

The Road to Redemption

Part 1 (Days 1-20)



Welcome to the 'Road to Redemption' devotional study for the season of Lent 2023. Page one of the study includes a timeline for you to see the plan for the first 20 days, with the dates on which they fall. Sundays are set aside for rest and reflection, and a suggestion is to also meet up with others to share fellowship and talk about what you have been learning. You can use the separate 'Road to Redemption Trail' to place a sticker marking your progress each day if you like.

Each day of the journey is made up of two sections - you are welcome to only do the 'Key Reading' section, with its questions and the 'prayer starter', which should only take around 15 minutes. If you would like to study the topic a little more, then there is a 'Going Deeper' section also provided each day. You could also save these up to study with a homegroup, or go on a second 40 day journey after you complete this one focussing on the 'Going Deeper' sections.

All Bible references not listed in the headings are found in the questions themselves, so you don't need to go on too much of a hunt. The version used is the New Living Translation, but any standard translation will be perfect! For the children, the separate children's study is available.

The Road to Redemption devotional study is based on a literal interpretation of scripture, as well as the understanding that much of the Bible uses figurative language to explain its deep truths. Its focus is to discover how the Old Testament points to Jesus and the cross, from the very first page of Genesis! May you be inspired and encouraged as you dedicate this season to studying God's word!

1	Introduction & the Need for Redemption	Ash Wednesday Feb 22	The Purpose of this Journey - The Road to Emmaus
2		Feb 23	Creation - Jesus the Creator of All Things
3		Feb 24	The Fall of Man - The Need for Redemption
4		Feb 25	Adam a 'Type' of Christ
		FIRST SUNDAY Feb 26	
5	The promised 'seed' & the Necessity of Faith	Feb 27	Cain and Abel - the Necessity of Faith
6		Feb 28	The Flood - the Judgement of God
7		Mar 1	Noah's Ark - the Way of Salvation
8		Mar 2	Abraham - Father of Faith
9		Mar 3	The Covenant of Circumcision - A Change of Heart
10		Mar 4	Isaac - The Sacrifice of the Son
		SECOND SUNDAY Mar 5	
11	Children & Slaves, Reconciliation	Mar 6	Jacob and Esau - The Right to be God's child
12		Mar 7	Jacob's Ladder - Jesus the Way between God and Man
13		Mar 8	Joseph - Son, Slave, Saviour
14		Mar 9	Joseph - The Reconciler
15		Mar 10	Slavery in Egypt - The Need to be Rescued
16		Mar 11	The Burning Bush - I AM
		THIRD SUNDAY Mar 12	
17	Rescue & New Life	Mar 13	The Plagues of Egypt - The Wrath of God
18		Mar 14	The Passover Lamb - Jesus the Lamb of God
19		Mar 15	The Red Sea Crossing - Baptism
20		Mar 16	Manna - Jesus the True Bread from Heaven

Day One - The Purpose of this Journey - The Road to Emmaus

Before we set out on a journey, we consider where we are going, and why. Perhaps we are seeking to explore a new place, or maybe we have a special family gathering to attend or a task to fulfil as part of our work. Whatever the case, there is a reason for the journey and that is also true of this forty day devotional study; 'The Road to Redemption'. The study focuses on Old Testament scripture beginning with creation in the book of Genesis and moving forward through history towards the cross. The passages of scripture have been selected for a specific purpose in mind, the same purpose which Jesus himself spoke of when he referred to the 'writings of Moses and the prophets.' As you read the passages of scripture below, you will discover the purpose for the journey you are embarking upon today.

NB: Each day upon the journey, you have the choice of only studying the 'Key Reading' passages, or 'Going Deeper' with an additional section on the same topic. Either way, read the Bible passages listed in the heading of that section before you start answering the questions.

Key Reading: Luke 24:13-49

The events described in this passage occurred on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus, as Jesus walked with two followers of his who were upset and confused by the death and burial of the man they had believed was Israel's long-awaited Messiah. They knew that the tomb had been discovered empty, but not that the person who walked and talked with them was Jesus. They did not understand what He had accomplished on the cross, only that the death of Jesus did not fit their expectation of the triumphant, conquering hero Messiah who would save them from the Romans. They had questions but no answers. That was about to change.

Questions:

1. Referring to verses 25-27, explain why Jesus called the two men foolish. What did he go on to explain, and what did he use to do so?
2. How did the feelings of the two men change as Jesus explained the scriptures to them, and they understood who he was?
3. In verses 44-48, Jesus again refers to scripture, saying that specific things were written about Him by Moses, the prophets and in Psalms that had to be fulfilled. What things did Jesus mention that had been written in ancient scripture for him to fulfil?
4. The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses. Which books are these? (NB: They form the Jewish 'Torah'.) What well-known Bible stories found in these books can you recall? Some of them will, most likely, be studied during the Road to Redemption but perhaps you will view them through a fresh lens, one of looking towards Jesus and the cross.

Prayer Starter:

It is the hope of the author of this study that, like the men on the road to Emmaus, you will find your own faith and passion for Christ grow as you come to a greater understanding of how the scriptures point to Jesus, our redeemer. (The concept of 'redemption' will be explained over the next three days of the study.) Pray for your own 'Emmaus' experience, where you learn new truths of scripture and encounter Jesus in a personal way. Pray that you, like the two followers of Jesus, have opportunities to share this joy and knowledge with others.

Going Deeper: John 5:16-47

Another time when Jesus affirmed that scripture and the 'writings of Moses' pointed to him, was after the Jewish leaders challenged him because he had healed a man on the Sabbath.

Questions

1. In verses 16-18, the Pharisees were not only angry at Jesus, but wanted to kill him. What was the reason for this?
2. Jesus gives a number of 'witnesses' which offered proof of who he truly was. What/who are these witnesses (v. 31-40)
3. Why do you think the Pharisees were so certain that it was impossible for Jesus to be the promised Messiah?
4. The Pharisees were dedicated studiers of scripture, experts in the law as written by Moses, yet what crucial understanding had they missed? (v.39-40)
5. Who does Jesus say will accuse the Pharisees for not believing him? Do you know any examples that Jesus might be referring to when he says that this person 'wrote about him'? (5:46-47)
6. How do you feel about studying Old Testament scripture to specifically look for the promised saviour, Jesus Christ, and his work on the cross? Are you excited, dubious, intrigued, or ... ?



Day 2 - Creation - Jesus the Creator of All Things

The world we live in is a wondrous place, full of life and colour. The details found in every aspect, from the simplest plant cell to the astounding human brain, from the workings beneath our feet to the sun we spin around all show the fingerprint of a purposeful Creator. Scripture tells us that that creator is God, and also that God is 'three in one', the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ... but where is the Son in the Genesis account of creation?

The first verses of Genesis state, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. The Earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness.' (Genesis 1:1-4). The account continues with God speaking into existence sky, land, seas, plants, sun (and moon) and creatures before, ultimately, creating humans. 'God' and 'Spirit' are specifically mentioned, but how would you explain, if someone asked, where the Son was in this account? Does the act of creation point to Jesus, or not?

NB: the name 'Jesus' (from the Hebrew 'Yeshua') was only given to God's Son when He was born into the human world. However, to avoid confusion, we will often refer to Him by that name throughout the entire Road to Redemption journey.

Key Reading: John 1:1-18

Questions

1. In this passage, John refers to Jesus as the 'Word'. Looking specifically at John 1:1-3, what does John tell us about Jesus' presence and involvement in creation? Why do you think John uses 'word' (logos) as a title for Jesus?
2. In verses 4-9, John calls Jesus the 'true light'. Compare these verses with the light and darkness mentioned in Genesis 1:1-4 (above). Do you think John purposely chose to refer to the light and darkness mentioned in creation when he wrote this introduction to his gospel? If so, why do you think he might have done this?
3. In verse 10, John declares firmly what truth about Jesus and Creation?

4. In verse 18, we are told that no one has ever seen God but that Jesus, who is Himself God, has done what for us? How has He done this?

5. If you have time, continue with the 'Going Deeper' section to find out more about how vital Jesus, the Son of God is in creation.

Prayer Starter

Take some time to contemplate how the same Jesus, through whom God created the world and all that is in it, and who 'holds creation together' is the one who humbled himself to become human and die for the sake of those He created. Respond in prayer.

Going Deeper: Colossians 1:15-20

Questions

1. What additional insight to Jesus' role in creation does Paul provide here in his letter to the Colossian church?

2. In verse 15, Paul says that Jesus is the 'visible image of the invisible God.' What does this mean?

3. Have you ever wondered why God created the world, and people, at all? In verse 16, Paul writes that everything was created 'through' Jesus and 'for' him. What does this verse suggest the purpose of creation is? What does that mean for your own life?

4. What does verse 19 mean when it says, 'God in all His fullness, was pleased to live in Christ.' What is the reason given in verse 20 for Him doing this? (NB: We will learn about reconciliation on Day 14)

5. Has your understanding of God's Son and Creation grown through this study? If you, like John and Paul, were to try and explain 'where the Son is' in Creation, but you only were allowed one sentence to do it in, what would you say?

NB: if you are curious about the 'unseen things' mentioned in v.16, they are also mentioned in Colossians 2:15



Day 3 - The Fall of Man - The Need for Redemption

Can you think of some examples of how we use the word 'redeem' or 'redemption' in everyday life? Pause now while you think, before you continue reading.

I have heard the word used when a popular sports person has had a terrible game, but then scores a goal in the last minute to pull off a victory. The commentator might say, 'Smith redeemed himself there'. Another use of the word is when a person reoffends so often that their community decides the person is 'beyond redemption' and gives up trying to help them. In terms of money you might 'redeem' a coupon or raffle ticket by handing it in to claim your discount or prize.

Think about your examples (or these ones provided for you) and see if you can find a common theme of 'buying back' and 'setting free', whether it is someone's reputation/honour, taking back some of your money by using a coupon, or 'setting free' your prize by handing over your ticket in its place.

During The Road to Redemption, we think of redemption as the 'deliverance from slavery' through the 'payment of a price' by a redeemer. Today we study what happened to put mankind in the position of needing to be redeemed (set free by paying a price.)

