

CONNECTING THE DOTS A CHRONOLOGICAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

I (Dennis) have been in church all my life. Before I was born I was on the role of my Sunday School class (known as the Cradle Roll) in the anticipation of my arrival. Since that time I have been taught and exposed to the stories of the Bible. We are not calling them stories any longer but biblical, historical accounts. The word bible "stories" sounds like fairy tales we learned as children. The Bible is not a story book about fairy tales. It is the inerrant, infallible, supernatural word of the One True, timeless, space-less, immaterial, powerful, personal God. He caused godly human instruments, inspired by His Holy Spirit, to write down what He said and what they, and others, witnessed. In 2014 we journeyed through the Old Testament and New Testament in a chronological fly-over. That journey took us three years.

It's time to start over, adding a few books we didn't cover the first time. Previously we did both the Old Testament and New Testament in seventy-eight weeks each. That was a year-and-a-half in the Old Testament and a year-and-a-half in the New Testament. This time we are going to add twenty-six weeks to each. That will give us two years (104 weeks) in the Old Testament and two years in the New Testament (104 weeks). There will be five devotions each week. We will, once again, be using the children's devotion books by Marty Machowski. The Old Testament book is "Long Story Short." There will be supplemental devotions for the children on the weeks that have been added. These devotions were written by Jennifer Dooley, our Ministry Assistant for the Preschool and Children's Department.

Why is this important? **Romans 10:17** says, "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*" This is the saving faith that determines your eternal destiny and daily life. This faith comes by knowing God and trusting His provision for a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

It is absolutely imperative that everyone know what God has to say. We have put all of this together with messages that will be preached each week in keeping with the previous week's devotions. It is our hope and prayer that everyone will develop the habit of a daily devotion time in the Word of God. Help your youngest child start the habit even before they can grasp what you are saying and reading.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The whole of scripture is about Jesus. It has been said that “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.” One of the outcomes of this journey will be connecting the dots. It is amazing to see how sixty-six separate books written by more than forty authors over several thousand years form an integrated message.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

He said to them, *“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Luke 24:44 (NIV)*

Each week we will focus on a particular historical account from the Bible. Days one through four will include a section of scripture to read along with a brief devotional thought. Day three, each week, connects that week's study to Jesus and the gospel. The focus of the Bible is Jesus. The fifth day each week we will look at a passage from the Psalms or from one of the prophets to discover how the passage points forward to Jesus. It is amazing to read and study the Bible with the understanding that the whole of the Bible is ultimately about Jesus. The week's readings and devotions will prepare the way for the messages on Sunday. This will put the entire body of HCBC, both Fayetteville and Holtonville campuses, reading and studying God's word in the same place!

Everyone on board! Let's go!

Dennis Watson and Chris Watson

All scripture references are New King James unless otherwise stated.

WEEK 1 GOD CREATES THE WORLD ----- Dennis Watson

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 1:1-2

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

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

"It has been said of the Earth that 'the existence of its inhabitants hangs upon a thin and delicate sheath of gas that envelops the planet like the skin of an apple.'" Though over 99% of our atmosphere (composed of 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, and 1% other gases) lies below 50 miles in altitude, it is still able to (a) provide the necessary oxygen crucial for animal and human respiration, (b) preserve acceptable temperature ranges while avoiding life-threatening extremes of heat and cold, and (c) protect from incoming extraterrestrial debris and (UV) solar radiation."

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

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 1:3-25

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

That is amazing but one might say that man also creates things. Man has created computers, jets, and spacecrafts that have taken

man to the moon and beyond. However, man really does not create: he builds at best, making things from existing things. When God created, He created 'ex nihilo', which means "out of nothing." God had no existing matter or "stuff" with which to make or build. He created all things from nothing.

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

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Colossians 1:15-17

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

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

He was there when it was made and all of it was made by Him and for Him.

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

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

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

Day 4

Read Genesis 1:26-31

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

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

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

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

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

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

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION

Read Psalm 1

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

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

Adam was the first man. In the Bible the word “firstborn” often carries this idea. He was the firstborn in that he was the prototype of man. God made the first man in His image to be the pattern for all who would come after him. Unfortunately, as we

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

will see later, this pattern was spoiled by the fall and that pattern was passed on to all others born after Adam, except Jesus.

