hebrews 11.17-19. What do we learn about Abraham's faith when it was tested?

Genesis 12 opens with the Lord calling Abram to “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12.1). The Lord would go on to promise that Abraham would become a great nation, inherit the land of Canaan and ultimately all families would be blessed in him. But why did God choose Abraham? While we have no wish to besmirch his character, Scripture shows that the patriarch had plenty of failings:

1. He may have previously worshipped idols, as his ancestors had done (see Joshua 24.2).
2. On some occasions he would rely on deception rather than the Lord (Genesis 12.11-3; 20.13).
3. When it seemed that the Lord was slow to fulfill His promise of an heir, Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands (Genesis 16.1-3).
4. When the Lord promised that he and Sarah would have a son, Abraham laughed because of his advanced age (Genesis 17.17-18).



Yet, in spite of his failings Abraham stands as an example to us all because of one feature: his faith. “So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (Galatians 3.9). This then begs the question, what kind of faith did Abraham possess? The concept of faith is multi-faceted. On one level it means believing without seeing (see Hebrews 11.1). Abraham certainly had this kind of faith because he believed God’s promises, even though he would not live to see their fulfillment. But faith is deeper; since we are called to believe in what we cannot see we have to trust that God is going to do what He promised. From the beginning of his walk with God, Abraham manifested this kind of trust in the Lord. First, he left his homeland “not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11.8). Second, it took 25 years from the time the Lord called Abraham until he had a son. While there were certainly moments of doubt (as we noted above), Abraham remained faithful to the

Lord; "No unbelief made him waiver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God" (Romans 4.20). Finally, Abraham's faith was seen in his obedience. The ultimate test of this was when the patriarch was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, his only son (Genesis 22.2). Abraham's willingness to fulfill the Lord's command showed that he feared the Lord (Genesis 22.12) and resulted in the Lord confirming His promises "because you have obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22.18). James rightly said about Abraham that his "faith was completed by his works" (James 2.22).

Abraham's life of faith is summarized by the statement in Genesis 15.6: "And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness." This statement is often used in the New Testament to urge Christians to have the same kind of faith as Abraham (see Romans 4.9,22; Galatians 3.6; James 2.23). Tragically, many have taken that to mean that all one has to do to please God is believe some things to be true. The context of Genesis 15 shows that was not the case. The chapter opens with a moment of doubt because Abram did not yet have any offspring (vs. 3). The Lord promised that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars (vs. 5) and Abraham responded with faith (vs. 6). Yet, this man of great faith still had some doubts. God promised that he would possess the land (vs. 7), but Abraham asked "how am I to know that I shall possess it?" (Vs. 8). The Lord wanted His servant to "know for certain" (vs. 13) and He gave assurance by establishing a covenant with Abraham (vs. 18). A covenant is how God establishes a relationship with man. It's a binding agreement where God will keep His promises if man meets His requirements. But what requirement did Abraham have to meet? To have faith, to trust that God would keep His word and continue following Him no matter how much he didn't understand. Righteousness is a covenant term, it's the fulfillment of covenant obligations. Abraham was righteous because he had true faith.

Perhaps we can see now understand why God's people are exhorted to have the same kind of faith as Abraham. As we will see, the physical descendants of Abraham (Israel) lacked his faith. But, "it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3.7); it is by faith that receive the blessing God promised to Abraham (Galatians 3.9).

Abraham will remain a central figure as we continue to trace the gospel story. We will see how Abraham's descendants became a great nation, how they took possession of the promised land and most importantly, how all nations were blessed through Abraham.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 4 "by a mighty hand"

Text Under Consideration: Exodus 1-19

Scriptural & Historical Context:

We have moved forward several centuries in our study from the events in lesson 3. Abraham lived around 2000 years before Jesus, and our best estimate is that the events of the Exodus took place around 1440 years before Jesus' life. However, the events of the Exodus continue the narrative from the life of Abraham. Recall that God promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation, inherit the land of Canaan and ultimately bless all families of the earth (Genesis 12.1-3,7). To assure Abraham that the promises would be fulfilled, the Lord made a covenant with the patriarch (Genesis 15.18). Now note the details God provided regarding the future of Abraham's offspring: "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions." (Genesis 15:13-14, ESV)

The rest of Genesis records how Abraham and Sarah did have the promised son, Isaac then had twin sons named Esau and Jacob. The record focuses on Jacob, whose name would be changed to Israel (Genesis 32.28) and would have twelve sons. One of those sons, Joseph, was sold by his brothers into slavery, but would eventually rise to prominence in Egypt (Genesis 37; 41). Joseph understood this did not occur by accident: "And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

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Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 45:7–8, ESV)

Genesis concludes with Jacob and his family leaving Canaan and settling in Egypt. While in Egypt Israel grew into a great nation (Exodus 1.7), fulfilling God’s first promise to Abraham. However, the Lord had also foretold that Abraham’s descendants would be afflicted (Genesis 15.13), which is how the book of Exodus begins: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph... they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.” (Exodus 1.8,11).

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Israel oppressed in Egypt (Exodus 1).
- 📖 Moses is born, raised in Pharaoh’s house but flees when he kills an Egyptian (Exodus 2).
- 📖 The Lord appears to Moses in a burning bush; sends Moses and Aaron to bring Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 3-4).
- 📖 God demonstrates His power over the gods of Egypt by means of ten plagues; Israel’s exodus from Egypt takes place (Exodus 7-12).
- 📖 Israel crosses the Red Sea on dry land, but the army of Egypt is destroyed (Exodus 14).
- 📖 Moses leads Israel to Mt. Sinai, the same mountain where Moses saw the burning bush (Exodus 19).

The Story

1. Israel was _____ to free themselves — the Exodus was impossible from a human standpoint; deliverance had to come from outside.
2. God acted out of covenant _____, not Israel’s _____ — He heard their cries and “remembered His covenant” with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which moved Him to act.
3. God’s _____ had to be demonstrated _____ — Pharaoh would not relent without compulsion, so God struck Egypt with ten plagues to force his hand.
4. The plagues were a direct challenge to Egyptian _____ — God’s power was displayed not just over nature but over Egypt’s entire religious and political system, including Pharaoh himself.
5. The _____ had to _____ for God to “pass over” Israel — God Himself went “out in the midst of Egypt,” and only the blood of innocent lambs could cause Him to pass over Israel and spare them from His wrath.
6. The Exodus was meant to produce _____ and _____ in Israel — having witnessed what no other nation had ever seen, Israel was called to recognize there is no other God and respond by keeping His commands.

7. Israel failed to _____ — almost immediately after their deliverance they complained and doubted, asking “Is the Lord among us or not?” — a failure that would repeat throughout their history.
8. The _____ in Israel always looked back to the Exodus — generations later, Daniel used it as the basis for his prayer, appealing to God’s “mighty hand” in Egypt as grounds for trusting Him to deliver again.
9. Past deliverance becomes the foundation for future _____ — the Exodus functions not just as history but as theological assurance: what God has done, He can and will do again.

For Further Consideration

1. Israel delivered Israel by a mighty hand, meaning their salvation was a result of His might. How is this still true for our salvation (see Ephesians 2.1-10).
2. The blood of an innocent lamb had to be shed for the Lord to “pass over” Israel when He executed His judgment on the Egyptians. How is this truly fulfilled in Jesus (John 1.29).
3. Israel was to remember how the Lord rescued them and delivered them from bondage. How can we properly remember the deliverance God has given us in Christ?

From the perspective of man, the Exodus could not take place. Israel was an enslaved nation and powerless to deliver themselves. But Israel's deliverance was not a product of their strength, but of the Lord's faithfulness: "During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew." (Exodus 2:23–25, ESV) Recall that God makes covenants to assure man that He will keep His word; God remembered His covenant with Abraham and was going to act to bring Israel out of Egypt.

But for God to fulfill His covenant promise, He would have to demonstrate great power. As He declared to Moses, "I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go." (Exodus 3:19-20, ESV) God struck the Egyptians with a series of ten plagues, demonstrating His power over not only nature, but over the gods of the Egyptians and Pharaoh himself.

Significantly, Israel's deliverance would occur only when the Lord Himself went "out in the midst of Egypt" to slay the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 11:4-5) and for Israel to be spared from the wrath of God, the blood of innocent lambs would have to shed for the Lord to "pass over" and not destroy Israel (Exodus 12:13). The Lord fulfilled His covenant promise and in the process demonstrated that He alone is the Lord (see Exodus 14:17-18).