Key Reading: Genesis 3:1-24

Here are a few verses from Genesis Chapter 2 which help paint the picture of the paradise that Eden was before what became known as 'the Fall of Man':

'Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man He had made. The Lord God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground - trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:8-9)

But the Lord God warned [the man], "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden - except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

Questions

1. What clues are there in the verse from Genesis 2, and the passage from Genesis 3 as to what life was like in the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve before they disobeyed God?
2. Who is the 'serpent' in verse 2? (NB: there are several different opinions on the actual serpent, but the force within or behind the serpent is generally agreed on. Look at Luke 10:18-20 if you'd like some more information for this question.)
3. In Genesis 3: 3-6 What did Adam and Eve do that was an act of disobedience? What was the consequence that God had warned would happen if they disobeyed his command? (Genesis 2:16-17 above)
4. How did their disobedience change Adam and Eve's relationship with God, with creation and with each other? (Genesis 3:7-22)
5. It can be easy to glance through the 'punishments' handed out to the serpent, to Eve and to Adam, without realising the incredible promise of hope God gave at the very moment when Adam and Eve had 'fallen' away from Him. Can you find, in the curse God gave the serpent, a promise so momentous that scholars have given it its own special name ... the 'proto-evangelium' or 'first gospel'?
6. The verse refers specifically to one of Eve's male offspring/seeds, who will one day 'strike the serpent's head' while he, himself will be bruised. Who and what do you think this refers to?
7. The incredible prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is the only ray of light in the terrible gloom. Adam and Eve are sent away from the garden, doomed now to die physically and experiencing the spiritual death of separation from God. All their hope is in the promised 'seed' who will one day make a way back for them (and all people.) Some scholars think there is another hint about how mankind would be 'redeemed' in Genesis 3:21. Can you work out what they think might be significant in that verse?

Prayer Starter

The consequences of Adam and Eve's sin included guilt (they were ashamed of their nakedness and hid from God), condemnation (they received penalties of pain, hardship and death) and separation (both from the garden and also from God.) Which of those words (guilt, condemnation and separation) resonate most deeply with you today? Speak to God about it, bringing to Him your own disobedience if need be, and expressing your thankfulness that, even as man 'fell' away from God in disobedience, He was preparing a way for us to return.

Going Deeper: Ephesians 2:1-5

The sin nature of mankind soon spread into every aspect of life. In fact, within ten generations, people were so entirely wicked that God was sorry He had ever made them (we will study this in Day 6 - The Flood). In disobeying God, Adam lost the righteousness which he had received by 'being made in God's image'. This meant that Adam had been considered blameless, without wrongdoing. However, from the moment of the original sin, throughout all people in all generations thereafter, people were born *without* righteousness. Instead, we are *born sinners* and would be lost, if God did not intervene and save us (Isaiah 53:6 'All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.')

Paul wrote to the Romans, 'When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned (Romans 5:12) and, 'For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.' (Romans 6: 23)

Questions

1. Why do you think God didn't simply make it impossible for Adam and Eve to reach the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the first place? Do you think God knew that they would disobey Him? If so, why did He allow it to happen?

2. There are two aspects of death that came as a consequence of the 'Fall of Man.' One is the physical death of our bodies, the other is spiritual death, the separation of ourselves from God. What does spiritual death look like according to Ephesians 2:1-3?

3. What is the good news for every 'born sinner'? (v.4-5) What does it mean that it is by God's 'grace' that we are saved?

4. How does the passage from Ephesians reflect the conflict between people and Satan that began in the Garden of Eden?

5. Creation and the 'Fall of Man' are Bible stories which can be the subject of a lot of controversy, as people wonder if they really happened or if they are only allegories (instructional stories, not truth.) What evidence is there in the words Jesus spoke in Mark 13:19 and Matthew 19:4-6 that he supported the Genesis account of creation? ('For there will be greater anguish in those days than at any time since God created the world. And it will never be so great again;' and "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'" 5 And he said, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. 6 Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.")



Day 4 - Adam a 'Type' of Christ

In today's study we introduce an important Biblical concept, called the 'type'. This phrase means 'something or someone that God has purposely placed into scripture to point forwards to when the promised seed would be revealed, and mankind 'redeemed'.' Types are a shadow cast across the Old Testament by the truth that is fully present in the New Testament. That truth is Jesus.

Some other words for 'type' are 'symbol', 'figure', 'pattern'; 'foreshadowing', 'image' and 'model'. Biblical types can be a character such as Moses, actions and events, objects, laws and rituals all of which may hold a far deeper meaning than a quick glance over them will reveal. The journey on the Road to Redemption will feature some of these 'types' as we discover how so much of the Old Testament points towards Jesus Christ, and what he would do for mankind.

Is this idea of 'types' new to you, or can you already list a number of Biblical types you are aware of? There are many more potential 'types' than we will be able to study. We will focus on the ones that are clearly referred to in the New Testament, so that the use of the 'type' as a symbol of Christ or the cross is verified by Jesus, or by the writers of the New Testament, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.

Our key reading today is a reassurance that the study of types is, indeed, legitimate because Paul himself called Adam a 'type' of Christ (as in a foreshadowing or symbol.) You will see that types can sometimes point to Jesus by providing a contrast to him because what Jesus has done for us becomes even more significant when compared to what Adam brought us.

Key Reading: Romans 5:12-21

Questions

1. In which verse does Paul specifically call Adam a 'type' or 'symbol' of Christ, who was yet to come? (NB: make certain that you understand Adam is not another Messiah, for there is only one. That is not what 'type' means in this use of the word. Adam is a signpost, pointing to Christ, that is all.)
2. Obviously, Adam is a very dim shadow compared to the glory of Jesus. This is common of all types; they are a hint, a whisper, a suggestion of what is to come so that when it does come, it is recognised and understood. Bearing this in mind, In what ways are Adam and Jesus similar?
3. Considering verses 15-19, how does Paul describe the 'great difference' between Adam and Christ?
4. Every person in the world is living with the consequences of Adam's actions, as all born after him are born with a sin nature. What must we do to move from living under the consequences of sin (Adam) to living in the righteousness of Christ? (v.17)
5. Righteousness is something we will come across again and again on the Road to Redemption. What does Deuteronomy 32:4 tell us about God and His ways? ('He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!')
6. This is the standard that we are compared to, so it is no wonder that we all 'fall short of the glory of God.' Yet, many people in the Bible are described as 'righteous' even before Jesus died for the sin of the world and they certainly weren't 'perfect.' How do you think these Old Testament men and women were counted as righteous in God's eyes? We will learn more about this in the days to come!

Prayer Starter

The passage from Romans says that God's wonderful *grace* and his *gift of righteousness* mean that all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death. Have you 'received' this gift through your faith in Jesus, and his death for you on the cross? If so, when did it happen in your life? Who helped you to find the truth and believe? Thank God for your salvation and all who helped you to find your way to relationship with Him. If you have not yet come to a place of belief and receiving of this gift, ask God to give you understanding and faith. Also, reach out and ask someone to help you along the way! Remember, 'But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.' John 1:12.

Going Deeper: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 42-49

Questions

1. Here we see Paul once again compare and contrast Adam and Christ, in particular with reference to the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. Go through the two passages from 1 Corinthians 15 and make a list of the comparisons Paul draws between Adam and Jesus.
2. How do verses 24-26 show the ultimate fulfilment of the prophecy that the promised seed would 'crush' the serpent's head?
3. Paul called Jesus the 'first fruits' (or 'first of a great harvest') because he was first of many who, in Him, will be raised to eternal life. Why do you think Paul also refers to Jesus as the 'last Adam'?
4. In some Bible translations, Verse 49 says, 'And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.' Other translations say simply, 'Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.' Explain what it might be like to 'bear the image' or to be 'like' the 'heavenly man' someday (v.42-44)
5. Have you gained a greater understanding or appreciation of the way in which Adam points forward in history towards Jesus? Does it alter in any way your feelings or perception about Adam, Eve and the 'Fall'? Or about what Jesus has done for you and all who believe?



Day 5 - The Necessity of Faith - Cain and Abel

After they had sinned, Adam and Eve felt ashamed and tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Their efforts were a failure, so God clothed them with animal skins (Genesis 3:21.) Scholars debate whether or not God actually killed an animal in order to clothe Adam and Eve, but it is certainly a possibility. If it was what occurred, can you imagine how it might have affected Adam and Eve who, until that point, had been living in the perfection of creation? Now, death in all its ugliness had arrived, and it would not stop there. Their own son would soon be killed - at the hand of his brother, no less.

If God did kill an animal as the result of Adam and Eve's sin, some scholars suggest that it was more than just for clothing. Rather, God was instituting the idea of atonement - where a perfect and innocent sacrifice needed to be made to take the place of the sinner who had brought upon themselves the consequence of death (both physical and spiritual.) Those scholars believe that God explained to Adam and Eve that this shedding of blood was done in faith, looking ahead to the permanent restoration of mankind that would one day be accomplished by the promised 'seed'. Certainly, when Noah entered the ark, God commanded him to take seven pairs of each type of 'clean' animal, because they were to be used for offerings. Noah knew how to build an altar and make such an offering. Was it possible that Abel also knew this and so his offering involved a slain animal, and therefore was one of faith looking ahead to the future redeemer who would pay the price for all sin? If so, does that explain the acceptability of his offering? He had bought the correct one, as ordained by God?

We do not know the answer to any of this for sure, and scholars are likely to argue about it until the end of time because there is not enough clear scripture to make more than an educated guess one way or the other but scripture IS clear on one point - that Abel brought his offering *by faith* and Cain did not. What that means is something we will study today.

Key Reading: Genesis 4:1-12; Hebrews 11:1-4,13

Questions

1. Looking at the reading from Genesis 4, think of some reasons why Cain's offering (gift) may have been rejected by God, but Abel's offering was accepted.
2. Do you think there was spiritual significance to Abel's offering being 'firstborn lambs' or was it purely Abel the man, rather than the type of offering, which was deemed acceptable?
3. Using Hebrews 11:1-4, and 11:13 see if you can determine why Abel is held up as one of the great examples of faith in scripture.
4. Abel is called a 'righteous man' (as in, 'right' in God's eyes, blameless) yet we know that all mankind, because of Adam, are inherently sinful and not righteous. According to Paul in Romans 3: 21-24, how is righteousness given to people? ('But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.) How then could Abel, who was born long before Jesus, acquire his 'righteousness'? (see 'Going Deeper' for more study into this question.)
5. What happened after God rejected Cain's offering? What does that suggest about the type of man Cain was? Do you think this would have influenced the offering he brought?