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

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

WEEK 2 GOD CREATES MAN ----- Chris Watson

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 2:4-14

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

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

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 2:15-23

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

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

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

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

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

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

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

³Jerry Vines: Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection, [Who is Jesus?](#)

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

Day 4

Read Genesis 2:22-25

God saw that Adam was alone. God was with him, but there was not a suitable helper for him. So God provided one! She would be the perfect partner for Adam, just how God had intended. Technically, this is the first marriage that we see in scripture.

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

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

Maybe you are single, never married. Pray and ask if it be His plan that in His time He would provide you with that special mate. Seek to submit to His plan and time, waiting on the Lord. Maybe you are widowed and you can thank the Lord for the memories you shared with the special person you had in your life. Be thankful for the times God gave you and thank God for placing that mate in your life.

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

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

Day 5

Read Isaiah 9:6

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

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

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

WEEK 3 ADAM AND EVE DISOBEY GOD ----- Dennis Watson

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

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 3:1-6

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

The real appeal seems to be, *"You will be like God."* Satan wanted the woman and Adam to begin to make their own determinations about what was right and wrong. All limitations were off and now the first couple could decide for themselves how to live and govern their own lives. The truth is, we are in no position to do such a thing. When people determine their own way, there is confusion and chaos. That is not freedom. Look what happened to them. They became insecure and self-consumed, aware that they were naked and they tried the great "cover-up." Of course, their coverings were insufficient. How long would the leaves cover them? Not long at all!

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 3:7-19

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

There was a new normal; but it was really a new "old" normal. Before they sinned against God, everything and every day was new and fresh. Now the new normal was characterized by oldness. Those things they enjoyed were now getting old. They lost the new life sensation. Before the fall, they were "bright eyed and bushy tailed." They were eager to learn and experience all God had made, but now there was something new characterized by oldness. Surely the sound of the Lord walking in the garden was not an unusual occurrence. Apparently, it was ongoing and regular. What had changed? Adam and the woman had changed. They felt something they had never experienced—guilt. Their guilt caused them to hide from God. Guilt causes some ugly stuff! We begin to hide. When we hide, we need things to cover us up, things to help us hide. This is costly. We buy clothes, cars, toys, jewels, and other expensive things that we think will fix the long-ing. Because of sin, living became a burden and a struggle. Sin and death entered the world by one man—Adam (see Romans 5:12).

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

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

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

God has made it possible for us to get out of Adam's family tree and into Jesus' family tree! You see, it is not just our sins, or sinning, that is our problem. It is our heritage. Our heritage in the family tree of Adam is sin and death. There is an inheritance that comes in the family tree of Jesus that brings forgiveness, adoption, and eternal life. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again. There must be a new birth that is from above. To be born again is to be born into the family of Jesus, the second Adam or the new prototype. Jesus is the firstborn among many to come after Him.

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

Day 4

Read Genesis 3:20-24

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

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

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

Another expression of His grace is the removal of Adam and Eve from the garden. That might sound odd, but God protected Adam and Eve and all generations that came from them. He removed them from the garden and guarded the tree of life so that they would not eat from it and live forever in their sin! Grace! Mercy! God did not destroy the tree of life. Access to the tree of life is once again possible as we read in Revelation 2:7 and 22:14.

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

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

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION

Read Isaiah 9:7

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

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

He will also reign with righteousness. Jesus is completely righteous. The best way to think of righteousness is that He is in complete harmony with His purpose. The kingdom of God, over which Jesus will be king, will be perfect in every way. It will be life as God intended. There will be no kind of unrighteous infringement. When Jesus rules and reigns, He will accomplish perfect peace. God will see that there will be no competition to His righteousness, peace, or justice.

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

WEEK 4 CAIN AND ABEL ----- Chris Watson

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 4:1-5

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

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 4:1-8

We know from yesterday that God looked favorably on Abel’s offering, but not on Cain’s (v.5). Cain didn’t do what was right by offering some of the fruits instead of the first fruits. At this point, the Lord could see that Cain was getting angry that the Lord accepted Abel’s offering, but not his. The Lord tells Cain, *“sin is*

crouching at your door: it desires to have you, you must master it.” In other words, you can repent (change your mind, turn around) and make it right or you can continue in sin and continue to become angry.