God demonstrated His power in delivering Israel for multiple reasons. First, it proved to Egypt (and all the nations) that He is the Lord and that their gods and idols were nothing in comparison. Second, God's mighty act of deliverance should have prompted faithfulness from Israel (see Deuteronomy 4:32-40). Israel was asked to consider that no other god had "ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation" (vs. 34), yet that is exactly what the Lord had done for Israel. Thus, they should consider that "the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other" (vs. 39) and respond by keeping "his statutes and his commandments" (vs. 40). As we will consider further in our next lesson, Israel was redeemed for a purpose; they were redeemed to be God's special people (Exodus 19:4-5).

Sadly, Israel would demonstrate throughout her history that they did not remember how the Lord delivered them. That was demonstrated immediately following their exodus from Egypt when they complained about the lack of water and even wondered, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7). However, throughout the generations the faithful of Israel would always remember how the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt. Consider how Daniel, who lived over 700 years after the events of the Exodus, when praying to the Lord for the deliverance of his people from Babylon based his petition on the fact that the Lord "brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand" (Daniel 9:15). Daniel understood that the Lord's past acts of deliverance were assurance that future deliverance was also possible!

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 5 "if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant"

Text Under Consideration: Exodus 20-40

Scriptural & Historical Context:

The Lord "remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" when He delivered Israel out of their slavery in Egypt. Significantly, the Lord instructed Moses that when he brought Israel out of Egypt he was to bring them to the same mountain where the Lord had appeared to him (Exodus 3.12). Moses obeyed the Lord and when Israel arrived at the mountain, He had this message for the people: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:4–6, ESV)

The focus of this lesson is the covenant the Lord formed with Israel. This covenant was formed almost immediately following the Exodus (circa 1440 B.C.), but would determine the course of Israel's history throughout the remainder of the Old Testament.

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Ten Commandments are given, the preamble to the entire Law (Exodus 20).
- 📖 Israel enters into a covenant relationship with the Lord (Exodus 24).
- 📖 Israel violates the covenant by worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 32).
- 📖 A tabernacle is constructed according to God's specifications. The Lord's presence fills the tabernacle (Exodus 40).

Creation
Genesis 1–2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6–9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12–25 · c. 2000–1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406–1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010–970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605–539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538–432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

The Story

1. Covenants are God's method of _____. A covenant is a binding agreement through which God establishes a relationship with humanity, requiring both parties to fulfill their obligations.
2. The Mosaic covenant was grounded in _____, not _____. A common misunderstanding is that the Sinai covenant was purely about law. In reality, its foundation was God's grace — what He had already done for Israel (deliverance from Egypt) and what He promised to do for them going forward.
3. The heart of God's grace was _____. The greatest blessing of the covenant wasn't physical prosperity but that Israel would be God's people, His holy nation, His priests — symbolized by God's presence dwelling in the tabernacle among them.
4. Obedience to the _____ was Israel's covenant obligation. The Law — including moral, distinctive, and cultic categories — was not about obedience for its own sake, but about Israel reflecting God's holiness: "Be holy, for I am holy."
5. _____ was essential under the Mosaic covenant, not just the New. Israel's failures (like refusing to enter Canaan) were failures of faith. Faith has always been required to please God (Hebrews 11.6).
6. Covenants are _____ with blood. Both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were sealed with animal blood, serving as a serious warning against covenant unfaithfulness.
7. The Mosaic covenant was never intended to be the final means of _____. Its limitations were built in: it applied only to Israel, its sacrifices couldn't truly forgive sin, and the tabernacle's design signified ongoing separation between God and humanity.
8. Israel's consistent covenant-breaking did not _____ God's plan. Despite Israel's faithlessness, God promised a new covenant (Jeremiah 31.31-34) — one written on hearts, available to all, and offering genuine forgiveness of sins.
9. The gospel story is the story of this _____. The entire arc of Scripture points toward how humanity can enter into a true, lasting covenant relationship with God.

For Further Consideration

1. According to Hebrews 8.6, Jesus mediates a better covenant, one based on better promises. How does understanding God's covenant with Israel help us to appreciate the covenant relationship we enjoy through Christ?
2. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He said that the cup "is my blood of the covenant" (Matthew 26.28). How should our understanding of covenant impact our observance of the Supper?

This is not the first time we have considered the Scriptural concept of “covenant”. As we noted in lesson 3, a covenant is how God establishes a relationship with man. It’s a binding agreement where God will keep His promises if man meets His requirements. While the term “covenant” is not used in Genesis 2, God had clearly formed a covenant with man which was broken when they ate of the forbidden tree. God made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15.18) by which He gave assurance that the promises would be fulfilled. Abraham’s part in the covenant, i.e. righteousness, was believing God and acting on that belief (Genesis 15.6). Thus, it isn’t surprising that when the Lord brought Israel to Mount Sinai He did so to establish a covenant with the descendants of Abraham (Exodus 19.4-6). If we are to properly understand the Gospel Story we need to examine this covenant in greater detail, for God’s covenants are how key concepts such as grace, law and faith are to be understood.

It’s a tragic misunderstanding that many associate the Mosaic covenant with ONLY law, for the basis of the covenant was not law but grace. Grace is best defined as God doing for man what he cannot do for himself and God’s relationship with Israel was founded on His grace. First, there was the grace Israel had already experienced: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself.” (Exodus 19.4) Second, there was the grace they would experience if they kept God’s covenant: “you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19.5-6) God would go on to enumerate the blessings of the covenant in passages like Leviticus 26.1-13 and Deuteronomy 28.1-14, but the real nature of God’s grace was not the physical blessings of being in a covenant. Rather, true grace was relational: they would be God’s people, His nation, His priests. All of the physical blessings flowed from that core grace. This fact is emphasized by the fact that much of Exodus is concerned with the building of God’s tabernacle, “a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” (Exodus 25.8) And once construction was completed, “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” (Exodus 40.34). The tabernacle was a visual reminder of the grace found in God’s covenant; He was their God and they were His people.

However, covenants are most often not one-sided agreements. God would be righteous and keep His part of the covenant, but for Israel to receive His grace they must keep their part of the covenant; they must “obey my voice and keep my covenant” (Exodus 19.5). The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) are the best known of Israel’s covenant obligations, the preamble of God’s entire law that emphasized how the Lord’s people should love their God and love their fellow man. While the rest of the Law would touch on every aspect of Israel’s life, the various laws would fall in a few broad categories:

1. Moral laws regulating how Israel should act like their Lord.
2. Laws that emphasized Israel’s distinctive nature.
3. Cultic laws regulating how Israel would worship and honor the Lord and atone for covenant violations.

It's important to note that the purpose of the Law was not obedience for obedience sake, rather the Lord was calling for His people to be like Him: "You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." (Leviticus 11.45). Holiness was Israel's requirement to remain in a covenant with their Lord.

Recall that Abraham's covenant obligation was to believe in the Lord (Genesis 15.6). It may surprise many to learn that faith was also essential to Israel's covenant. When the Lord delivered His people from Egypt, the result was "the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses." (Exodus 14.31) Tragically, when the people refused to enter the promised land it was because they lacked faith: "How long will this people despise Me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?" (Numbers 14.11). In the New Testament the Hebrew writer reflected on how God's good news "was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed." (Hebrews 4.2, NIV) Faith is not a concept reserved for the New Testament, but has always been a necessity for those who would please God (Hebrews 11.6).

Covenants must be ratified in order to be binding and God's covenants are ratified with blood. God's covenant with Abraham was made after numerous animals were cut in two (Genesis 15.9-10) and God's covenant with Israel was made after the people swore "all that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Exodus 24.7) and the blood of numerous oxen was cast upon the Lord's altar and then the people (Exodus 24.6,8). The shedding of blood was not a mere formality, but a warning against covenant unfaithfulness: "And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—" (Jeremiah 34:18, ESV).

The Lord's covenant with Israel will play a central role as we continue to see how the gospel story develops in Scripture. But as we conclude this lesson it's important to note that Scripture makes it apparent that God's covenant with Israel was NOT how He would redeem mankind.

- » This covenant was with one nation, NOT all people (cf. Psalm 147.19-20).
- » The sacrifices of this covenant could not truly forgive sin (cf. Hebrews 10.1-4).
- » The tabernacle itself and the Levitical priesthood signified that there was still a separation between God and the people (cf. Hebrews 9.1-10).
- » As we will see in subsequent lessons, Israel consistently broke the covenant.

Israel may have proven faithless, but the Lord's plan to redeem mankind would not fail. Thus, He promised to establish a new covenant with His people (Jeremiah 31.31-34). This covenant would not be contained on external tablets, but on the hearts of the people. This covenant would be one in which every member of the covenant would have a relationship with the Lord. And this covenant would be one in which sins were truly forgiven. The gospel story is about how man can enjoy this covenant relationship with the Lord.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 6

"I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people."