Prayer Starter

Sometimes we cannot find out the definite answer to a Biblical question because there simply isn't enough detail in the text to provide certainty for one view over another. Here is a list of four suggested reasons given by scholars as to why Cain's offering was not accepted. Consider each prayerfully to see (whether or not you agree it is the truth of the matter) how it might apply to your own life, and ask God to forgive you for where your attitude is that of Cain's, rather than the righteousness conferred by faith shown by Abel.

1. God is Sovereign - He is able to choose as He wills, and it is not our place to question why He accepted one offering over the other. Stated simply, God is God and human minds cannot understand Him, the end! Pray about the times you find it difficult to accept the sovereignty of God.
2. The quality of the offering - Cain brought to God a selection of crops, but the scripture infers that Abel brought his first and best. What are the offerings that you bring to God - your service, your time, your money, your worship? Are they your best?
3. Cain's attitude. God could see that Cain's heart was not pure. His motive in making the offering was simply to fulfil an expectation; he did it grudgingly rather than worshipfully. How pure is your heart - is there any ill-feeling or reluctance hidden within it?
4. Non-blood sacrifice - Cain did not come to God with the acceptable sacrifice of shed blood, something that God may have explained/instituted to his parents (Adam and Eve) when He killed the animals to clothe their nakedness (thus pointing ahead to a future sacrifice of the Son of God.) Abel, however, acted obediently to bring a blood sacrifice as an offering. He understood that his hope was in the coming redeemer. Where is your hope? Are you trying to be righteous by your works, rather than by your faith in Jesus?

Going Deeper: Hebrews 11:1-40, Romans 3:21-26

In this deeper look at the story of Cain and Abel, we continue to grapple with trying to understand what exactly the faith of Abel was, that caused him to bring the acceptable sacrifice and proved that he was righteous. Was he looking forward to the future redeemer, or simply recognising that God was worthy of the best offering he could bring? Are all those spoken of as righteous in the Old Testament made so by their belief in the coming offspring of Eve who would buy back mankind from their fallen state? Or were they simply trusting God to fulfil what He promised in the smaller situation they were in?

Questions

1. Consider the statement; 'All are saved by Jesus, some by looking forward in time to His arrival, and some by looking back in history to His death on the cross'. Do you believe this statement is true? If so, does it then follow that those with faith in the Old Testament were considered righteous because they were looking forward (though dimly as they did not know exactly who he would be) to this future redeemer? Read through some (or all) of the examples of faith listed in Hebrews chapter 11, reminding yourself of what each character did 'by faith.'
2. Consider the difference between the faith (and mighty works) of these Old Testament heroes earning them a 'good reputation' and the fact they died without seeing all the promises that God had given them fulfilled. Are there two types of faith mentioned or are they one and the same? Consider Hebrews 11:26 and 11:39-40 in your answer.
6. Whatever the reason for God's rejection of Cain's offering, the verses in Hebrews show that Abel brought his offering *by faith*. Have you come any closer to deciding what that means? Faith to wish to honour God? Faith that he could give the first and best of his flock and trust God to bless him? Faith that the promised seed would save him one day? Something else? Whatever you have decided as the most likely answer, it seems that Cain did not bring his offering 'by faith' and therefore the work of his hands was rejected. How is the story of Cain and Abel's offerings relatable to Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) which says, 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.'
7. Read Romans 3:21-26 to further confirm, or challenge, your understanding of the role of faith in the Old Testament.



Day 6 - The Flood - The Judgement of God

We will be looking at the story of Noah over two days of the Road to Redemption journey. Today, we look at the aspect of God's judgement coming upon all people in the world, and tomorrow we will look at God's provided salvation for all those who accept it with faith. When we speak of 'judgement' in this study, it is to do with global judgement, with the flood providing a warning that one day *all people* will be judged to decide their eternal fate. This day is called the 'Day of Judgement' in scripture and what happens to each person on it depends upon whether they have received, by faith, the righteousness of Jesus in place of their own sinfulness.

Before we look at the world as it was when God commanded Noah to build the ark, read the following verses from John 3:16-18 and use them as your secure ground as we proceed to grapple with the thought of a flood which purposely destroyed all the people in the world, except for one man and his immediate family.

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. "There is no judgement against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18)

Key Reading: Genesis 6:5-22, Matthew 24:36-42

Questions

1. What had changed since the Garden of Eden? Describe what people were like at the time God decided to 'wipe the human race from the face of the earth.' (Genesis 6:5-7, 11-13)
2. How was Noah different from the other people on earth? (Genesis 6:8-9)
3. Jesus references 'Noah's day' in Matthew 24:36-42 when he speaks of his 'second coming'. In what way will life in Noah's time immediately before the flood be the same as life on Earth immediately preceding Jesus' second coming?
4. What do you think it means to 'keep watch'? (Matthew 24:42.) Look at the 'Going Deeper' section if you would like to study this a little more.
5. In 2 Peter 2:5, we are told, 'And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and the seven others in his family. Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgement. So God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood.' Other versions say that 'Noah was a preacher of righteousness.' If Noah was warning others of the coming devastation, do you think that means other people had the chance to escape if they had believed his warning?
6. According to 2 Peter 3: 9-10, we are told that the day of the Lord will come 'as unexpectedly as a thief.' What do these verses tell us the desire of God is:(that man be saved or perish?); 'The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgement.'

NB: We all come under judgement as, through our sinfulness, we break the perfect moral standard of our holy and sinless God. It is only by faith in Jesus that our sinfulness is moved from us and replaced by his righteousness. The ultimate result of the Day of Judgement is that believers are brought into a place even more wonderful than the Garden of Eden, a place without death, where a close relationship with God is restored. That is the ultimate goal of redemption and it is only possible by faith in Jesus.

Prayer Starter

Spend some time prayerfully considering what you are trusting in to determine your fate on the Day of Judgement. Is it in your good deeds, such as going to church, being 'better' than others (not committing any crime, not swearing, supporting charity) or is it because you have faith in Jesus' redemptive work on the cross? There is only one way to be saved, but for the believer, their place in heaven is assured. Pray for those on your heart who you hope will come to this belief, that they also will be saved. Ask God to help you be a 'preacher of righteousness' like Noah.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 9:27-28, Matthew 24:1-42

Questions

1. What was the reason given in Genesis 6:5-6 and 11-13 that made God desire to destroy all living things? What does this tell you about the character of God and how He feels about sin?
2. How does the worldwide flood fit with the picture of a 'loving God'? Are you tempted to explain it away as a localised flood, or something not 'as bad as it sounds'? Check back to Genesis 7:19 for the Bible's perspective on this.
3. Jesus himself referred to the flood when he said, 'People didn't realise what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes (Matthew 24:39.) What does the flood story tell us about the need to be prepared for death? Do you live with a daily expectation of a sudden return of Christ?
4. Looking throughout the chapter of Matthew 24, what are some of the signs that Jesus told the disciples would 'signal his return and the end of the world?'
5. What specific warnings did Jesus give to the disciples that they should be vigilant to guard against? What will it be like when the Son of Man does come? How can we be 'ready all the time'?
6. . As the flip side to the coin of judgement, how does the story of the flood demonstrate God's great mercy and how does it point directly ahead in time to the cross? We will consider this more tomorrow, but read these verses to help you with this question; Hebrews 9:27-28; 'And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgement, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.'

(NB: The Road to Redemption does not study the secondary judgement, which is where those saved believers then provide an account of their works they have done in order to receive their reward for it. We are considering only the first judgement that determines where a person will spend eternity.)



Day 7 - The Way of Salvation - Noah's Ark

Noah's Ark is one of the iconic stories of the Bible, well-known even beyond those of faith. You will find Noah's ark toys, decorations and clothing lines in kids' shops everywhere. What do you think it is about this story which has captured the imagination of people everywhere? How is it possible they have so readily glossed over the grievous truth of the flood wiping out all living things in the world, to instead focus solely on cute, fluffy animals and rainbows? What answers do you think you would get if you asked ten random people on the street what they believed about Noah's ark? What do *you* believe the truth and the message of the ark is?

Before we begin, it is important to understand what we speak of when we use the word 'salvation'. Salvation means, 'by faith, to be delivered from eternal death which is the result of sin' or, more specifically, the 'saving of human beings from death and separation from God by Christ's death and resurrection.'

Key Reading: Genesis chapter 7, Genesis 8:13-22

God gave Noah specific instructions for how to build the ark, which was to be over 130 metres long and house pairs of all the 'kinds' of animals on the Earth. Once the doors were shut, the water began to fall from the sky and come up from the depths of the earth to cover all of the land (past the top of the highest mountains.) The rains lasted 40 days, and the floodwaters 150 days. All in all, Noah's family and the creatures were inside the ark for an entire year. The scepticism we might hear these days from people regarding their impression of Noah's ark, is likely nothing compared to how crazy an idea it seemed to the people of Noah's day - at least, before the rain began to fall.

Questions

1. In Genesis 7: 1-16, we read how at last the ark was completed and it was time to board. Aside from Noah, his wife, their three sons and three daughters-in-law, what was on the ark? Why were there different numbers of pairs of animals mentioned?
2. Do you think the mention of 'clean' animals means that Noah was already familiar with the concept of animal sacrifice? Use Genesis 8:20 to help with this answer. Was this something new, or something already instituted prior to the flood?
3. Who was in charge of the door of the ark? (Look at who closed the door, and then at what happened before the family and animals exited.) What did Noah wait for before leaving? Why is the control of the door significant?
4. How is the ark a symbol that points to Jesus? Read this verse and ponder how it relates to the ark; 'The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.' (1 Corinthians 1:18)
5. When did the choice of whether or not to enter the ark have to be made? Before or after the floods began? When does our choice for faith in Jesus to save us have to be made? Before or after our death (or the sudden return of Jesus, should it happen in our lifetime?)
6. There was only one way to enter the ark, through the door. Jesus says, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6) and 'Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.' (John 10:9). What is your view on the way to be saved for eternal life? Are you certain that Jesus is the only way, or do you hold to other, broader ideas of salvation. Consider these against what Jesus said, and in view of the message of the ark.