James 1:13-15 (NIV) says, *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”* What James is talking about here is the very thing that happened to Cain. Cain was enticed at first not to give his best offering to the Lord and he followed through with it, giving birth to sin. Instead of acknowledging his sin and turning around, he continued in his sin. Ultimately, sin gives birth to spiritual and physical death. Here, Cain’s sin even led to the physical death of Abel.

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Genesis 4:9-12

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

The scriptures show us that every person is a sinner; no one is innocent. Let’s imagine for a minute that in your lifetime you have sinned only once. The Bible tells us in **James 2:10 (NIV)**, *“whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it”*. Oh no... that means if we have lied only once, it is like we have broken every law. If we have cheated even once, we’ve broken every law. You get the idea. This is not an excuse to live a life of sin, because we love God and we want what He wants.

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

Day 4

Read Genesis 4:13-16

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

I am sure we have all been like Cain. We have sinned against God and done something that is terribly wrong. We are not necessarily sorry for what we have done, but that we got caught or that it caused us some serious consequences. The problem in this case is that soon we will be right back to doing what we have been doing. We enjoy the sin that we were in and will return to it, if we are not asking God to change our heart and wanting to please Him. We can't change ourselves, only God can.

Maybe God has brought you out of a life-controlling sin that threatened to overtake you. Thank Him for saving you and that you don't have to live there anymore. Maybe there is something right now that you are struggling with, a sin that is "eating your lunch". Recognize that it is against God, that it hurts God and it's not what He wants for your life. Tell Him that it is not what you

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

want and that you want Him to take the place of your sin and you want to find contentment in Him only. Jesus told His disciples, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”* **Luke 9:23-24 (NIV)** We must die to ourselves daily, hourly, every second of every minute. Ask God to help you die to yourself daily and recognize that your only hope is Him! When we find ourselves immersed in Him and His goodness, we don’t have time to be immersed in sin.

Day 5

Read Psalm 2:1-2

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

Look around the United States today and the whole world. Now look at Psalm 2:1, *“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain”*? Do we see this happening today? Of course, all around us, on the news and right in our backyards!

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

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

⁶ Break Our Hearts, Billy James Foote

WEEK 5 ENOCH REMOVED WITHOUT DEATH--Dennis Watson

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

Day 1 ENOCH'S TRANSFORMATION

Read Genesis 5:21-22

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

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

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Jude 1:14-15

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

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

Day 2 ENOCH TAKEN BY GOD

Read Genesis 5:21-25

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

In 2008 a movie entitled “Taken” came out. It was about a 17-year-old girl by the name of Kim who was a victim of human trafficking. She was the daughter of a retired CIA agent. Of course the movie was filled with suspense and intrigue. It was then followed by two sequels “Taken 2” and “Taken 3.” However, the original “Taken” was not a movie, it was a real life historical event. **Genesis 5:24** tells about this event, *“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”* This was not an event of human trafficking but of God rescuing one of His own before judgment came to the world. It is recorded in scripture that three-hundred years after his son Methuselah was born, God took Enoch. Unlike his ancestors who it was written of them, *“and he died”*; it was written of Enoch, *“and he was not, for God took him.”*

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

On a lighter note, J. Vernon McGee shares:

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read John 14:1-3 And 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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

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

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

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

Day 4 SO WHY DID GOD TAKE ENOCH?

Read Hebrews 11:5-6

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

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

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

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

Day 5 MORE ABOUT JESUS AND OUR SALVATION: ENOCH AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Read Genesis 5:1-22

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

What did Enoch know when he named his son Methuselah which means "*his death shall bring*"? Because the passage says that after he had Methuselah he "*walked with God three hundred*

years". However, I believe that Enoch did some dot connecting also. Chuck Missler explains that the Bible is an amazing book which goes way beyond just the words on the pages.