Text Under Consideration: Exodus 32; Numbers 13-14; Judges 2; 1Samuel 8

Scriptural & Historical Context:

Recall that when the Lord brought Israel to Mt. Sinai He promised that they would be His "treasured possession among all peoples", but only if they "obey my voice and keep my covenant" (Exodus 19.5). Tragically, Israel rarely demonstrated a willingness to follow the voice of their God and thus they consistently broke His covenant. This lesson will examine four occasions when Israel refused to follow their God, spanning from immediately following the Exodus in 1440 B.C. until when Israel rejected the Lord in favor of a king in ~1000 B.C.

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Israel breaks the covenant by worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 32, ~1440 B.C.).
- 📖 Israel refuses to take the land of Canaan and are sentenced to wander in the wilderness until that generation perished (Numbers 13-14, ~1440-1400 B.C.).
- 📖 Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel enters Canaan and quickly defeats the major armies in the land (Joshua, 1400 B.C.).
- 📖 After the death of Joshua, Israel forsakes the Lord for the idols of Canaan. A series of military defeats follows, each time the Lord using a Judge to deliver his people (Judges - 1Samuel 7, 1375 - 1000 B.C.).
- 📖 Israel requests for a king to rule over them so they can be like the other nations (1Samuel 8, ~1000 B.C.).

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
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Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

The Story

1. Israel quickly broke the _____ they swore to keep. While Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days, the impatient Israelites demanded Aaron make them a golden calf — violating God’s command against carved images regardless of whether they intended it as a representation of the Lord Himself.
2. Their sin went deeper than ____-_____. By wanting gods “who shall go before us” on their own terms, Israel was attempting to redefine their relationship with God — replacing submission to His leadership with self-determined religion.
3. Moses interceded and God relented, but Israel didn’t _____. One year later, on the border of the Promised Land, the people refused to trust God’s promise and wanted to return to Egypt — despite the testimony of Joshua and Caleb that the Lord would give them victory.
4. _____ had consequences. An entire generation was condemned to die in the wilderness, a direct fulfillment of God’s judgment on those who refused to trust Him despite witnessing His signs and wonders.
5. A new generation entered and took the land — by God’s _____, not their own _____. Joshua led Israel to conquer Canaan, fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
6. The cycle of unfaithfulness continued in the period of the _____. The next generation did not know the Lord — partly because Israel failed to pass on what God had done — and repeatedly turned to other gods over a span of 300–400 years.
7. Israel eventually rejected God as _____. Demanding a human king “like all the nations,” Israel once again forgot that the Lord Himself was their protector and ruler — a rejection God took personally.
8. God remained faithful to His _____ throughout. He did not destroy Israel even when they deserved it, because doing so would have broken His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His faithfulness was unconditional even when theirs was not.
9. The root problem was always a lack of _____. Israel’s repeated failures — the golden calf, the wilderness rebellion, the judges cycle, the demand for a king — all traced back to their unwillingness to trust and believe God despite overwhelming evidence of His power and love.
10. The story points forward to a greater _____. Israel’s rejection of God’s rule didn’t end His reign. The gospel reveals that a descendant of David would be the eternal Son of God, whose kingdom never ends — the ultimate fulfillment of what Israel’s history was always pointing toward.

For Further Consideration

1. What do we learn about God's patience in these episodes from Israel's history? Are there limits to His patience? Why is He so patient (see 2Peter 3.9).
2. Do you agree with the following statement: "all disobedience results from a lack of faith"? Why or why not?

It didn't take long for Israel to break the covenant they swore to keep (cf. Exodus 24.7-8). Following the covenant ratification ceremony, Moses ascended Mt. Sinai where he remained for 40 days (Exodus 24.18). But Israel, a people who had recently toiled in slavery, were too impatient to wait for guidance from the Lord. Thus, they commanded Aaron to "make us gods who shall go before us." (Exodus 32.1) There is some question if Israel broke the first commandment that they "shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20.3) because the term for God, Elohim, is a plural noun. Thus, their request to Aaron was that he make Elohim, a representation of God "who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32.4). Regardless of intent, they broke the covenant because God had commanded that they "not make for yourself a carved image... you shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Exodus 20.4-5). Israel's treachery went deeper than violating a commandment, for they were trying to redefine their relationship with the Lord. They wanted to make gods "who shall go before us", but it was Israel who would determine where these gods would go. By refusing to submit to God's leadership they proved themselves to be "a stiff-necked people" (Exodus 32.9) a people more than willing to break God's covenant, signified by Moses smashing the tablets on the mountain (Exodus 32.15-19).

The Lord threatened to destroy the people, but relented after Moses interceded for the people. Had they learned a lesson? Tragically, they had not. Fast forward one year and Israel was now on the border of the Promised Land. Spies were sent into the land in order to see the goodness of the land and to see what kind of people dwelt there (Numbers 13.17-20). The spies returned with glowing reports of the land's goodness, but also declared that they could not take the land because "the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large... we are not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we are." (Numbers 13.28,31). Only two spies, Joshua and Caleb, reported that they could take the land... because the Lord was with them (Numbers 14.8-9). However, the people refused to place their trust in the Lord and rather determined that they would go back to Egypt (Numbers 14.3-4). The punishment for Israel's lack of faith? An entire generation would perish in the wilderness (Numbers 14.26-35).

Fast forward 40 years and the Lord's word was fulfilled: the generation who refused to enter the land had perished in the wilderness, but a new generation would take the land under the leadership of Joshua. The book of Joshua records how this new generation entered the land and quickly defeated the armies of the land; "Thus

the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there.” (Joshua 21.43). Surely Israel would remain true to their God, having witnessed the faithfulness of the Lord. Alas, after the death of Joshua and his generation “there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.” (Judges 2.10) This statement is tragic because the Lord had commanded Israel to both teach their descendants His laws (Deuteronomy 6.6-9) and what He had done for His people (Deuteronomy 6.10-15; cf. Joshua 4.1-7). The book of Judges records how over the next few hundred years the people consistently turned to other gods and suffered the consequences of their rebellion. But the Lord did not completely abandon His people, He raised up judges who would deliver the people, but the people would continue to abandon their God (Judges 2.16-17).

The time of the Judges lasted between 300-400 years. During the time of the last Judge, Samuel, the people of Israel made this request: “Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1Samuel 8.5). While Samuel saw this as a rejection of him, the Lord rightly stated that “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them” (1Samuel 8.7). Interestingly, the people declared that they wished for a king who would “go out before us and fight our battles” (1Samuel 8.20). They had forgotten that it was the Lord who fought for His people (Exodus 19.4; Deuteronomy 28.7; Joshua 23.10). The people remained stiff-necked, rejecting their God at every turn.

Before we conclude, note a few takeaways from these events in Israel’s history. First, it is important to note that God is always faithful to His covenants. Even when Israel violated their covenant, the Lord kept the promise He had made to their forefathers; He did not destroy Israel because that would have broken the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Exodus 32.13-14). He even gave Israel the promised Land, not because they deserved it, but because of His promise (Joshua 21.43). Second, if God proved Himself to be faithful, why did Israel constantly break His covenant? Because they lacked faith! “How long will this people despise Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?” (Numbers 14.11) Finally, Israel may have rejected God’s rule (1Samuel 8.5), but their rejection didn’t change the fact that God ruled over them... and over all people! The gospel story reveals how a descendant of David, the third king of Israel, would in fact be the Son of God and that His reign is forever (2Samuel 7.12-13; Psalm 2)!

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 7 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne..."

Text Under Consideration: 2Kings 17; 2Chon. 36

Scriptural & Historical Context:

In the days of Samuel the people of Israel requested that a king be appointed to lead them (1Samuel 8.5), a rejection of God's rule over them (1Samuel 8.7). Israel would be ruled over by kings for ~400 years, first as a United Kingdom under the rule of Saul, David and Solomon then as a divided Kingdom with Judah in the south ruled over by the line of David and Solomon, Israel in the north under the rule of various short-lived dynasties. Tragically, both kingdoms would suffer defeat and captivity to mightier nations around them: Israel would be conquered by the Assyrians in ~720 B.C. (see 2Kings 17) while Judah would be conquered by the Babylonians in ~586 B.C. (see 2Chronicles 36). How could Israel, the people whom God promised would be His special people (Exodus 19.4-6), be defeated and exiled from the Promised Land? Because the Lord always keeps His covenant, and the terms of His covenant involve both blessings and curses.

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Solomon dies; Israel divides into two kingdoms during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1Kings 12; ~931 B.C.).
- 📖 Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom, leads Israel into apostasy by constructing two golden calves (1Kings 12; ~931 B.C.).
- 📖 Ahab and his wife Jezebel lead Israel into further apostasy by institutionalizing the worship of Baal (1Kings 16, ~874 B.C.).
- 📖 Israel is conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians (2Kings 17, ~720 B.C.).