Prayer Starter

The overarching message of Noah's Ark is that there IS a way for people to be saved. A hateful, vindictive God would never provide a way of salvation, one which can so readily be accepted by all who come to Him with faith. God IS a loving God and, according to Romans 10:9, 'If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' Read those last four words again - you WILL be saved, not 'may' or 'might' ... it is guaranteed, bought by the blood of Jesus. Respond in prayer to this truth - whether in gratitude, in need for yourself or in prayer for others (or all three.)

Going Deeper: Genesis 8:20-22, Genesis 9:1-17

Questions

1. According to Hebrews 11:7, 'By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became

an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.' What do you think it means that Noah became an 'heir of righteousness'?

2. Once the land was dry enough for Noah and his family to leave the ark, what was the first action Noah took? What was God's response? (Genesis 8:20-22)

3. God gives Noah new instructions regarding man and animals, and regarding what is to happen if a wild animal or human 'takes the life' of another human. What does God require as punishment for murder and, bearing in mind His reasons for destroying all life with the flood, why do you think He said this?

4. In Genesis 9:1-17 God enters into a covenant, not only with Noah, but with all the people of Earth from that point on. What is a covenant, and what does God promise in this covenant? What is the sign of the covenant? What is the message of this sign?

5. Once more grounding ourselves in the ark being a symbol of salvation, consider the difference between the ark and the rainbow. Which of those requires action on the part of a person - an individual choice they must make, in faith? What is the message of the rainbow to all people, for all time? What does God say the rainbow will remind Him about the covenant?

6. Can you think of any other covenants in the Bible? (There are five key ones!)

7. Consider the following perspective of the sign of the rainbow and see if you agree or disagree; 'When we look at the rainbow, we remember that, though we as mankind are deserving of death because of our fallen nature, God in his loving kindness withholds it, giving mankind the opportunity to, in faith, come to belief in His son as our saviour. When God looks at the rainbow, He sees the sign whereby He has sealed a covenant, a promise He has made, that, despite mankind deserving of being wiped from the earth, as they were in the time of Noah, He will not do it.' How would you explain the promise of the rainbow in your own words?



Day 8 - Abraham - Father of Faith

As generation followed generation, there is one family line vital to the fate of mankind, the 'seed' line spoken of as a male offspring/child/seed of woman who would be the one to 'crush the serpent's head' and rectify the terrible consequences wrought by Adam and Eve's disobedience in Eden.

This 'seed' line was traced from Adam to his son, Seth, and eventually to Noah. From Noah's son, Shem, it continued, ending up after a total of twenty generations with a man called Abram. In all of this time, there would have been an expectancy, wondering if this child was the chosen one.

It is in the life of Abram (later called Abraham) that we begin to hear a great deal more about this promised 'seed', but Abram's story covers a significant portion of scripture and we do not have time to read it all, let alone study it thoroughly. Over the next three studies, we will focus on three main aspects of Abraham which point ahead to Jesus. They are; Abraham - Father of Faith, The Covenant of Circumcision and The Sacrifice of the Son.

Key Reading: Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15: 1-6, Matthew 1:1-17 or Luke 3: 23-38

Questions

1. What did God tell Abram to do? What did He promise to Abram (Genesis 12:1-3)?

2. In Genesis 15:1-6, how was Abram 'counted righteous'. What did he specifically believe God would do?

3. Look at a genealogy of Joseph (the adoptive father of Jesus) in Matthew 1:1-17 or Mary (the mother of Jesus) in Luke 3:23-38. Trace the lineage back to Abraham or to Adam respectively. What confirmation does the genealogy give that Jesus at least *could be* the 'promised seed'? (NB, women were not mentioned in genealogy lines, so in Mary's lineage, it says Jesus was 'known as the son of Joseph, son of Heli (or Eli).') We

know that Joseph is actually the son of Jacob, so a better way of saying this is Jesus was 'known as the son of Joseph, son-in-law of Heli, or Jesus was the son of Mary, daughter of Heli.)

4. Galatians 3:6-9 says, 'Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith. The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you. So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.' Explain how every person on Earth has been blessed via Abraham. What does it mean that the 'Gentiles' are 'made right in his sight.' (NB: A 'Gentile' is any person who is not Jewish.)

5. The Jewish people and leaders that Jesus interacted with were very proud of their ancestor, Abraham because God had chosen Abraham and his descendants to be His special people, set aside for Him. They were the nation entrusted with the law of Moses and the priesthood, and knew all the rules, sacrifices, feasts and rituals inside and out .. but they did not recognise Jesus as the promised one and even worked to have him killed. Jesus rebuked them by saying, "Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad." (John 8:56) What would Abraham want to tell these physical descendants of his?

Prayer Starter

Abraham is called the 'Father of Faith' for several reasons. For one, his descendants went on to found the Jewish, Christian and Islam religions. Also, God made a special covenant with Abraham sealed with the sign of circumcision that God would always be 'his' God and the God of his descendants (we will look at this tomorrow.) Most importantly, one of his future 'seed' (offspring) would be Jesus, the promised one through whom all people can be saved. Perhaps the simplest and most powerful explanation for why Abraham is called the Father of Faith is because he simply believed what God told him. Prayerfully consider what God is telling you today, or has spoken to you about in the past. Do you believe He will bring to fulfilment what He has spoken? Ask God to help you with this, or any aspect of faith you are struggling with.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 11:8-12, (Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3: 23-38)

Questions

1. What clue is there in Hebrews 11:8-12 that Abraham's faith was looking ahead to things of eternity (what action did he take which showed he believed God?)

2. The promised 'seed' of Eve is a powerful prophecy that pointed ahead to Jesus, for he was born of Mary and God, so in truth the 'seed of woman', as well as being in the lineage directly from Eve and Adam. Look at the following prophecies regarding the genealogy of the promised 'seed', and then find the name of the 'seed bearer' on the genealogy tree of Joseph (Matthew 1:1-17) or Mary (Luke 3: 23-38.) How do such documented facts as these family lines help you more securely ground your faith (or the defence of your faith?)

- Jacob (*Now that Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again at Bethel. God blessed him, saying, "Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. From now on your name will be Israel." So God renamed him Israel. Then God said, "I am El-Shaddai—"God Almighty." Be fruitful and multiply. You will become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! And I will give you the land I once gave to Abraham and Isaac. Genesis 35:11-12*)

- Judah (*The sceptre will not depart from Judah, or the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honour. Genesis 49:10*)

- Jesse (*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. Isaiah 11:1*)

- David (*"For the time is coming," says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. And this will be his name: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.' Jeremiah 23:5-6*)

3. Look again at this prophecy in Genesis 3:15, to refresh your memory as to why the seed/offspring promise is important; 'And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and

her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.' Remember that God is addressing Satan (in the snake who encouraged Adam and Eve's disobedience) here. Consider the difference between being struck in the head, and being struck in the heel. Which is likely to be the fatal blow? Does Jesus' resurrection from the 'blow' of His death on the cross fit with the phrase, 'you will strike (or 'bruise') his heel'?

4. Reflect on these words spoken by Jesus in John 12:32; 'The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.' Does this verse have significance in the light of the Garden of Eden prophecy? What did he mean by 'when I am lifted up'? (look at John 12:33 for this answer if you aren't sure.) What does it mean that Jesus would 'draw everyone' to himself?



Day 9 - The Covenant of Circumcision

There are several stories in the Bible which once made no sense to me. For example, a man swallowed by a giant fish who cleverly spits him out onto dry land three days later? Wouldn't a boat have been easier? Or how about Moses whacking a *rock* to get water out of it? That hasn't been my experience of rocks. What about people saved from snake venom by looking at a bronze statue, or a loving father preparing to kill his long-awaited son as a sacrifice? These things seem peculiar - in fact, they are startling in how strange they are. But, once they are looked at as they fall into the shadow of the cross, they suddenly make sense. Perfect sense. The reason they happened was to point directly to Jesus and His redeeming work on the cross.

Does the topic of today's study also fall into this category? Circumcision, the removal of skin, certainly seems a peculiar thing for God to have asked Abraham (and all the men of his family and household) to do. Whilst superficially it served to set the men of Israel aside as God's chosen people, was there a deeper significance to the act which would not be fulfilled until Jesus died? That is what we consider today, as we read about God's covenant with Abraham.

(NB: We have missed out a lot of Abram's story. Some highlights are that he was forced to live in Egypt because of a famine, and then returned. He rescued his nephew, Lot, from the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah, and met a mysterious man called Melchizedek. There is already in place an initial covenant that God made with Abram, regarding giving him land and an heir (despite his age) Then, in the absence of this promised heir appearing in a timely manner, Sarai (Abram's wife) suggested Abram bear a child with her maidservant, Hagar. Ishmael is the resulting son, conceived in a human effort to provide the promised 'son' rather than trusting in faith that the barren Sarai would bear the child herself.)

Key Reading: Genesis 17, Colossians 2:11-15

Questions

1. In Genesis chapter 17, God makes a covenant with Abram (changing his name to Abraham as he does.) What was God's side of the covenant to be, and what was Abraham's?
2. Circumcision was the outward, physical sign that the descendants of Abraham were part of the covenant with God, that God was 'their' God. What would happen to any male who did not agree to circumcision? Why do you think God chose circumcision for the sign of the covenant?
3. Deuteronomy 30:6 says, 'The Lord your God will circumcise (change) your heart and the hearts of all your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live!' How would you explain the concept of 'circumcising your heart'? What would be cut off, and why?
4. Does Romans 2: 28-29 help you understand further what the physical removal of flesh represents in a spiritual way? ('For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true

circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.)

5. Colossians 2:11-15 provides the direct link with the covenant of circumcision and the work of Jesus on the cross. Take your time reading this passage and absorbing the truths it contains. Does the peculiar ritual of circumcision now act to deepen your understanding of what Jesus has done for you?