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

The Jewish rabbis have a quaint way of expressing this very idea: they say that they will not understand the Scriptures until the Messiah comes. But when He comes, He will not only interpret each of the passages for us, He will interpret the very words; He will even interpret the very letters themselves; in fact, He will even interpret the spaces between the letters!⁷

GENEALOGY OF GENESIS 5

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

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

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

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

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

⁷<https://www.khouse.org/articles/1996/44/#fn:8>

WEEK 6 GOD CHOOSES NOAH -----Dennis Watson

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

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 6:5-8

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

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

The only way people can be saved from God’s wrath is through God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9); but grace isn’t God’s reward for a good life: it’s God’s response to saving faith.”⁸ It is important not to read anything into the text. At this point, the focus is not on the character of Noah, but on the grace of God. God’s grace was freely given to Noah, his family, and all of us. God spared humanity, because of His grace given freely to Noah.

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

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

Day 2

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

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

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9)

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

God knows each of us just like He knew Noah. He knows that we are all fleshly, sinful, and weak. He is not looking for superhuman people. No, He is looking for people who will seek Him with their whole hearts devoted to Him. He will provide the grace necessary to do what needs to be done. Noah was not a super powerful man, but he had a mighty God.

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read 1 Peter 3:18-20

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

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

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

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

Day 4

Read Genesis 7:1-10

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

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

God is faithful! He makes promises and He keeps them. The seeming delay of the fulfillment of those promises sometimes makes us anxious. But remember, God is not slack concerning His promises and He is patient in not wanting anyone to miss out on His great salvation (see 2 Peter 3:9).

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

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION

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

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

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

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

This week we have seen God's judgment upon sin and, at the same time, His grace to deliver. Not only have we seen it in the event of the flood, but we have made the connection to Jesus. God has judged sin in the crucifixion of Jesus but has also provided Jesus to deliver us from sin and judgment. Give thanks to God for His goodness to judge and deliver.

WEEK 7 THE RAINBOW OF GOD'S PROMISES----Chris Watson

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 7:11-16

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

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 7:17-8:5

This past summer we had more rain than I can remember in many years. Usually we are in a drought, but this past summer many were wishing for the rain to stop. However, this was nothing compared to what Noah and his family experienced. Can you imagine rain for forty days and forty nights? After that, it took almost half a year for the water to go down.

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

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

We often find ourselves waiting on the Lord. Scripture tells us that our ways are not His ways nor our thoughts His thoughts. God's timing and answers are often different than ours. Whatever you may be going through today or working through, ask God to help you trust Him and put your faith in Him alone. May your prayer be, "God, I want to be on Your timetable not mine."

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Genesis 8:6-9:1

We see the Gospel all the way back in Genesis. Marty Machowski says, “The ark is a picture of the ways Jesus saves us from God’s punishment. Noah was safe from the flood in the ark and we are safe from God’s holy anger in Jesus.”⁹ It’s so neat to see the foreshadowing of Christ in the very first book of the Bible.

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

God had mercy on Noah just like Jesus has mercy on us. Noah chose to believe God and it changed the world, literally. Today, we need to ask the Lord to help us follow and believe Him the way Noah did, trusting Him completely. In the end, our only hope is to trust Jesus, the friend of sinners. If you are saved, ask the Lord daily to save you from yourself. Ask Him whom you might need to show the mercy of Jesus to, so they too, can live.

Day 4

Genesis 9:8-17

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

⁹Marty Machowski, Long Story Short (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010). 34.

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

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

Day 5

Read Psalm 2:10-12

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

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

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

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

WEEK 8 THE TOWER OF BABEL -----Dennis Watson

Adam and Eve sinned, but God clothed them and promised to send the world a Redeemer. Cain killed Abel, but God sent Seth to carry on the godly line. The Sethites intermarried with the godless Cainites, and God had to wipe the earth clean with a flood; but Noah and his family believed God's Word and were spared. After the Flood, the descendants of Noah's three sons repopulated the earth. But the new beginning with Noah eventually led to one of the most arrogant revolts against God recorded anywhere in Scripture.¹⁰

Day 1

Read Genesis 10:1-10

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

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

So seventy is important and may teach us several things theologically. Jehovah God is the Lord of the nations. He is the God of history and He is in control. All nations belong to the same human family. We are all of one blood. *"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."* **Acts 17:26 (NIV)**

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

¹⁰Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary - Pentateuch.