Creation
Genesis 1–2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6–9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12–25 · c. 2000–1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406–1380 BC

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Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538–432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

📖 Judah is spared from the Assyrians and follows the Lord for brief periods during the reigns of righteous kings like Hezekiah and Josiah. However, Judah also rebels against the Lord and the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple (2Chronicles 36; ~586 B.C.).

The Story

1. God's promises are _____, not _____. While God promised Canaan as an "everlasting possession" to Abraham's descendants, Israel's enjoyment of those promises depended on their obedience to the covenant terms.
2. The covenant offered both _____ and _____. Leviticus 26 and Deut. 28 spelled out both sides clearly — obedience brought flourishing and, most importantly, God's presence; disobedience brought loss, suffering, and exile.
3. The greatest covenant blessing was _____ with God himself. More than land, crops, or offspring, the highest promise was "I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people."
4. God's character — _____ and _____ — is the foundation of his covenant faithfulness. Righteousness means meeting one's obligations under the covenant; justice means vindicating the faithful and punishing the covenant-breaker.
5. Israel's exile was not God's _____ — it was the covenant curses coming to pass. Their defeat, captivity, and scattering were the direct fulfillment of what God had warned would happen if they broke covenant.
6. God was extraordinarily _____ before enacting judgment. He sent prophet after prophet urging Israel and Judah to return, warning them repeatedly before "the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy."
7. Israel's stubborn unbelief, not God's unfaithfulness, caused the _____. The people "would not listen" and "were stubborn" — the covenant curses fell because of their persistent rejection, not any failure on God's part.
8. God's other covenants — with _____ and _____ — remained in force. Israel's covenant-breaking did not nullify God's promises to bless all nations through Abraham's offspring or to establish David's descendant as an eternal King.
9. The righteousness and justice of God are the foundation of future _____. Because God is bound by his own character to keep his word, the exile is not the end of the story — those same qualities that brought judgment will ultimately bring redemption.
10. The gospel depends on God's covenant _____. The entire story of salvation flows from a God who keeps his promises — to Abraham, to David, and ultimately through Christ.

For Further Consideration

1. Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant with better promises (Hebrews 8.6). What is the curse associated with the new covenant (Hebrews 10.29-31)?
2. How does the principles of covenant relationship with God help us to understand the reward of Heaven and the punishment of Hell?

For many, the story of Israel's demise and subsequent captivity is difficult to comprehend. After all, the Lord promised to Abraham that Canaan would be an "everlasting possession" for his descendants (Genesis 17.8). Was God not faithful to His word? Had He failed in some way? This is why we must remember that God's promises are made as part of covenant relationships. Israel could be the Lord's "treasured possession" and a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation", but only if they "obey my voice and keep my covenant" (Exodus 19.4-5). And God's covenant could result in either blessings or curses.

The blessings and curses of God's covenant with Israel were enumerated in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Various physical blessings were promised such as abundant rain, crops and offspring, but as we've noted before the greatest blessing in God's covenants is to be in a relationship with Him. Thus, the Lord promised that if Israel would "walk in my statutes and observe my commandments" (Leviticus 26.3) then He would "make my dwelling among you, and my soul will not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people." (Leviticus 26.11-12). The blessings of the covenant were clearly evident when He gave Canaan to Israel: "Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass (Joshua 21.45).

But what would result when the people broke covenant? Not only would they fail to receive the promised blessings, they would suffer a series of curses! Their enemies would eat their produce (Leviticus 26.16), their labor in the land would yield nothing (vs. 20), they would suffer from pestilence and at the hand of their enemies (vs. 25), their cities would be laid waste (vs. 31) and they would be scattered among the nations (vs. 33). None of these curses would happen by accident, but would be the result of no longer enjoying the covenant relationship with the Lord. If Israel walked "contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins" (vss. 27-28).

The blessings and curses of the covenant relationship are consistent with the character of God. Note these two descriptions of the Lord found in the Psalms:

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you." (Psalm 89:14, ESV)

“The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around.”
(Psalm 97:1–3, ESV)

Both passages describe the Lord’s throne as being founded on “righteousness and justice”, both of which are significant covenant concepts. The Hebrew word *ṣādēq* is the word for “righteousness” and comes from a root which meant “to be straight”. Thus, righteousness is to conform to some ethical or moral standard. In a covenant, righteousness is to meet one’s obligations under the terms of the covenant. Abraham was counted righteous (i.e. fulfilling His covenant) because he believed God (Genesis 15.6) and Israel would be righteous if they obeyed God (Deuteronomy 6.25). God is righteous because He keeps His promises (see Nehemiah 9.8). Justice is also a covenant concept because true justice is a matter of justifying the righteous (i.e. those who keep covenant) and condemning the wicked (see Deuteronomy 25.1). God is just because He upholds the righteous and punishes the wicked.

Now note how the Psalmist described the effects of God’s righteousness and justice. On the one hand His rule would result in “steadfast love and faithfulness” (Psalm 89.14), but on the other the result would be fire that “burns up his adversaries all around.” (Psalm 97.3) When one enters a covenant with the Lord he can be sure that the Lord will be righteous and just. Whether one receives the blessings of the covenant or the curses is determined by their keeping the covenant; the Lord is righteous to bless those in covenant with Him and He is just to punish those who break the covenant.

Returning to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, we see that their defeat and subsequent exile was a fulfillment of the covenant curses. God had been more than faithful to the covenant, exercising great patience as “the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets’.” (2Kings 17.13). Yet, His people “would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God (2Kings 17.14). This continued until “the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy” (2Chronicles 36.16).

Israel may have broken their covenant with the Lord, but His righteousness and justice remain essential to the hope of God’s people. Remember that the Lord had also made covenants with Abraham (Genesis 12; 15) and with David (2Samuel 7). Because the Lord is righteous, He was going to keep His promise to bless all families through Abraham’s offspring and to install David’s descendant as King forever (see Psalm 132.11). The gospel story is dependent on the righteousness and justice of God.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 8

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord... to give you a future and a hope."

Text Under Consideration: Jeremiah 29

Scriptural & Historical Context:

Jeremiah was one of the Lord's prophets who were commissioned with speaking to a people who would not repent of their sins. Much of Jeremiah's prophecies concerned the impending disaster that awaited God's people, a disaster the prophet would live to see when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Lord's Temple in 586 B.C. However, the Lord's wrath would not completely destroy His people and the Lord promised that "when seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place." (Jeremiah 29.10) Cyrus the Mede defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C. and he decreed that God's people could return to the Promised Land and rebuild the Lord's Temple (Ezra 1.1-3; see Isaiah 44.28). The first captives returned to their homeland in 536 B.C., starting the fulfillment of the Lord's "plans I have for you... plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29.11)

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Zerubbabel leads the first group of captives back to Judah to rebuild the Temple (536 B.C., Ezra 1-2).
- 📖 Due to the people's lack of faith, work on the Temple ceases. It is finally finished twenty years after the people were allowed to return (515 B.C., Ezra 6.13-18).
- 📖 Nehemiah returns to Judah in order to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (444 B.C., Nehemiah).
- 📖 Old Testament record concludes with the Jews

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406-1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010-970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605-539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

back in their homeland, but not experiencing God's blessings due to their unfaithfulness (~435 B.C., Malachi 1).

The Story

1. God restored Israel from captivity because of his own covenant _____, not Israel's _____. Deuteronomy 30 promised that if the people returned to the Lord, He would gather them again — and He did, just as He told Jeremiah: 70 years of captivity, then restoration.
2. Daniel understood that the basis for restoration was God's _____, not Israel's _____. At the close of the 70 years, Daniel prayed not on the grounds of the nation's goodness but on the grounds of God's "great mercy" — a model of how to approach a covenant-keeping God.
3. God's plans for his people were far _____ than a simple return to the land. Through the prophets, He promised His dwelling presence among the people, an eternal Kingdom, a forever-reigning Son of David, the inclusion of all nations, and a new covenant in which sins are fully forgiven.
4. None of these grand promises were fulfilled when _____ Israel returned to _____. The second Temple was completed but God's glory did not fill it. Israel ended the Old Testament still faithless and under judgment, still awaiting the "day of the Lord."
5. Israel's continued faithlessness did not _____ God's promises. The fulfillment of his plans was never contingent solely on ethnic Israel's obedience — it was grounded in covenants God made with Abraham and David that transcended any single generation.
6. The Abrahamic covenant pointed beyond Israel to a _____ blessing. God promised Abraham that "all families of the earth shall be blessed" through his offspring — a promise the prophets connected to the establishment of God's true Kingdom drawing in all nations.
7. The Davidic covenant guaranteed an _____ king even after the physical line was cut off. When the Davidic dynasty ended with the Babylonian exile, God's word through Isaiah still stood: a child would be born to sit on David's throne, ruling with justice and righteousness forever.
8. The promise of Genesis 3.15 awaited its fulfillment through the Lord's _____. Isaiah 53 revealed that God's Servant would make an offering for sin, bear the iniquities of many, and thus finally crush the power behind humanity's fall.
9. The gospel story is the fulfillment of all these promises in _____. Everything the Old Testament pointed toward — the dwelling presence of God, the eternal Kingdom, the Son of David, the new covenant, the blessing of the nations, and the defeat of evil — finds its "yes" in him.