Prayer Starter

The rituals of the Old Testament point the way to Jesus. He is the fulfilment of all that was acted out year after year by the Israelite people, including the covenant of circumcision. As believers in Christ, we are free of such burdensome rituals - we can know with full assurance that the promised seed did come, and we know His name. No longer do we need to go through the physical process of cutting away our flesh to know that God is 'our' God. Reflect on your attitude towards God. Do you take for granted the freedom which Jesus has purchased for you? Do you begin to comprehend more deeply how deathly our sin nature is? Spend some time asking forgiveness for anything in your life which is sinful. Then, rejoice as you think upon this verse from Colossians, 'He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.'

Going Deeper: Romans 4

Questions

1. Paul, in the book of Romans chapter 4, does a thorough and convincing job of explaining how it was Abraham's faith, rather than the sign of circumcision in his body which made him righteous (of right standing with God.) Why would it be difficult for Jewish believers to accept that uncircumcised gentiles (non-Jews) could be in right standing with God? Read the chapter carefully, then try to explain in your own words what you would say to encourage them that circumcision is no longer necessary for a person to be called one of God's 'chosen' people.

2. Genesis 15:6 says, 'And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.' What is the difference between 'being righteous' and 'being counted righteous'. On what grounds can we be counted righteous? (Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.' Romans 5:1)

3. Paul explains that Abraham's life is recorded for our benefit, to tell us what? (Romans 4:21-25)

4. What new Biblical knowledge have you learnt so far from the story of Abraham, if any? Has there been any impact on your personal belief or faith?



Day 10 - Isaac - The Sacrifice of the Son

Out of all of the Old Testament 'types' that point to Jesus, today's story of the sacrifice of the son is one of the clearest and most exciting. Rather than a whisper gently murmuring that a redeemer is on the way, the story of Abraham 'sacrificing' his beloved son is a trumpet-blasting, cymbal-clanging, megaphone shouting that, not only is redemption on the way, but that when it comes, it will involve the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

One thing to keep in mind as we study the peculiar (and abhorrent) idea of God requesting Abraham to kill Isaac, is that God did not intend Abraham to actually do it. However, Abraham and Isaac did not know that, so it was in faith that they submitted to God's command. It was for the benefit of future hearers/readers of scripture that this enactment happened, so that the death of Jesus on the cross would be the unmistakable fulfilment of God's plan. This story can seem offensive and off-putting to those who do not understand what

was actually happening, but once that understanding is gleaned, the sacrifice of Isaac can provide an unshakeable foundation for your faith.

In the 'Key Reading' section we will go directly to the story of the sacrifice, however in 'Going Deeper' we learn about a 'christophany' which is potentially a 'preincarnate' (before Jesus took on human nature) appearance of God's Son on Earth.

Key Reading: Genesis 21:1-7, Genesis 22:1-18

Questions

1. Why do you think that God refers to Isaac as 'your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much' when he speaks to Abraham about Isaac, given that Ishmael is also a son of Abraham?
2. When you picture Isaac, the son of Abraham, at the time this story takes place, how old do you imagine him to be? What clues are there in the reading (Genesis 22:1-10) as to Isaac's strength? Does the reality that Isaac was a young man (possibly in his twenties or early thirties) alter your perception of the events that take place? (NB: there are clues in scripture regarding Isaac's age. The historian Josephus cites it as being 25 years old, and Jewish tradition at 27 years old, so it is a safe assumption to make that he was a young man, not a child.)
3. At which location does the 'sacrifice' occur? Did you know that Golgotha, the place where Jesus died on the cross, is also thought to be on that same mountain?
4. What is Isaac doing as he climbs the mountain? What does Jesus do as he walks to Golgotha? (John 19:17 'So they took Jesus away. Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha). There they nailed him to the cross.') What other parallels can you find between Isaac and Jesus?
5. What was the attitude of Abraham regarding the command to sacrifice his Son? Read these verses from Hebrews 11:17-19 for more understanding, 'By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.' How does Abraham give us greater insight into God the Father? How does this picture compare with John 3:16, 'For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.'
6. God calls out to halt Abraham before he kills Isaac, and provides a ram to be sacrificed as a 'burnt offering' in Isaac's place. What does Leviticus 1:4 tell us is the purpose of this type of offering; 'Lay your hand on the animal's head, and the Lord will accept its death in your place to purify you, making you right with him.'
7. At the point where a ram takes the place of Isaac on the altar, Isaac is no longer a picture of the Son of God, but a picture of all of us for whom Jesus died in substitution for our deserved death. Consider these verses in the light of the ram God provided in Isaac's place; 'The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:24) and 'For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.' (Hebrews 10:10)

Prayer Starter

Reflect upon the thoughts and emotions of Abraham as he contemplates the death of his Son, then Isaac as he willingly submits to his coming death, and finally Isaac again, when the ram takes his place on the altar. Think about what understanding the story gives regarding God the Father, God the Son and yourself. What is God telling you specifically as you study this foreshadowing of the cross? Respond in prayer.

Going Deeper: Genesis 18:1-25

In addition to types (symbols/pictures) and prophecies written into the Old Testament that point ahead to Jesus, there are some instances where it seems the Son of God literally appears. These pre-incarnate appearances (meaning, the Son of God 'appeared' as a man but was not yet human because he had not been

born of Mary) are called 'Christophanies'. However, visitations of God are not always in the form of a man; for example, the burning bush and the 'cloud and fire' that led the Israelites. There is debate upon each visitation if it is God, as in the 'one God, three in one', or specifically the Son of God, but there is no doubt that these visitations occur.

These visitations dramatically challenge the view people may hold that God is a distant God, dispassionately viewing the human race from afar. It may not seem to matter which form of God is present, but we are told that, 'No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us' (John 1:18) and 'Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15.) Without these pre-incarnate appearances, the Son of God might seem to arrive suddenly on the scene at Jesus' birth, but if Christophanies exist, they show us that He has been a part of the redemption story all along, guiding and encouraging the characters of faith in their own journey towards Him.

After all that preamble, we will only have a quick look at the passage from Genesis 18 in order for you to decide for yourself if this was God present, rather than an angel messenger, and if so, if it were specifically the Son of God. Like all the topics presented in the 'Road to Redemption' much more study than what is possible each day is required to fully make an informed conclusion, but you will, at least, be able to make an educated guess.

Questions

1. What title is given to the one who 'appeared to Abraham' in Genesis 18:1. Where else in the passage is the title used?
2. Where was Sarah when she 'laughed silently to herself'? Where were the men? How did 'the Lord' know what her reaction had been?
3. In verses 17-19, how do the words spoken suggest it is God rather than a man or angel speaking.
4. If you read the rest of the chapter of Genesis 18, you would see Abraham interceding for the fate of those living in Sodom and Gomorrah. What title does Abraham give the one he is speaking to in verse 25?
5. It is in Genesis 12:7-8 that 'the Lord' had previously appeared to Abraham. What further evidence does that present regarding the deity of the visitor? (7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 After that, Abram travelled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the Lord, and he worshipped the Lord.)
6. What have you concluded as to the identity of 'the Lord' who spoke with Abraham? If you haven't made up your mind, you are amongst scholars who have debated this for many years so you are in good company! Does it even matter if it were God, God the Son, a man or an angel present? Give a reason for your answer.



Day 11 - Jacob and Esau- The Right to be God's Child

For people living in the Western World in modern times, the concept of special rights being given to the first born son is not a comfortable idea. We have a system of all children being considered equal, so that if parents die without leaving a will, the property and assets they own are divided equally, without the child's gender or whether they are first born, a middle child or the youngest making any difference. In Bible times, however, it was the right of the son born first in a family to inherit his father's authority and responsibilities over the family. He also received a 'double portion' of the inheritance (including the land) and, if it were a royal family, he automatically succeeded to the throne to become the king.

In addition to the birthright, this first born son usually received the greater 'blessing' from his father. The blessings written into scripture (from men such as Abraham and Jacob) included words of encouragement, prophecies about the future and instructions regarding the son's inheritance. To receive the greater blessing was a high honour, and emphasised the special favour which the father had for that child. To lose the blessing of the father would be both shocking and humiliating for a first born son.

With all that in mind, we look at a conflict between a new set of brothers, this time Esau and Jacob, the sons of Isaac. This will help us to understand the privilege we 'inherit' through Jesus, to become 'children of God'. The idea of birthright and the blessing (favour) of God becomes far more meaningful when viewed through the lens of the cross.

Key Reading: Genesis 25:19-34, Galatians 4:4-7

Questions

1. Esau and Jacob are both sons of Isaac, twins, born on the same day. Why might Jacob desire the 'birthright' of Esau? What was Esau's attitude towards these greater rights to the authority, property, and possessions of his father?

2. How did Esau receive the birthright? Did he have any choice about giving it up? Later, Esau claimed that Jacob 'cheated' the birthright from him. Do you think this is truly what happened?

3. Jacob goes on to trick his father into giving the *blessing* of the first son to him instead of to Esau. You can read the full story in Genesis 27, but here in verses 36-38 we find Esau's reaction when he finds out what happened; 'But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing." Esau exclaimed, "No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice. First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?" Isaac said to Esau, "I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?" Esau pleaded, "But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!" Then Esau broke down and wept.' -Why does losing the blessing cause Esau such grief?

4. Here is the blessing that Jacob received in Esau's place, many of the words an echo of what God had spoken to his grandfather, Abraham; "From the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth, may God always give you abundant harvests of grain and bountiful new wine. May many nations become your servants, and may they bow down to you. May you be the master over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. All who curse you will be cursed, and all who bless you will be blessed." (Genesis 27:28-29) How do you feel about Jacob's motives and actions? What might have made him be so determined to get the blessing as well as the birthright? Would the words spoken by God in Genesis 25:23 be one of the reasons?

5. According to John 1:12-13, 'But to all who believed him and accepted him [Jesus], he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.' Reflect on how we become 'children of God', and if it is possible, like Esau, to despise and reject this spiritual birthright?

6. What does Galatians 4:4-7 tell us about the type of relationship we are able to have with God as his adopted children? What do you think we receive as His 'heir'?