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

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

God is in control. History is His story. We have seen God giving direction to His creation. It is a wonderful thing to know that He is directing the affairs of history to accomplish His purposes.

Day 2

Read Genesis 11:1-9

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

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

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

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

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Revelation 7:9-10

What a contrast! There was a scattering at the Tower of Babel. In the passage in Revelation 7:9-10 there is a gathering. God scatters and God gathers. Man was created in the image of God and was made to worship God. When God’s people are disobedient the scattering takes place. In the end God will gather people from all nations, tribes, and languages, to worship Him. The Lamb in this passage is Jesus. He is the Lamb of God because He gave up His life on the cross as a sacrifice for sin.

Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. 2 For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD. Psalm 117:1-2 (NIV)

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

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

Jesus is the One who will bring all scattering to an end. Jesus is our salvation and the salvation of the whole world. Our hope is in

Him. We have been commissioned by Jesus to take the gospel message to the whole world.

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

Day 4

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

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

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

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7-8 (NIV)

We are blessed to have this vantage point! We can see the scattering at the Tower of Babel and the scattering of the people of God (Israel) on several occasions. We can be amazed at the gatherings through the centuries when God brought the people back to the Land of Promise. In recent history (1948), we see God bring Israel back to their land. Since we have this vantage point we can see how God scatters and gathers. God will break the barriers and in Jesus Christ bring people from all nations, tribes, and languages together united in Christ to sing His praises.

Give thanks and praise for the hope we have because of God's promise that He will bring us all together in Christ.

It is God's plan that all nations and all tribes praise Him in all languages.

Day 5 LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS AND/OR OUR SALVATION

Read Isaiah 1:18

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

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

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

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

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

WEEK 9 JOB'S REPENTANCE -----Dennis Watson

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

Day 1 GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN ALL THINGS

Read Job 1:1-12

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

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

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

We know that all of the angels, even Satan, report to God. They can do nothing without His permission, not even Satan. "*The*

Almighty" is one of the key names for God in the book of Job; it is used thirty-one times. No matter what happens, in this world and in our lives, God is on the throne and has everything under control. It is so encouraging to have this glimpse into God's throne room. He is in complete control of the evil one. God is sovereign!

Amazing enough, even Satan is there. He is there to give a report. Where did he come from? The writer says Satan tells God that he comes, *"From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."* Satan is not ruling the earth from hell. Hell will not be opened up until the Millennium (See Revelation 20:10.) Under God's authority he goes about on the earth and can even go into God's presence in heaven.

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

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

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

Day 2 GOD REALLY DOES MOVE IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Read Job 29:12-25

In these verses Job does a review of some of his good works. There is nothing wrong with good works. Jesus said that we are to let our light shine so that others will see our good works and glorify God. No, there is nothing wrong with good works unless we are trusting our good works to win us favor with God.

God loves you too much to leave you where you are. That is great news, however, He may allow some very uncomfortable times in order to move you forward. That seems contradictory in light of **Isaiah 26:3**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trust Him! Live from your relationship with Him!

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Luke 15:11-32

This biblical historical account is often known as the “Prodigal Son.” It would be better to call it the “Prodigal Sons.” A prodigal is someone who squanders wealth or opportunity. In this account we read about a father who had an older son and a younger son. He most likely had other sons, in between, but the focus is the father and these two sons. The younger son asked for his inheritance and then leaves and goes to a far country and wastes, or squanders, his inheritance on sinful, fleshly living. He then finds himself so broke that he is forced to feed pigs and becomes so hungry he wants to eat their food. He comes to his senses and returns home asking to be a servant but his father welcomed him home, not as a servant, but as the son he was. The older brother was jealous when his younger brother came home and says to his father, “after all this time I have been a faithful and good son and you have never thrown a party for me.” This son was a squanderer too. He squandered his privilege and position and thought he deserved more because of how he had acted. The point of the parable is the faithfulness of the father to receive his repentant son back.