For Further Consideration

1. Daniel based his request on the Lord's righteousness, not on Israel's merit (see Daniel 9.7, 16-19). Why is it important to base our prayers on the Lord's righteousness (i.e. His faithfulness to keep His covenant)? How does factor into 1 John 1.8-10?

Why did God bring His people back to the Promised Land? As we've noted in the last few lessons, Israel rarely kept the covenant and thus God was both righteous and just to punish them with the curses spelled out in the covenant (Deuteronomy 28.15ff). It was because of the Lord's faithfulness to the covenant that He brought the people out of captivity: "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you." (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, ESV) God's faithfulness to His promise was why He revealed to Jeremiah that He would bring the people out of captivity after 70 years (Jeremiah 29.10). Daniel (a prophet of the Lord who was taken captive as a young man and was a court official throughout the entire 70 years into the rule of the Persians) understood that the Lord is always faithful to His promises, thus the end of the 70 years (Daniel 9.1-2) he prayed that the Lord would "open your eyes and see our desolations... For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy (Daniel 9.18).

Significantly, when the Lord promised to Jeremiah that He would bring the people back after 70 years, He declared: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11, ESV) Those plans were laid out elsewhere in the prophets and foretold of truly glorious future:

- » The Lord promised to dwell among His people (Ezekiel 37.26-28).
- » The Lord was going to establish a Kingdom that would shatter the kingdoms of the world and last forever (Daniel 2.44).
- » A descendant of David would reign forever (Isaiah 11.1-10; cf. Daniel 7.13-14).
- » The nations would be brought into the Lord's Kingdom (Isaiah 2.2-4).
- » A new covenant would be established, a covenant in which sins were forgiven and no longer remembered (Jeremiah 31.31-34).

Plans for welfare indeed!

Yet, those promises were not fulfilled in the days when physical Israel returned to Canaan. God promised that His sanctuary would be among His people, yet when the second Temple was completed (Ezra 6.13-18) there is no record of His glory filling the structure (contrast with the Tabernacle in Exodus 40.34 and Solomon's Temple in 1Kings 8.10-11). The Lord promised to establish an eternal Kingdom ruled by the Son of David and a beacon to the nations, yet the Old Testament record concludes with Israel once again described as a nation suffering because she turned away from God (Malachi 3.6-12). Clearly, the new covenant had not yet been established because Israel remained a people estranged from His holiness and awaiting the fearful day of the Lord: ""For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1, ESV)

So, what of the wonderful plans the Lord had made for His people (Jeremiah 29.11)? Would the Lord fail to bring them to their fulfillment because Israel proved to be faithless? Absolutely not! Rather, they would be fulfilled with a people who "will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29.13). Furthermore, the Lord's plans would be fulfilled because they were part of other covenants God had made. Remember, the Lord promised Abraham that in him "all families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12.3). Through the prophets the Lord revealed that would occur with the establishment of His true Kingdom (Isaiah 2.2-4). To David the Lord promised that his son would rule forever (2Samuel 7.12-13). The physical line of David ended when Judah went into Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 22.30), but the Lord was going to keep His word: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." (Isaiah 9:6-7, ESV) Finally, the Lord promised that one day the seed of woman would put an end to Satan's power (Genesis 3.15). This promise would be fulfilled when the Lord's Servant made an offering for sin (Isaiah 53.10), an offering that would allow the "many to be accounted righteous" because "he shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53.11).

The Lord had wondrous plans for His people. The gospel story is how those plans are fulfilled in Christ.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 9 "He has visited and redeemed His people"

Text Under Consideration: Romans 6

Scriptural & Historical Context:

Between 1500 - 1400 years before the birth of Jesus, the Lord redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 6.6). However, our study of the Old Testament has shown that Israel did not remain free; because of their many sins they were taken captive and lived in exile (2Kings 17; 2Chronicles 36). Yet, there was still hope because even though their captors (Assyria and Babylon) were mighty nations, Israel's "Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name" (Jeremiah 50.34). However, the Lord did not plan to merely redeem the physical nation of Israel from captivity; His aim was to redeem His people from their true captor... sin! "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression" (Isaiah 59.20). Significantly, the New Testament opens with the acknowledgment that God was about to fulfill this promise. At the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah prophesied, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1.68). Notably, this redemption would bring "salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1.77).

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Jesus is born in ~ 3 B.C.
- 📖 Jesus' public ministry begins in ~A.D. 27.
- 📖 Jesus is crucified, resurrected and exalted in ~A.D. 30. He completes His mission "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10.45).

Creation
Genesis 1-2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6-9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12-25 · c. 2000-1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406-1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010-970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605-539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

The Story

1. Redemption involves release from _____ through outside _____. The concept assumes weakness or inability on the part of the one being redeemed — social, physical, or spiritual.
2. Redemption was embedded in Israel's _____. The kinsman-redeemer was obligated to buy back a poor relative's property or even their freedom if they had sold themselves into servitude, and the "avenger of blood" redeemed innocent life with the life of the guilty.
3. God's call for Israel to redeem one another was rooted in His own redemption of them from _____. Because God had claimed Israel as His own by freeing them, they were to reflect that same redemptive concern toward each other.
4. The _____ captivity deepened the concept. God promised through the prophets to redeem Israel from exile, identifying Himself explicitly as their Redeemer — the Holy One of Israel.
5. God's ultimate redemptive purpose went beyond national deliverance to freedom from _____ itself. Isaiah 44:22 shows God's heart was always to blot out transgressions, not merely to move people from one geography to another.
6. Isaiah's suffering _____ is the centerpiece of this redemption. Framed by promises of redemption in chapters 52 and 54, Isaiah 53 reveals that the cost of man's redemption would be the life of one pierced and crushed for human sin.
7. Jesus' ministry demonstrated His _____ to redeem. Just as God proved His power over Egypt through the plagues, Jesus proved His power over sin's effects through healing and exorcism before accomplishing redemption on the cross.
8. The Passover _____ foreshadowed Jesus. The blood of the lamb that protected Israel from judgment and the lamb required to redeem every first-born son both point forward to Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
9. _____ needs this redemption. Sin is the universal condition, and no one has the power to free themselves from it — redemption must come entirely from outside.
10. Redemption in Christ means belonging to God, not _____. As Israel was freed from Egypt not for independence but to be God's people, those redeemed by Christ are freed from sin not to live as they please but to live as servants of righteousness.

For Further Consideration

1. How does the concept of redemption help us to think correctly about the magnitude of sin (cf. Romans 6.23)?
2. What do you think it means to be a “slave of righteousness” (Romans 6.18)?

Redemption is a key concept in Scripture and “involves the release of people, animals, or property from bondage through outside help. Their social, physical, or spiritual weakness makes redemption necessary.” (IVP New Dictionary of Biblical Theology) Interestingly, the concept of redemption was baked into Israel’s law:

- » If an Israelite became poor and sold his property, then a kinsmen redeemer was to buy the property back (Leviticus 25.25-34).
- » If an Israelite became so poor that he sold himself to a stranger, the kinsmen redeemer was to buy him back (Leviticus 25.48-52).
- » If an Israelite was murdered, the closest relative was to be an “avenger of blood” and put to death the murderer (Numbers 35.19). Note that the term “avenger” is the same word as “redeemer” in Leviticus 25. The idea is that the blood of the innocent was redeemed by the blood of the guilty.

Significantly, God’s interest in Israel redeeming the land and their fellow Israelites was tied to God’s redemption of Israel: “For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 25.55).

Redemption took on an added significance during the Babylonian captivity. In the prophets God declared that He would be faithful to His covenant promise to bring Israel back to Canaan (Deuteronomy 30.1-3); He would redeem them from their captivity: “Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 41:14, ESV) But the Lord’s idea of redemption went further than freeing a nation from captivity; His purpose was to redeem man from what truly enslaved him... sin! “I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.” (Isaiah 44:22, ESV) Significantly, the description of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is bookended by two promises that God was going to redeem His people (see Isaiah 52.9; 54.5). The cost of man’s redemption would be the life of the One who was “pierced for our transgressions... crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53.5). It was this redemption that would fulfill the prophesy of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1.68).