Prayer Starter

In Galatians 4:6, we are told that we can call out 'Abba, Father'. This phrase is used by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cries out to God as the time of his suffering and death draws near. It is intimate, affectionate and trusting - often described as being like a child calling their father, 'Daddy' but, at the same time, full of reverence for the holiness and majesty of God. It is no small matter to be the child of such a Father, lovingly adopted as His 'very own'. Spend some time in prayer with your Heavenly Father.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 1:1-4, Romans 9:1-16

Questions

1. In Hebrews 1:1-4, we are told what Jesus receives as his 'inheritance' from God. What is this inheritance? What does the passage tell us about the place/rank Jesus has compared to man and angels.
2. Compare the following two uses of the word 'firstborn' in relation to Jesus. What extra insight do they give? According to Colossians 1:15-16, 'Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is the firstborn of all creation [NB: *the NLT translates this as 'supreme over all creation'*] for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.' And Romans 8:29 says, 'For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.'
3. When it comes to Jacob's character, he is sometimes called the 'righteous deceiver'. His actions do not seem to match his faith and yet God blesses him. Looking back at the passage in Genesis 25:21-23 where God tells Rebekah that the older son will serve the younger, why do you think God said this?
4. The apostle Paul, in Romans chapter 9, says that the Jews were chosen to be God's children, but that being a physical descendant of Abraham was not enough. What else did they need to do to be considered 'true members of God's people'?
5. The passage explains that God's choice of Jacob was not to do with Jacob's own actions or character because Jacob was chosen from the womb, when he was too young to earn God's favour himself. God is sovereign and chose Jacob because of grace alone, not Jacob's merit. What does Romans 9:1-16 tell us about our own standing with God?
6. Has this study of birthright and blessing helped you to better understand what Jesus has done for you on the cross?



Day 12 - Jacob's Ladder - Jesus the Way between God and Man

All over the world, people are attempting to 'reach God', or they are trying to receive 'ultimate wisdom' or earn a blissful life after death. Different religions have different methods by which they believe a person can be saved (or at least have a better life the next time around!) Some religions rely on hard work or perfect behaviour, others on serving various gods (or idols), some look within, seeking to 'know' themselves, others look to the 'universe', an impersonal force which they can tap into for success. Some belief systems do not think there is any such thing as faith, or if there is, that there is no afterlife. For them, you have this one life and then it ends, fullstop.

What is common to all these beliefs is they do not have any personal Being on the other side of the divide (gap) between man and God. They don't have someone who is reaching out for them and making the way for them, whether they deserve it or not. A divide *does* exist between man, who bears the nature of sin, and God, the holy one. There is only one way that such a divide could be bridged - by someone who is both fully God and fully man who stands in the gap. Today we see how the Old Testament clearly points ahead to Jesus being this 'mediator' or 'bridge' between God and man.

Key Reading: Genesis 28:10-22, John 1:45-51

Jacob has managed to take both the birthright and the blessing from Esau and his brother is so angry that he wants to kill Jacob (as soon as the elderly Isaac dies.) Rebekah arranges for Jacob to go to her brother in Haran, supposedly to find a suitable bride not from the heathen Canaanites near them. It is on this journey that Jacob has his 'dream'. The dream has significance to Jacob, but the true meaning and fulfilment of it

happens when Jesus comes to Earth as both God and man. Jesus himself speaks of the meaning of Jacob's dream, thus confirming Jacob's ladder as a 'type' or foreshadowing pointing towards Jesus and the cross.

Questions

1. Describe the dream of Jacob; Who and what did he see? What were they doing? (NB: we won't be looking specifically at angels during the Road to Redemption, though they do occur in scripture fairly commonly, and are said to fulfil various purposes including taking messages to people, protecting the saved, praising God, fighting in spiritual warfare etc. This verse from Hebrews 1:14 is one mention of their role; 'Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?')

2. Looking at what the Lord spoke to Jacob - what was a confirmation of the blessing God had spoken over Abraham and Isaac, regarding their descendants, and what was new and specifically for Jacob?

3. Some translations of the Bible use the word 'stairway' and others 'ladder', but all say that one end of the structure was on earth and the other in heaven. What other image did Jacob use to describe the place when he woke up? (v17)

4. In John 1:45-51, an Israelite called Nathanael is brought to meet Jesus. What does Philip tell Nathanael about Jesus? What is Nathanael's response to Jesus having supernaturally seen him before he arrived?

5. In verses 50-51, Jesus plainly states that he is the 'ladder' or 'staircase'. What was he telling Nathanael?

6. What additional insight do you glean from this verse; 1 Timothy 2:5 'There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus'?

7. Shortly after the events of Noah's Ark, mankind made a determined effort to 'reach to heaven' themselves. The story of the Tower of Babel is found in Genesis 11, with the motivation of the people given in verse 4; 'Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky [other translations - 'whose top is in the heavens'.] This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.'" Contrast the tower built by man with the 'ladder' who is Jesus. Think of several ways the two are very different.

Prayer Starter

What is your belief concerning life after death? What do you believe you must do to gain a positive afterlife, if you think there is one? What do the people you love believe about God and heaven? Are they open to discussing their views? Are you confident and prepared to tell others that faith in Jesus is the only way to be saved for heaven after death? Use these thoughts and concerns to pray for those you love, and for your own confusion or unwillingness to consider the truth of the 'one way.'

Going Deeper: Genesis 32:22-32, Matthew 16:13-20

In a somewhat ironic turn of events, at his Uncle Laban's house, Jacob is tricked into working seven years to marry whom he thought was his cousin Rachel, only to be deceived by his uncle into marrying her older sister, Leah. Shocked to discover the truth, Jacob also marries Rachel, with his uncle agreeing providing that Jacob works another seven years for him. By the time Jacob decides to head back home and reconcile with Esau, he has two wives, two servant wives, eleven sons and a stunning amount of livestock and possessions. When he hears Esau is on the way to meet him with four hundred men, Jacob panics and sends ahead gifts to appease his brother. During the night, Jacob takes his wives and children over the River Jabbok before returning alone to the camp. It is at this place where the wrestling match between Jacob and the 'man' occurs.

Questions

1. What clues are there in Genesis 32:22-32 as to the identity of the man who came to wrestle with Jacob? (NB: This can be quite confusing, as the story flicks from the man supposedly seeing he would not win the match, to suddenly wrenching Jacob's hip from its socket, to having the authority to bless Jacob and

confer a new name on him, while sometimes being referred to as 'man' and other times 'God'.) Present evidence for and against the 'man' that Jacob wrestled being the Son of God (i.e. for and against this being a 'Christophany', an appearance of God's Son on Earth.)

2. Genesis 25:6 says that Jacob was born grasping Esau's heel, which was why he was called 'Jacob' ('he clutches the heel'.) Jacob also means 'usurper', something we saw clearly in his actions to take the birthright and blessing from his brother, as well as other events that happen in his life. Jacob is referred to by scholars as the 'righteous deceiver' because God, in His grace, blessed him despite his character flaws and frequent use of trickery to get his way. Here in Genesis 32:28 Jacob receives a new name; what is it and what does it mean?

3. Another man in the Bible who received a new name was the disciple Simon, who was renamed 'Peter' by Jesus. ('The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter)' John 1:41-42.) Using the passage of scripture from Matthew 16:13-20, explain why Jesus called Simon the 'rock' (Peter).

4. Jacob/Israel and Simon/Peter both had overwhelming character flaws that we might think would prevent them from being given the favour of God. Jacob plotted and tricked for his own advancement; Peter was the disciple who denied even knowing Jesus, let alone following him. However Jacob went on to become the famous patriarch of faith, whose sons and grandsons founded the twelve tribes of Israel and Peter was a fearless witness for Jesus who brought many people to faith before he, also, was crucified. How do the lives of Jacob and Peter, with their struggles and blessings, encourage you in your own life?



Day 13 - Joseph - Son, Slave, Saviour

After Jacob was tricked into marrying his cousin Leah, he then married Rachel, whom he loved and who had been his chosen bride. Leah gave Jacob four sons in quick succession - Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah but Rachel failed to conceive. Jealous of her sister, she insisted Jacob take her maidservant as a wife so that through Bilhah, Rachel could have a family. This union produced Dan and Naphtali ... and now the war was on between the two sisters as to who would have the most sons. Leah gave Jacob her maidservant, Zilpah, and through her, Jacob bore Gad and Asher. Then from Leah again came Isaachar and Zebulun. It was only after years of bitter conflict that, finally, Rachel became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She called him Joseph.

Rachel went on to die shortly after the birth of another son, Benjamin. This brought the total of Jacob's sons to twelve, but out of all of them, the sons of his precious wife, Rachel, were his favourite, in particular Joseph, her first born. And that sets the scene for what unfolds in the amazing story of Joseph, the beloved son who became a slave, then a saviour.

NB: Most scholars view Joseph as a 'type' pointing towards Jesus, because of the similarities between the lives of Joseph and Jesus. In the Road to Redemption we look at two key themes of Joseph's life - today it is his descent from a place of privilege into slavery/imprisonment and the three times he was raised in that place to the highest position, second only to the ultimate authority that ruled there. Tomorrow, we see Joseph bring his family together in forgiveness and unity. There are many other ways people think Joseph points to Jesus, so perhaps you could do your own study of this righteous man of God, and find some of the other reasons scholars think Joseph is a 'type' of Christ.

Key Reading: Genesis 37:1-13, 18-36, Philippians 2:5-8

Questions

1. According to Genesis 37:3-4 (and what you know of Joseph's family), why was Joseph favoured by Jacob and how did he demonstrate this preference?
2. Using what you know about the importance of the birthright, do you think the special coat might have been a sign of Jacob intending to give the position of honour and the greater blessing to Joseph (first born of Rachel, whom Jacob loved?) Does this possibility shed more light onto why the brothers might want to get rid of him?
3. What effect did sharing his dreams have on Joseph's relationship with his brothers? What do the dreams suggest will happen to Joseph in the future?
4. What did the brothers originally intend for Joseph? (Genesis 37:18-24) What changed their minds?
5. In Genesis 37: 25-36 Joseph receives what fate?
6. This is only the beginning of Joseph's life as a 'slave'. He spends 13 years firstly as an unpaid servant to Potiphar in Egypt, then as a prisoner after being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife of attacking her. In everything that happens, Joseph is shown to be innocent and blameless. What other similarities can you see between the lives of Joseph and Jesus in Genesis chapter 37?
7. In Philippians 2:5-8, we are told Jesus willingly gave up his 'divine privileges' to become a slave. What do you think that means? What privileges might Joseph have lost as his life abruptly changed from beloved son to unknown slave?
8. In Genesis 50:20, Joseph says to his brothers, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.' How do Joseph's words point to Jesus and the cross?