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

What is the motivation of God’s grace? Is it behavior or moral goodness? Can a person earn God’s grace? Consider the opposite of a moralist. A moralist is someone who does good to earn special treatment from God. A hedonist is someone who believes that the pursuit of pleasure is the most important thing in life. The younger son was a hedonist. He just wanted to have a good time and pursue that in a way he determined—wild and riotous living. Now what do you think? That freezes most of us in our tracks. We are like Job and the older son and begin to think, “Well after all I have done shouldn’t God reward me with earthly blessings?” Dave Ramsey has made popular a response to the question, “How are you doing?” The popular and truthful response is, “Better than I deserve.” But do you really believe that? When you consider prostitutes, corrupt, and immoral people, don’t you just sometimes think you deserve better from God because you are a good person? The older son believed he deserved better than his hedonist brother. Job believed that he deserved better because he was a good person. Job’s friends believed that Job was going through tough times because he had done bad. They were all wrong. Satan was wrong. Job was wrong. His friends were wrong. The older prodigal son and the younger prodigal son were wrong. God was right and so was the father in the prodigal sons account. Of course, in the parable the father represented God. The father was waiting for his son to come to his senses and come home. God was waiting for Job to come to his senses and repent. They did and were restored. God’s desire is that all of us will come to our senses and turn to Him in faith entirely depending on His amazing grace. That grace is granted in Jesus Christ. Even Job knew there was a Redeemer.

For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth. Job 19:25

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

Day 4 GOD WILLS FOR YOU TO EXPERIENCE HIS BEST

Read Judges 3:6-11

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

We see this in **1 Corinthians 5:1-5** where we read about a man in the church involved in immorality. The people were to, *"deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."* The goal was for the man to repent and turn in obedience back to the Lord.

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

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

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

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

God has provided enough evidence in this life to convince anyone willing to believe, yet He has also left some ambiguity so as not to

compel the unwilling. In this way, God gives us the opportunity to either love Him or reject Him without violating our freedom. In fact, the purpose of this life is to make that choice freely and without coercion. For love, by definition, must be freely given. It cannot be coerced. That's why C. S. Lewis wrote, "the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of [God's] scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to over-ride a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo."¹²

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

Day 5 WHAT JOB CAME TO UNDERSTAND

Read Job 42

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

- Job came to realize who God really was.
- In all of this no one was right except God
 - o Job was wrong—lost in his own moralism
 - o Job's friends were wrong—they thought Job was suffering for some specific sin
 - o Satan was wrong because he thought he could destroy Job
 - o God allowed Job's things to be taken from him to wake him up

¹²Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Limbaugh)

- God was always in control
- God had (and has) Satan on a tight leash
- God gave Satan enough rope to hang himself
- God used all of this for Job's benefit
- God used this to bring Job back to Himself

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

I am not sure about you, but I have certainly questioned God on way too many occasions. I have even told Him how I thought He should do things. But the great truth that Job came to was that God was the One in control and the only One worthy or qualified to run the world. It was there that Job came to rest and to be still and know that HE (God) WAS GOD!

WEEK 10 ABRAM AND GOD'S PROMISE-----Chris Watson

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 11:27-32

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

Most likely, billions of people won't be reading about us in hundreds of years, although it is possible. Even if not, we need to ask God if we are being faithful with the time that we have. Whether or not we make the history books we need to ask God whether we are following Him and His footsteps. I imagine the folks many years before Abram had no idea the influence Abram would have and how God would use him. However, I can also imagine that many generations before Abram had an impact on his life. What about you? Are you being obedient to the Lord? Are you following God's ways like Abram? Ask the Lord to help you be a faithful follower. Who knows how it might impact others. May all who come behind us find us faithful.

Day 2

Read Genesis 12:1-9

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

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

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Galatians 3:26-29

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

The link between Abram and us is Jesus. “Jesus is the one who fulfilled the promise God gave to Abram to bless the nations.”¹³ All who have faith and have put their trust in Jesus are Abraham’s far off grandchildren. There are hundreds of years between Genesis and Galatians and Abraham was long gone when Galatians was written. However, we see the obedience of Abraham in the New Testament, including Hebrews 11.

What is the promise that we have today in Christ? It is Salvation. **Romans 5:1b-2a** reads, “*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*” We have peace with God, meaning that we have the gift of God and eternal life and heaven only through Jesus. We also see in **Romans 15:13**, “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*” We have the gift of an ongoing relationship with Christ; He walks and talks with us. It’s not just about going to heaven, although that will be great, it’s also walking in tune with Him while on this earth. Today, thank God for the promise of Salvation that comes only in Jesus. Ask Him to show us how to enjoy His presence daily, wanting to walk in step with Him.