A couple of important parallels exist between Jesus redeeming man from sin and God redeeming Israel from slavery. First, redemption requires the power to re-

deem. The Lord redeemed Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand (Exodus 3.19-20) as proven by the plagues He brought on the Egyptians. While on earth Jesus proved His ability to free man from sin by healing the sick (Luke 5.24) and by casting out demons (Luke 11.20-22). Second, the blood of lambs was required in the redemption of Israel. Each family was to sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on their doorposts so that the Lord would pass over when He brought judgment on the Egyptians (Exodus 12.13). Furthermore, all succeeding first-born males were to be redeemed with the sacrifice of a lamb (Exodus 13.13-15). The Gospel declares that Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1.29)

The Gospel Story reveals how redemption is found in Christ. There are several important implications of this theme that we need to consider:

1. Because each of us sin, we all need redemption. Sin has been the universal problem of man ever since the first sin in the garden, a reality the apostle Paul described in Romans. We were all once "slaves of sin" (Romans 6.17).
2. We are powerless to redeem ourselves (Romans 5.7).
3. Only Christ can redeem us. Thus, redemption is found in Him. Jesus died to "ransom" us (Mark 10.45), and those who die with Christ (via baptism Romans 6.1-4) are freed from sin (Romans 6.7).
4. Being redeemed does not mean we are free. Israel was redeemed from Egypt not to be free to themselves, but to be the people of God. Likewise, we who were once enslaved to sin are freed not to live how we please, but to be slaves of righteousness (Romans 6.15-18).

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 10 "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Text Under Consideration: John 1

Scriptural & Historical Context:

After His resurrection and before He was exalted to heaven, Jesus took time to explain the significance of all that had transpired: "Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem'." (Luke 24:44–47, ESV) The events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection were no accident, but the fulfillment of God's plan as revealed in the Old Testament. In our last lesson we noted how the theme of redemption is fulfilled in Christ. Now we turn our attention to how the themes of creation and life are also completed in Christ.

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Adam and Eve sin, starting the process by which all men sin... and thus all men die (4000+ B.C., Romans 5.12).
- 📖 God promises that the day would come when He cleanses His people with water and gives them a new spirit... His Spirit (~580 B.C., Ezek. 36.25-27).
- 📖 Jesus declares that entrance into the Kingdom requires a new birth; a birth of water and the Spirit (~27 A.D., John 3.5).
- 📖 Paul states that baptism is both a death to the life of sin, and a rebirth into new life (~57 A.D., Romans 6.1-4).

Creation
Genesis 1–2 · Undated

The Flood
Genesis 6–9 · c. 2350 BC (trad.)

Abraham
Genesis 12–25 · c. 2000–1800 BC

The Exodus
Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

Conquest of Canaan
Joshua · c. 1406–1380 BC

David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010–970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605–539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538–432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

The Story

1. Creation and the _____. God created humanity in His image, but sin entered the world through Satan's temptation, bringing death as its consequence.
2. The first promise of _____. Even in the moment of the fall, God promised a Messiah who would ultimately defeat Satan — the first glimpse of the gospel (Genesis 3:15).
3. Jesus as the source of _____. John presents Jesus as the eternal Word through whom all things were created, and in whom life itself resides — life that He offers to humanity.
4. What Jesus _____. Jesus provides living water, the bread of life, resurrection from death, abundant life as the Good Shepherd, and direct access to the Father — He is life in every sense.
5. New birth as the _____. Receiving this life requires being "born again" — a spiritual rebirth of water and the Spirit, fulfilling God's promise through Ezekiel long before Jesus spoke of it.
6. Baptism _____ us to Christ's death and resurrection. Like Adam, we all sin and die. Baptism is how believers die to sin and are raised into the new life Christ secured — uniting them with Him rather than with Adam.
7. The _____ of the Spirit. New birth brings the promised gift of the Spirit, remaking us in the image of God.
8. New life comes with _____. Christians are called to actively put off the old self, renew their minds, and put on the new self — living lives shaped by the Spirit rather than by the flesh.
9. _____ by the Spirit is the ongoing _____ of the Christian life. The fruit of the Spirit in a believer's life is the evidence that they are being led and transformed by God.
10. The gospel is the story of life _____. From the image of God in creation, through the ruin of sin, to new life in Christ through baptism and the Spirit — the entire biblical story is about God restoring what was lost.

For Further Consideration

1. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus said that we are to be "perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Based on what we've studied in this lesson, how is that possible?

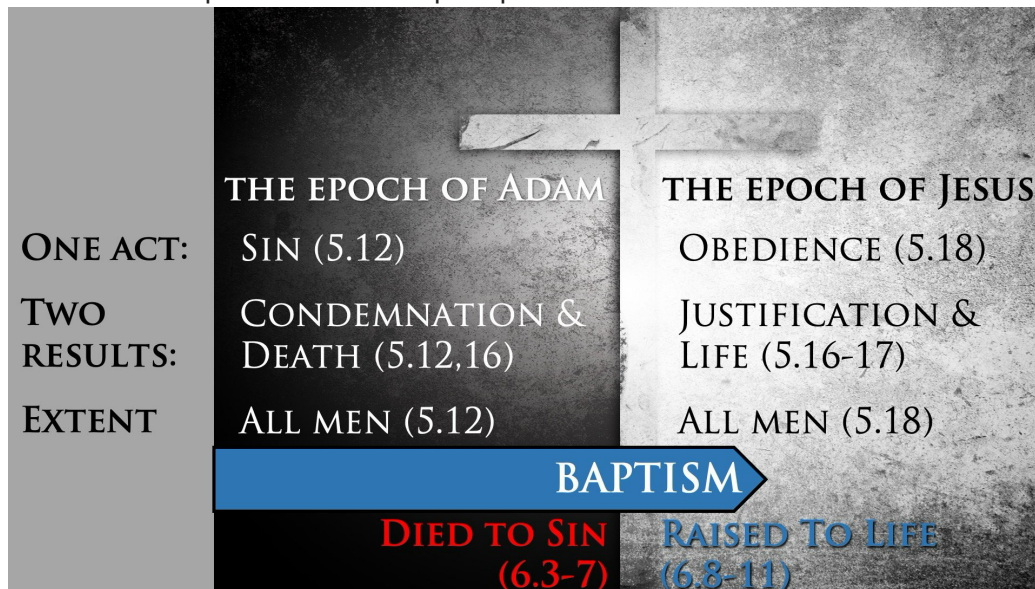
The Bible begins with creation, culminating in God's creation of man in His image (Genesis 1.26-27). Tragically, the story of life was quickly marred by sin and death when man and woman succumbed to Satan's temptation (Genesis 3). However, God offered hope with the first promise of the Messiah: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15, ESV) Jesus fulfilled God's promise to defeat Satan! "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Hebrews 2:14-15, ESV) But how could Jesus free man from the fear of death when all men die because of sin (Romans 6.23)?

In his account of the gospel, John presented Jesus as the Word who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were created (John 1.1-3). Significantly, Jesus' life-giving ability did not cease with creation, for John declared "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1.4). The rest of John's gospel shows how real life is found in Jesus:

- » Jesus offers true sustenance; He provides water that wells up to eternal life (John 4.14) and is the bread of life (John 6.35).
- » Jesus is the Good Shepherd who provides care and protection for His sheep; He "came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10.10).
- » Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" meaning that He provides life after death (John 11.25).
- » Jesus provides access to the Father, thus He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14.6).

That Jesus offers life is apparent, but how does one receive life? He or she must be born into it! John states that anyone who "believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1.12-13). Jesus expounded on this when approached by Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5, ESV) Jesus was not introducing a new concept, but was speaking of the fulfillment of God's promise through Ezekiel that He was going to cleanse His people with water and give them a new Spirit... His Spirit (Ezekiel 36.25-27). Significantly, when the apostles first preached the gospel following Jesus' ascension to Heaven they told the people that they needed to be baptized (water) not only to have their sins forgiven, but to receive the promised Spirit (Acts 2.38). Ezekiel, Jesus and the apostles all declared that the new life promised by God would come through water and the Spirit.

The apostle Paul showed the connection between baptism and the new life promised to God's people. In Romans 5 the apostle made a significant contrast between Adam and Christ. Adam committed sin (vs. 12) resulting in condemnation and death (vss. 12,16,18) and that extended to all men because all sin (vs. 12). By contrast Jesus obeyed the Father (vss. 18-19) resulting in justification and life (vss. 16-17) which also extends to all men (vs. 18). But how? If we all identify with Adam because of sin, how can we be with Christ in life? Through baptism (Romans 6.1-4). Baptism is both a death to the life of sin and a resurrection to new life; baptism is how we born again into the life God promised His people.



The new life is a reality for the Christian; we have been born again (John 3.3) resulting in a new life (Romans 6.4) characterized by a new Spirit (John 3.5; Ezekiel 36.25-27; Acts 2.38). We are "beholding the glory of the Lord... being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2Corinthians 3.18). But that new life comes with responsibilities. Paul described those responsibilities in Ephesians 4.22-24:

- » We are to put off the old man, our former manner of living.
- » We are to be renewed in our minds.
- » We are to put on the new self... a new self in the image of God Himself.