Prayer Starter

Use these beautiful words from Philippians 2:5-11 as the foundation for your prayer today. Read the words aloud, pausing to fully consider each sentence and respond to God as you allow the profound meaning of the words to sink in.

“Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.
Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,
he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour
and gave him the name above all other names,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”

Going Deeper: Genesis 39:1-6, Genesis 39:19-23, Genesis 41:14-46

Questions

1. Describe the times Joseph went from a place of 'slavery'/imprisonment to a more lofty position. Each time, what caused him to be successful in everything he did?
2. Thinking about Potiphar, the prison warden and Pharaoh - what were their roles like once Joseph was working for them? What authority did Joseph have, and how much trust did they place in him?
3. Ephesians 1:19-22 tells us where the Son of God is now that He has faithfully carried out the work of the cross on behalf of mankind; 'I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.' How is this passage of scripture similar (though far superior) to Joseph's life?
4. The 'right hand' is a place of honour, having equal dignity and honour as the person seated in the most honoured place. In this case, Jesus has the power and authority of God ... to do what, according to Ephesians 1:19-22? (see Question 3 above)
5. Read these other verses which speak of Jesus seated at the 'right hand of God' and see what further insight you can take from them; Romans 8:34 'Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, pleading for us'; Hebrews 1:3 'The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honour at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven' and Acts 5:31 'Then God put him in the place of honour at his right hand as Prince and Saviour. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven.'



Day 14 - Joseph - The Reconciler

'Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Glory to the Newborn King, Peace on Earth and mercy mild, God and Sinner reconciled'. No doubt you have sung that Christmas carol a hundred times, but have you ever stopped to think deeply about the words, 'God and Sinner reconciled? 'Reconcile' or 'reconciliation' usually means that 'friendly terms were re-established after two parties disagree' whether it's a husband and wife that have argued, two business partners, workers and their employers or even entire countries. However, when it comes to God and sinner (mankind) being reconciled there is something crucial to understand - this is not a reconciliation of equal parties, where both have disagreed and moved apart, only to desire to come back together. Rather, man deliberately chose to break away from God (through Adam and Eve's disobedience). It was a one-sided decision, and it could have been the end of the relationship forever, but, God in His great love and mercy, deliberately sought out mankind to bring him back. God humbled himself to woo humans back into perfect relationship with him. Man is reconciled TO God, not the other way around. That is what the entire Bible shouts, and it is pictured very clearly in Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers, which is the topic of our study today.

NB: There are several chapters of the story where Joseph's brothers come and go from Egypt and Joseph keeps his identity from them. We will look at that in 'Going Deeper' but for the Key Reading, we will fast-forward to the chapter where Joseph reveals who he is and reunites with his brothers.

Key Reading: Genesis 45, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Questions

1. In Genesis 41:47 we read, 'And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.' When Joseph's brothers first came before him, asking to purchase grain, what are the different ways Joseph COULD have treated them, given their history and the fact he has total power to act in any way he wishes?
2. Does Joseph appear to hold any grudge against the brothers? What efforts does he make to ensure they understand he fully forgives them and that he genuinely wants to reunite the family again - all of them, not just his father and Benjamin?
3. Why was it that Pharaoh was so willing to be generous to the brothers - did he treat all those who came to Egypt this way? What does the passage tell us about how Joseph's brothers and all their families were blessed? (Genesis 45:16-23)
4. Look at this verse from Philippians 4:19 you consider your answer to Question 3 in the light of our own lives; 'And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.'
5. After they had lived in Egypt for some time, Jacob dies and immediately the brothers become fearful once more, thinking that Joseph has only been biding his time while Jacob was alive and now might take his revenge, after all. How does Joseph reassure them? (Genesis 50: 18-21 Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said. But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children.") What is the 'good' that God 'intends' for mankind today?
6. 2 Corinthian 5:19 says, 'For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them.' How do the actions and heart of Joseph for his brothers foreshadow (point ahead to) Jesus?
7. Reflect on the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Now that we, as believers, have been reconciled to God, what are we instructed to do?

Prayer Starter

From the moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God, conflict entered the world. We have seen it in the fractured relationships of brothers such as Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, and between the offspring of rival sisters Leah and Rachel. As part of being brought back to God, through his Son, we are given the charge to go into the world and become reconcilers. As well as asking God to help you share the truth of Jesus with those who are separated from Him, pray about any relationship whether in your family, a friendship, at church or in your workplace where conflict is causing a lack of unity. Use the example of Joseph to inspire you to be the one to forgive and seek reconciliation.

Going Deeper: Genesis 42, Genesis 44:6-17

Joseph could have revealed his identity to his brothers the very first moment they stood before him. Instead, he made a concerted effort to conceal it. He put the brothers through a series of tests which can, at first reading, appear cruel and deceptive. However, it is obvious that Joseph's motives (as we studied in the Key Reading section) were to restore relationship with his brothers, and to bring their families into a place where they could live safely and flourish despite the famine in the world. It seems, therefore, that the intention of Joseph was to reveal what was in the hearts of his brothers; to find out if they had changed, or not - If they wanted to turn away from the actions of the past. The work of reconciliation of man to God is done for us through Jesus BUT there is something that each person must do before reconciliation can take place ... every person must realise their *need* to be saved, and therefore *desire* to be saved before they can accept that Jesus is the *way to be saved*. Therefore, repentance is the focus of Going Deeper today.

The 'Author's Note' below explains the difference between the 'big picture' repentance of a sinner turning in faith to God to be saved, and the discipline of repentance where a believer asks forgiveness and help with sins they struggle with. It is the first type that we are focussing on in 'Going Deeper' today.

Questions

1. It has been more than twenty years since Joseph last saw his brothers. What was happening to him on that occasion? Why might his first impulse have been to pretend he did not recognise them?
2. What do you think it was about remembering his dreams (of the bundles of grain and stars bowing down to him) that caused Joseph to decide to accuse the brothers of being spies (Genesis 42:9) Considering the actions that Joseph then took in verses 14-20, what do you think he was trying to achieve here?
3. Joseph's test for his brothers specifically mentions they must bring to Egypt their youngest brother, Benjamin. Why does this have such an impact on the brothers, and why does their response affect Joseph so deeply? (Genesis 42:20-24)
4. In Genesis 42:29-38, the discovery of their money in the sacks of grain they have bought terrifies not only the brothers, but also Jacob. Why are they so petrified? Why does Jacob refuse to allow the brothers to take Benjamin back to Egypt in order to get Simeon released?
5. Eventually the famine forces Jacob to allow the brothers to go back to Egypt - it's either that or they all starve. The brothers are greeted warmly, told their payment had been received so all is well, and given a special feast in Joseph's home. However, Joseph orders a special silver cup of his to be placed in Benjamin's sack of grain and, as the brothers begin their journey home, he sends his palace manager after them to accuse them of theft. What does the brothers' response in Genesis 44:6-17 show regarding their understanding of their sin regarding Joseph in the past, and their genuine sorrow about it?
6. The chapter ends by Judah begging for Joseph to allow him to take Benjamin's place, ("So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn't bear to see the anguish this would cause my father!" Genesis 44:33-34) How does this speech from Judah show that he is not only 'sorry' for his past but has fully 'changed his mind' about what he had done? (NB: the literal meaning of 'repent' is to 'change the mind'.)
7. After this, Joseph finally reveals his identity (as in the Key Reading section above.) How does the brothers' full change of mind from how they had once treated Joseph, to now being ready to take Benjamin's place, open the way for them to be reconciled to Joseph?
8. On the very first day of 'The Road to Redemption' we read that Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' (Luke 24:46-47). What do you think it means to 'repent'? It is the message we are to proclaim, but what does it actually mean?

Author's Note: Repentance

In Acts 20:21 Paul says, 'I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.' This is a tricky subject as we, as Christians, often equate repentance with being sorry about our individual sins in order to be saved. We might use the genuine remorse that Joseph's brothers showed as evidence for that definition. However, we also know that we are saved by faith alone, and no 'work' we do in our own strength is necessary. 2 Peter 3:9 says, 'The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.'

Repentance is a 'changing of mind' about sin so that we have a new mindset that accepts that we are sinners with a need for Jesus Christ to save us. This does not mean that repentance is a work on our part we must do, so that we can't be saved unless we do it right. Being saved only relies on faith. Rather, the 'big picture' definition of repentance is the dawning awareness that we are in BIG trouble, eternal trouble, because of the death sentence imposed on all mankind by their disobedience, and we desperately need God to rescue us. Repentance and faith are two sides of the same reconciliation coin - the turning away and the turning to

happen at the same time. A new mindset that realises we are sinners, at the same time as an awareness that Jesus can save us, together bring about reconciliation with God.

This 'big picture' type of repentance is sometimes called 'repentance unto salvation.' For the believer, however, there is also the frequent sorrowful repentance of being convicted of sins we have committed, the seeking of God's forgiveness and a determination to no longer do such wrong. This type of repentance is important as we day by day seek to follow Jesus faithfully. It is not being saved in the first place, but it is 'growing up in our salvation.' (Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:1-2.)



Day 15 - Slavery in Egypt - The Need to be Rescued

We have already come a long way on The Road to Redemption, and today we reach our fifteenth study focussing on how the Old Testament points to Jesus and his redeeming work on the cross. We are past a third of the way, and yet have so far to go! Think of all the amazing treasures you will find to enrich your faith in the days ahead!

However, there is no denying that this journey is a commitment and a challenge. Some of the days may have felt like you were carrying heavy bags of rocks uphill - pure hard work as you struggled to understand what the scriptures were saying. Other days may have been joy-filled and refreshing, or sent you to your knees to worship in awe of our almighty God. Perhaps, some days were a mixture of all of the above!