Day 4

Read Genesis 12:10-20

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

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

¹³Marty Machowski, *Long Story Short* (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010). 44

Wait, this sounds familiar... it sounds like me. What about you? One moment we know God is in control, He is on our side, He will fight for us, and we have nothing to fear. The next moment we are clenching our hands, stressed out, drowning in worry, and even sometimes trying to “help God,” as in Abram’s case. Isn’t it good to know that God was still faithful to Abram, although he didn’t trust God at that moment, and that He is faithful to us in the same way today?

Day 5

Read Psalm 4

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

In Psalm 4:1 David calls out to our Creator, *“O my righteous God.”* Just what does it mean to be righteous? We could spend a lot of time here but basically it means to be without fault, blameless, and holy. Are you righteous? **Romans 3:10** says, *“There is no one righteous, not even one.”* Well, I guess that pretty much says it. Even the most holy person you know is not righteous. That’s why we need Jesus.

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

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

WEEK 11 ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK -----Dennis Watson

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

Day 1 MELCHIZEDEK: THE HISTORICAL SETTING

Read Genesis 14:1-17

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

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

After Lot and Abram parted ways, God renewed His promise to Abram (see Genesis 13:14-18). God would renew His promise for Abram, particularly after major life events. Have you ever needed that kind of encouragement after major life events? I know I have. I am thankful for God’s Word, His Spirit, and His church. He

very often gives me encouragement through one or all of these during those times. Abram did not have the advantage of the written Word of God, but the Lord would speak with Abram directly to keep him moving along.

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

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

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

Day 2 ABRAM, MELCHIZEDEK AND THE GOD-JOURNEY

Read Genesis 14:18-20

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

At this point in Genesis we have traced the lineage of all of the biblical characters who have appeared with the exception of Adam, because he was the first. Here we have this Priest and

King who suddenly appears on the scene without any connection to a family or lineage. The writer of Hebrews says that he was, *“without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.”*

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

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

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

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

Day 3 MELCHIZEDEK: CONNECTING TO JESUS

Read Hebrews 7:1-3

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

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

“I believe Melchizedek was a type given to us by Moses and guarded by God. He just walks out of nowhere and walks back into nowhere. He had no beginning or ending of days. The Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end. He is Alpha and Omega. He started it all, and He will end it all. He is the AMEN. He is the One who is the eternal God and as such has no beginning or ending. The writer is telling us that we have a priest like that -- He is after the order of Melchizedek.”¹⁴

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

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

¹⁴ Thru The Bible With J. Vernon McGee

Day 4 MELCHIZEDEK: CONNECTING TO JESUS (2)

Read Hebrews 7:23-28

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

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

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12

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

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

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

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

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

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

Day 5

Read Psalm 110

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

The words of this psalm are addressed to the psalmist's "LORD." The expressions are those of a prophet who had received a revelation from God. The king was also a priest, a fact that looks beyond the order of Aaron, which was not a royal order. This is one reason the psalm has been classified as a prophetic psalm. Jesus quoted [Psalm 110:1](#) in [Mark 12:36](#) (cf. [Matt. 22:44](#); [Luke 20:42](#)) to demonstrate that He the Messiah was to be David's Lord, not merely David's Descendant ([Mark 12:35, 37](#)). By Jesus' use of the passage one also notes that David wrote [Psalm 110](#), that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it refers to the Messiah. [Psalm 110:1](#) is also quoted in [Acts 2:34-35](#) and [Hebrews 1:13](#). Attempts to date [Psalm 110](#) in the Maccabean times, when some priests held temporal power, are therefore futile. Those leaders were priests first and also had civil power but in [Psalm 110](#) the King is a Priest.¹⁵

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

¹⁵The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

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

Verse 2 anticipates the rule of the Messiah.

Verse 3 anticipates large numbers coming to Christ.

Verse 4 anticipates the eternal priesthood of the Messiah.

Verse 5-6 anticipates the judgment of the Messiah.