Paul elaborated on this more in Galatians 5. There we read that God's people are to "walk by the Spirit" (vs. 16), be "led by the Spirit" (vs. 18) and "live by the Spirit" (vs. 25). How can we know that we are doing that? By the fruit we present in our lives (vss. 19-23)!

The gospel story is the story of life being reclaimed. We were created in God's image (Genesis 1.26-27) but through sin we die and fall short of His glory (Romans 3.23; 6.23). But Jesus came so that we could "have life and have it abundantly" (John 10.10). We enter that new life through baptism (Romans 6.1-4) and commit to walking by His Spirit for the rest of our days (Galatians 5.16).

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 11 "this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many..."

Text Under Consideration: Hebrews

Scriptural & Historical Context:

We have noted that the themes of redemption and creation find their completion in Christ. Significantly, when the Lord redeems and fashions a people it is with the purpose of establishing a relationship with that people. That was clearly seen when the Lord redeemed Israel from Egypt and made them into a people... His people if they would keep His covenant (Exodus 19.4-6). Likewise, Jesus came to this earth to redeem His people (Luke 1.68) a people who would be born anew into His Kingdom (John 3.5). And why did the Lord do this? Because He wants a relationship with this people... He wants to be in a covenant with them. Thus, on the night when Jesus and His apostles commemorated the redemption of Israel from slavery, He inaugurated a new feast meant to commemorate the establishment of His covenant with His new people. "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26.28)

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 God forms a covenant with Abram (~ 2000 B.C., Genesis 15.18).
- 📖 God redeems Israel out of Egypt and forms a covenant with them (~1440 B.C., Exodus 24).
- 📖 Israel continually breaks covenant finally resulting in their captivity and the destruction of God's Temple (586 B.C., 2Chronicles 36).
- 📖 Through His prophet Jeremiah, the Lord promises to establish a new covenant (586 B.C., Jeremiah 31.31-34).
- 📖 Jesus states that His blood is the blood of the new covenant (A.D. 30, Matthew 26.28).

Creation
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The Flood
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Exodus · c. 1446 or 1270 BC

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David's Reign
2 Samuel · c. 1010-970 BC

Babylonian Captivity
2 Kings 25 · c. 605-539 BC

Return from Captivity
Ezra, Nehemiah · c. 538-432 BC

Life of Jesus
Gospels · c. 6/4 BC – AD 30/33

Establishment of the Church
Acts 2 · c. AD 30/33 (Pentecost)

📖 The Hebrew author states that we are part of the new and better covenant (~A.D. 65, Hebrews 8).

The Story

1. Covenant is how God relates to humanity. Throughout Scripture, God forms binding relationships with people through covenants — with Abraham (Genesis 15), with Israel (Exodus 19), and ultimately through Christ.
2. God's covenants are rooted in grace. Each covenant offers blessings man could not obtain on his own — promises to Abraham, special peoplehood to Israel, and "better promises" in the new covenant (Hebrews 8.6).
3. The new covenant fulfills the promises of Jeremiah 31. Unlike the old covenant, it is internalized (written on hearts), personal (made with believers who already know God), and not dependent on succeeding generations being re-taught faithfulness.
4. The new covenant truly and finally forgives sin. The old covenant's sacrifices could not perfect the people (Hebrews 10.1-4), but Christ's once-for-all sacrifice does, and His continuing high priesthood means He intercedes for believers always.
5. Covenants are not one-sided — they require faithfulness. Jesus commanded his followers to "observe all that I have commanded" (Matthew 28.20). Keeping those commands is not legalism; it is covenant faithfulness.
6. Deliberate, persistent sin breaks the covenant relationship. Just as Israel faced curses for disobedience, those who willfully abandon Christ after knowing the truth face judgment, not continued forgiveness (Hebrews 10.26-27).
7. Grace within the covenant includes forgiveness for imperfect obedience. Christ's ongoing intercession as high priest means confession restores fellowship (1 John 1.8-9), giving believers boldness to approach God (Hebrews 4.14-16).
8. The new covenant was ratified by Christ's blood. As Israel's covenant was sealed with blood (Exodus 24), the new covenant is enacted in Christ's blood (Matthew 26.28), which we enter through baptism and commemorate in the Lord's Supper.
9. The covenant endures as long as both parties remain faithful. God's faithfulness is certain (Hebrews 10.23); the open question is always human faithfulness. Israel failed, but persevering faith preserves the soul (Hebrews 10.39).

For Further Consideration

1. Read Hebrews 2.17-18; 4.14-16; 7.23-25. How does Jesus' work as high priest give us assurance that we can remain in covenant with God?

The covenant relationship is an essential concept in the study of Scripture. Remember, a covenant is how the Lord forms a relationship with man, a relationship where man and God are bound together. He assured Abraham that He would keep His promises by forming a covenant with him (Genesis 15) and promised Israel that they would be His special people if they kept His covenant (Exodus 19). The covenant concept was central to the theology of the Hebrew author, telling his audience that "Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises." (Hebrews 8.6) The gospel story is the story of how we can be part of the new covenant in Christ.

We've noted before that God's covenants are founded on grace, i.e. God promising blessings that man could not obtain on his own. God's covenant with Abraham was founded on the promises of Genesis 12.1-3 and His covenant with Israel offered them the opportunity to be His special people (Exodus 19.4-6). But the Hebrew writer said that Jesus' covenant is "enacted on better promises" (Hebrews 8.6). The better promises are the very promises the Lord made through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31.31-34; Hebrews 8.8-12):

- » This covenant would not be like the old covenant, one that was broken through unfaithfulness (Heb. 8.8-9).
- » This covenant would be internalized (Heb. 8.10). The old covenant was made with a physical nation, but the new covenant is made with those who voluntarily come to Jesus in faith.
- » This covenant would be personal (Heb. 8.11). Under the old covenant each succeeding generation had to be taught the will of God and shown the importance of keeping his covenant. And rarely did succeeding generations keep the covenant. But the new covenant is made with believers, thus all know Him!
- » This covenant would truly forgive sin (Heb. 8.12). The Hebrew writer stressed the point that the old covenant could not perfect the people (Hebrews 7.11,19) and the sacrifices of the old covenant could not forgive sins (Hebrews 10.1-4). But the new covenant perfects God's people because Christ's sacrifice was for all time (Hebrews 10.12-14) and because Christ's high priesthood continues forever, meaning He is always making intercession for the people of the new covenant (Hebrews 7.23-25).

The gospel declares that from Jesus' "fulness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1.16). The new covenant is where we find "grace upon grace".

Remember that God's covenants are usually not one-sided arrangements. When a covenant is in tact God is bound to fulfill His promises, but man is bound to "keep" His covenant. Jesus' great commission concludes with the instruction to teach "them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28.20). Jesus,

who ratified the new covenant in His blood (Matthew 26.28), declared that there are commands to keep in His covenant! The Hebrew writer was clearly concerned that His brethren were departing from their covenant in Christ. Thus, he urged them to “pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb. 2.1) and warned that they must “not refuse him who is speaking... for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12.25,29). Recall that Israel’s covenant contained both blessings for faithfulness and curses for disobedience (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). Those curses were severe and would ultimately result in the people being removed from their inheritance. Likewise, “if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” (Hebrews 10.26-27).

Keeping Christ’s commandments is not legalism, it is covenant faithfulness. No amount of obedience can earn God’s grace (Ephesians 2.8-9), but God’s grace is found in the covenant relationship... and covenants have requirements. Thankfully, part of the grace in the covenant is forgiveness for our imperfect covenant keeping. In the new covenant Jesus continues as high priest, making intercession for our sins. Thus, confessing our transgressions brings the assurance that God will forgive (1John 1.8-9). Being part of the new covenant imparts boldness based on what Christ has done and is doing on our behalf (Hebrews 4.14-16) but also requires resolve to follow our Lord. After all, “we are not those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls” (Hebrews 10.39).

Covenants must be ratified in order to be binding. God’s covenant with Israel was brought into force when blood was applied to both His altar and to the people (Exodus 24.6-8). The blood of Christ is what ratifies the new covenant (Matthew 26.28). His blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins, a blessing of the new covenant relationship (Ephesians 1.7; Hebrews 8.12). It is His blood that cleanses us when we are baptized (Acts 22.16), thereby entering a covenant relationship with Him (Matthew 28.19-20). The formation of this new covenant in His blood is what we commemorate each time we partake of the cup (1Corinthians 11.25). And it is His blood we would trample and profane should we forsake the covenant (Hebrews 10.29).

Finally, covenants remain in tact when both parties remain faithful. God’s faithfulness is assured (Hebrews 10.23), so the only question is whether man will keep faith. Israel failed at faithfulness (Hebrews 3.19; 4.2), but if we maintain faith it will result in the preservation of our souls (Hebrews 10.39). We will examine the significance of faith in the next lesson.

THE GOSPEL STORY

Lesson 12 "the righteous shall live by faith."

Text Under Consideration: John 3

Scriptural & Historical Context:

Jesus told His disciples "that everything about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24.44). Certainly specific prophecies from the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus, but the aim of this study has been to show that the entire story of Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus. The gospel story is about how creation, redemption and the covenant relationship with God are completed in Jesus. But who benefits from this story? Both Jesus and His apostles declared that faith is how man accesses the blessing of the gospel (John 3.16; Romans 3.28; Ephesians 2.8-9; etc.). Significantly, faith is not a New Testament concept, but a theme that runs throughout the gospel story. Both Old and New Testaments declare that "the righteous shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2.4; Romans 1.17).

Key Verses & Events:

- 📖 Abram believes God, setting the example for how God's people respond in faith (~ 2000 B.C., Genesis 15.6).
- 📖 Israel fails to enter the promised land because they lack faith in God (~1440 B.C., Num. 14.11).
- 📖 Israel goes into captivity because they do not believe in the Lord (720 B.C., 2Kings 17.14).
- 📖 Habakkuk prophesies how Israel's enemies would be punished, "but the righteous shall live by his faith." (~600 B.C., Habakkuk 2.4)
- 📖 Jesus declares how God loves all of His creation, but that only those who believe in His Son would escape condemnation and receive eternal life (A.D. 27, John 3.16).

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The Story

1. Faith is central to both _____, not just the New. While most recognize faith as essential to salvation in the New Testament, the entire biblical narrative — from Genesis to Revelation — is built around the theme of faith.
2. The first sin was a _____ of faith. Satan didn't tempt Eve with brute force; he planted doubt about God's character. Adam and Eve's transgression began with disbelief.
3. Israel's pattern of failure traced back to _____. Where Abraham trusted God's promises (Genesis 15.6), his descendants repeatedly did not — leading to their failure to enter the Promised Land and eventually to captivity.
4. _____ is the perfect model of faith. Unlike every person before Him, Jesus resisted Satan's temptations by trusting completely in His Father, endured the cross, and was vindicated through resurrection and exaltation.
5. Real faith is more than _____ agreement. Many have reduced "belief" to a private, internal conviction. But Jesus' own faith drove obedience and self-surrender — and He calls us to the same.
6. Faith involves being _____ about who Jesus is. Nicodemus started here — persuaded by the signs that God was with Jesus — but this is only the beginning of genuine faith, not its fullness.
7. Faith requires _____ what Jesus says, even when it doesn't make sense. Nicodemus struggled to accept Jesus' teaching about being "born again." Mature faith means taking Jesus at His word even when His claims confound us.
8. Faith culminates in _____. John 3.18-21 shows that true belief means choosing the light over darkness — submitting our will to God's. Obedience isn't opposed to faith; it is faith in action.
9. "The righteous shall live by faith" has a _____ _____. We receive life through faith in Christ, and we also live each day by faith — every decision made in trust that God will fulfill His promises to those who follow Him.
10. The gospel story — creation, redemption, and relationship with God — is received by faith. The call of Hebrews 10.39 to be "those who have faith and preserve their souls" is the fitting conclusion to the entire biblical narrative.

Most appreciate that faith is central to the New Testament message since both Jesus and His apostles declare that faith is how we can be saved by God's grace (John 3.16; Ephesians 2.8-9; etc.). What many do not appreciate is how faith is also central to the Old Testament narrative:

- » Eve and Adam transgressed the Lord's command (Genesis 2.17) because Satan successfully planted doubt in their minds about God's character and

His will (Genesis 3.1-6). The first sin resulted from a lack of faith!

- » Abraham followed God because he believed that God would fulfill His promises (Genesis 15.6).
- » Israel would consistently show that they lacked the faith of Abraham, their forefather. Lack of faith resulted in the exodus generation's failure to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14.11) and ultimately their captivity (2Kings 17.14).

The Hebrew writer showed the significance of faith throughout the gospel story. He pointed out how Israel disobeyed God because they lacked faith (Hebrews 3.17-19), but also showed how the Old Testament record was filled with those who drew near to God through faith (Hebrews 11). Pleasing God has always required faith!

The gospel story is fulfilled in Christ, and that includes Jesus providing the ultimate example of real faith. Whereas man has succumbed to Satan's temptations since the beginning (Genesis 3), Jesus resisted by placing complete trust in His Father (Matthew 4.1-11). Jesus resolved to do the Father's will even when He knew that would require Him to suffer and die (Matthew 26.39). Significantly, one of the insults hurled at Jesus on the cross was "He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now..." (Matthew 27.43). Jesus endured the reviling because He "continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly" (1Peter 2.23). And Jesus' faith in His Father was vindicated when God raised Him up and exalted Him to His right hand (Ephesians 1.19-21).

Jesus demonstrated complete faith in God and He declared that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3.16). The crucial question then is "what does it mean to believe?" Sadly, many have adopted a definition of faith that is far removed from the kind of faith Jesus possessed. Remember, Jesus' faith prompted Him to follow His Father's will regardless of the cross. He certainly did not water down faith to mean simply believing something in your heart. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 gives us a fuller picture of faith.

Believing in Jesus starts with being convinced about who He is (John 3.1-2). The chapter begins with Nicodemus, noted as both a member of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews, coming to Jesus. What is significant is his conviction that Jesus is both a rabbi and that He came from God. No, Nicodemus did not yet believe in the true nature of Jesus as revealed in John 1, rather he believed that God was with Jesus much as He had been with Moses (cf. Exodus 3.12). What convinced Nicodemus? "no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." In John 2.23 we read that many were beginning to believe in Jesus based on the "signs" He performed. Truly, the signs of Jesus accomplished their purpose (cf. John 20.30-31). However, while many were beginning to believe in Jesus, their faith would not prove to be genuine. And so at this early stage we can see that Nicodemus' faith needed to grow. Yes, he was convinced about some things regarding Jesus, but true faith is comprised of more.

Believing in Jesus requires us to trust Him and what He says (John 3.3-17). Jesus, who "knew all people" (2.24), knew that Nicodemus' faith needed to grow

and mature. Thus, Jesus began by addressing the means of entering the Kingdom. Nicodemus likely believed that all Jews would be part of the promised Kingdom, but Jesus said it would require one to be born again (better translated "from above" cf. vs. 31; 19.11). This new birth had been prophesied in passages like Ezekiel 36.25-27 and Jesus was confirming that entrance into His Kingdom could be found only by spiritual means (vss. 5-8). Nicodemus' responses in vss. 4 and 9 show that while he believed some things about Jesus, he was not yet to the point where he fully trusted everything Jesus said and taught. So, while Jesus chided Him for not understanding these heavenly truths (vss. 10-12), He also gave Nicodemus profound reasons to trust Him:

- » Only Jesus had descended from heaven, thus He was qualified to reveal these heavenly truths (vs. 13).
- » Like the bronze serpent in the wilderness (see Numbers 21.8-9), Jesus was going to be "lifted up" so that those who believed could have eternal life (vss. 14-15).
- » Jesus came because of God's great love for us; not to condemn us, but to save us (vss. 16-17).

Believing in Jesus means we surrender our will to His (John 3.18-21). Even though Jesus did not come into this world to condemn it, much of the world will be condemned because of their love of the darkness. That is, they have a choice to do "what is true" and come "to the light" vs. 21, but most love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, vs. 19. They do not wish to surrender. This is where so many discussions regarding faith and works go astray. The Scriptures do not contrast faith and obedience, rather they show that obedience is the result of faith. "Whoever believes in Him" (vs. 16) are the ones who "comes to the light" and these show that their "works have been carried out in God" (vs. 21). As John states later in the chapter, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3.36).

Both Paul and the Hebrew author quote the prophecy of Habakkuk, "the righteous shall live by His faith" (Habakkuk 2.4; Romans 1.17; Hebrews 10.38). The statement could have two meanings. First, we obtain life through faith. We obtain life because we place our trust in the Son of God and not ourselves (John 3.16). We obtain life because we submit to His will to be born again, even if it doesn't make sense to us (John 3.5; Mark 16.16). Second, faith is our manner of life. In the words of Paul, "the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2.20). Every day is a matter of placing our trust in God and in His will; every decision and choice is to be made in faith, trusting that God will fulfill His promises when we follow Him.

The gospel story shows how creation, redemption and a relationship with God are found in Christ. Those promises will be fulfilled to those who have faith! "We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." (Hebrews 10.39)