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

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

WEEK 12 GOD MAKES A COVENANT WITH ABRAM-----

-----Dennis Watson

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

Day 1

Read Genesis 15:1-6

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

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

What was it that really connected Abram to God? Verse six says that *“Abram believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness.”* Righteousness was not following a law or rule. What made Abram right with God was the fact that he trusted. Putting faith in God and His Word is what makes a person right with God. To be righteous is to be in right standing with God.

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 15:7-21

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

There was a way in ancient time of confirming a covenant. Animals would be killed and cut in two pieces and the two individuals would walk between the dead animals. By doing this they were saying, "If I break my part of our bargain I should be killed just as this animal was killed." That made it a very serious promise. They confirmed the covenant with a vow that if they did not each live up to the agreement of the covenant the violating party would be put to death. However, in this case only God passed between the animals. He put Abram to sleep and by Himself confirmed the covenant. The covenant is one-sided because God knows man is not capable of keeping it. God took the initiative to make and confirm the covenant.

The whole idea of salvation is God's. He has taken the initiative to provide what we need. In this account we see that God made the

covenant, God established the terms and He confirmed the covenant by placing the whole thing on His own shoulders. Even through the many years of history God's people have been unfaithful, God has kept His promise.

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Romans 4:13-25

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

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

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

Day 4

Read Genesis 15:13-15

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

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

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

Day 5

Read Psalm 6:1-4

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

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

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

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

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

WEEK 13 GOD GIVES ABRAM A NEW NAME-----Chris Watson

What's in a name? A whole lot. In scripture we see many names of God, like Jehovah Jireh and the Great I Am. So a name can mean a great deal. This week we will see that God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which literally means "father of a multitude." Although there was a lot of time between the original promise and the renaming of Abraham, God would still follow through on His promise.

Day 1

Read Genesis 16

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

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

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

Day 2

Read Genesis 17:1-6

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

He doesn't give them what they deserve; rather, He keeps His promise. This is another one of those unconditional promises that we see in scripture, that regardless of what Abram and Sarai did, God was going to keep His promise. Remember, last week we saw that God was the only One to walk between the animals when the covenant was made with Abram. God, being all knowing, knew that Abram would fail. However, He kept His promise. Not only was He going to keep His promise, as we will see in a few chapters, but He expands it. Instead of making Abram the father of one great nation, God tells Abram he would be the father of many nations and that kings would come from Abram's children. To match this bigger promise, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, which means 'father of the multitude' or 'father of many'.¹⁶

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

Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

Read Genesis 17:6-8

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

¹⁶Marty Machowski, *Long Story Short* (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010).

mind around it. It will never end. Never! Forever and ever we will be with God, we will see those believers who have gone on before us, including the heroes of the Faith, and it will never end.

Most are familiar with **John 3:16** that reads, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whosoever believeth in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.”* It’s simply believing that we are sinners, knowing there is nothing we can do to fix it and trusting in what Jesus did on our behalf. What an incredible love.

Abraham lived and died before Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection. However, he believed God, he put his hope in Him, and trusted His Words and promises. Machowski says, “When Abraham trusted in God’s plan he trusted in Jesus.”¹⁷ As you go throughout your day today thank God for salvation through Jesus; be thankful for everlasting life with Him. Also, ask Him to help you trust Him today, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Day 4

Read Genesis 17:9-27

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

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

This covenant that was made with Abraham was carried out through a sign (v11) and that sign was circumcision, which we

¹⁷Marty Machowski, Long Story Short (North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2010).

will see in other parts of the Old Testament and even in the New. Even before Sarah gave birth Abraham entered into the covenant and was trusting God to do what He said. What faith. This was something only God could do and Abraham was fully trusting Him in it and following the sign of the covenant.

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

Day 5

Read Psalm 7:6-11

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

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

Salvation is basic and easy to understand, yet it's so complex. All sixty-six books of God's Word have salvation woven through them. Just think of salvation as an exchange. It's an exchange from evil to God's goodness, sin to perfection, bondage to freedom, death to life, and hell to heaven. Wow! How incredible! We can't earn salvation; we have no righteousness on our own. God knows my heart, thoughts, and attitudes, and He is still working on me. However, when He looks at me He doesn't see my sin, He sees His Son's blood that covers my sin. This is the only hope that I have, and it is the only hope that you have.

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

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