Over the past weeks, we have looked at some huge concepts of faith, including The Fall of Man (the disobedience of Adam and Eve, bringing the consequence of separation from God and physical death), the promise of the Seed (the offspring of woman who would one day conquer death), the necessity of faith to be declared righteous (of right standing/blameless) and the one way for all people to be saved. Now, we journey into Egypt where the Israelites (Jacob's sons, their families and all the generations beneath them) are about to be taken into slavery for a period of four hundred years.

Key Reading: Exodus 1:6-22, Exodus 2:1-10

Questions

1. The time of slavery that was about to come upon the Israelites should not have surprised them, because God had told Abraham it would happen ('The Lord said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth.' Genesis 15:13-14.) What does it mean to be 'oppressed'? What might be the purpose of God in allowing Abraham's descendants to experience this period of slavery?
2. When Jacob's sons and their families first come to live in Egypt, there are only around seventy of them. What clues are there in Exodus 1:6-22 regarding the number of Israelites who now live in the land? Why has the attitude of the Egyptians changed towards them?
3. Why does Pharaoh order the midwives to kill the Hebrew (Israelite) baby boys? When his initial plan does not work, what does Pharaoh next command regarding the baby boys?
4. What extremes does Moses' mother go through when her son is born to save his life? How does he spend his childhood from the time he was found in the river until he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter?
5. Moses is called the most important prophet in the Bible. He is the writer of its first five books, and the man who led the Israelites out of their slavery into freedom. He spoke frequently with God and wrote down the law for the children of Israel. It is generally accepted that Moses is a 'type' of Jesus. Read the following

passages about the birth of Jesus, and see if you can find the parallels with the birth of Moses, which help establish him as a 'foreshadowing' of Jesus. (NB: This doesn't impact on the larger picture of Jesus, our redeemer, so don't worry if you think too much is being read into the verses here. Just have a bit of fun, which you deserve after fourteen days of concentrated study!)

- Luke 2:1 'At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire.'
- Luke 2:7 'She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.'
- Matthew 2:16 'Herod was furious when he realised that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance.'
- After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

6. Unsurprisingly, Joseph (Pharaoh's 'right hand man') is mentioned in the 'Faith Hall of Fame' in Hebrews chapter 11. The act of faith he is celebrated for relates to Question 1 of the study today; 'It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.' (Hebrews 11:22) What do these verses suggest Joseph believed, spoken as they were long before his family became slaves?

7. The slavery (and redemption) of the Israelites is one of the greatest stories of the Bible. It clearly points to our need for a saviour, someone to break us free of the oppression and death we are bound with. What do these verses spoken by Jesus in John 8:34-36 tell us about our own 'slavery'? 'Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.'

Prayer Starter

Think of what you know about modern or historical slavery. The Israelite slaves faced horrible treatment and even death at the hand of the Egyptians and, until their rescue, they were helpless to stop it. Consider how we are said to be 'slaves of sin' and spend some time thanking God that, because of Jesus, we have been set truly free. Whilst we are no longer 'slaves to sin' and its deathly consequences, until we reach heaven we *will* continue to sin, so take the time to reflect on where your thoughts, words and actions are not showing your new life in Jesus. Pray for God to forgive you and help you turn away from the habits you find yourself stuck in which are not righteous.

Going Deeper: Romans 6

What is sin? Why do we continue to sin if the Son has set us free? Are we really 'slaves' either to sin or to righteousness (just one or the other)? These are some of the tricky questions we will try to ask as we dive deeper into the idea of slavery, as it applies to the Christian faith.

Questions

1. The word 'sin' in the Bible comes from a word that means 'to miss the mark.' What standard are we held to, that we might 'miss the mark' on? How would you explain what 'sin' is to someone who had never heard of the idea?
2. Romans 5:21 says, 'So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' What does this verse tell us about our 'standing' with God? What has happened to the consequences we were bound to before our faith in Jesus?
3. Romans 6:6 says, 'We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.' What happened to our 'sinful self' when Jesus died?

Given that it is obvious that all of us still sin, no matter how long or short a time that we have been followers of Jesus, how is not being a 'slave to sin' different from not sinning at all?

4. According to 1 John 1:8-9, 'If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.' What does this verse suggest about sin and the believer? What does it direct us to do?

5. How is this repentance of individual sins different from our initial repentance when we *turned away* from our sin nature, and *turned to* Jesus in faith?

6. The entire chapter of Romans 6 is full of understanding about sin and its opposite, righteousness. How, in the chapter, does Paul answer the following questions;

'Why does it matter if we keep sinning, since Jesus has already paid the price for all sins we could possibly commit?', 'Do we have any control over whether or not we sin?', 'What is the alternative to being a 'slave to sin?'

7. In a culture where slavery was common (not the oppressive sort like Pharaoh, but a long-term servant sort) people would not be surprised that Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, and Jude all described themselves as 'slaves' or 'bondservants' to Christ. Why do you think they called themselves 'slaves to Christ?'



Day 16 - The Burning Bush - I AM

Moses remained living as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter until he was around forty years old, when he killed an Egyptian who was beating up a Hebrew slave. He then ran away into the Midian desert where another forty years have passed. Moses is now married and has a son, seemingly settled and content with a life nothing like either that of his Hebrew kinsmen or his adopted Egyptian family. He is unaware just how much his life is about to change when, at eighty years old, he encounters God whilst out 'tending his father-in-law's flocks'. As well as being commanded to go back to Egypt in order to lead God's people out, God tells Moses the name by which the Israelites should call him; Yahweh, I Am.

'I Am' is not only stating that God exists, but that God is *everywhere*, for all time and He is *present*. He is with His people; His attention, His love, care, protection and power are *always* there. The difference is like knowing that wind exists, as a scientific reality, and actually being pushed along in your sailing boat by it, feeling it rush against your face and hearing the sails flap. The message that Moses is to take to the Israelites is 'God IS and God is present.'

Many people believe that Jesus was a real person who walked on Earth but they think he was only a man, a 'good teacher'. They declare that Jesus NEVER actually said he was God, however today's study will show that is not true because Jesus deliberately called himself 'I Am' and it provoked a strong, angry reaction from the Jews he said it to ... they knew what he was claiming, and even tried to kill him for saying it. Using the name 'I Am' directly links the 'good teacher' of Israel with the mighty 'I Am' God of the desert, and does away with the idea that 'Jesus never claimed to be God.'

Key Reading: Exodus 3, John 8:52-59

Questions:

1. Exodus 3:2 uses the phrase 'The angel of the Lord' but what evidence is there in verses 4-5 that show that this appearance was God himself rather than an angel? (NB: The title 'The Angel of the Lord' appears many times in scripture; some of those times the Being called that speaks with the authority of God, identifies himself as God and causes panic in those who had seen him as they thought they would die for having 'seen God', so it's important not to see the word 'angel' and assume it's 'just' an angel every time.)

2. This passage in scripture is the first time in the Old Testament that 'holiness' is mentioned as part of who God is. What does being 'holy' mean and what was Moses told to do because of this holiness?

3. What task does God give Moses to do? Think about the upbringing Moses has had, why he left Egypt and what he has been doing in the forty years since then. With this background, how prepared do you think he is for the task God gives him? How prepared does Moses, himself, feel?

4. What does God say will happen after Moses speaks to the Israelite leaders, and also after he speaks to Pharaoh? What does God intend to do? (v18-22)

5. Looking at the verses regarding the name of God, what are the different names and titles God calls Himself in His conversation with Moses? (v14-15)

6. In John 8:52-59, what does Jesus mean when he says "Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad"?

7. What is Jesus claiming when he says, 'You say, 'He is our God,' but you don't even know him. I know him.'

8. In ancient Israel, 'stoning' was a method of execution. A group of people would literally pick up and throw stones at the 'sinner' until they were dead. It was carried out for a number of extremely serious sins, including murder, worshipping idols and blaspheming, and it was still very common in Jesus' day. In the passage from John, what sin are the people intending to stone Jesus for? How does he 'escape'? (v 58-59)

9. C.S. Lewis famously said, 'A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.' How do our readings today, both Old Testament and New Testament, work together to validate this quote?

NB: In the 'Going Deeper' section, we look at Exodus chapter 4 where God provides miraculous signs for Moses to do to show the elders and Pharaoh that God has sent him. Miracles were also one of the signs Jesus used to validate who he was, and that he was sent by God

Prayer Starter

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'holy' as 'exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness'. When God speaks to Moses from the burning bush, He tells him not to come closer. He also tells Moses to take off his sandals, for the ground he is standing on is 'holy ground'. Do we sometimes lose our awe and respect for God, because of the amazing gift of being reconciled to Him? Is there a place, an action or a particular hymn or prayer which helps you worship God with the reverence He deserves? As you pray today, remember that you are in the presence of the Holy God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the great I AM who is HERE in your life.

Going Deeper: Exodus 4:1-23, 29-31, John 2:1-11

Questions:

1. In Exodus chapter 4, Moses continues to give God excuses as to why he is not the one who God should send. What are these excuses and how does God respond to each?

2. God provides three miraculous signs that Moses can perform. What are these signs, and what is the reason for God providing them?

3. Considering what you know of the prophecy of the promised 'seed', why might the sign of the staff turning into a snake be particularly convincing to the Israelites?

4. The sign of the leprous hand was shown to the Israelites, but not the Egyptians. Can you think of any reasons why that sign might have been reserved for them?

5. How did the Israelite elders respond to what Moses and Aaron told them, and the miraculous signs that Moses performed? (Exodus 4:29-31)

6. Jesus performed many miracles during his three years of ministry. What is the reaction of the disciples in John 2:1-11 when they witness his first miracle at the wedding in Cana? What does it mean that Jesus 'revealed his glory'?

7. What does John 20:30-31 tell us about the reason that Jesus performed miracles? ('The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.')



Day 17 - The Plagues of Egypt - The Wrath of God

Moses and his brother, Aaron, secure the support of the Israelite elders by showing them the miraculous signs God provided. The Israelites now believe that God has declared it is time for His people to be freed from Egypt and to go and inhabit the land He promised to Abraham but there's one thing standing in their way; Pharaoh.

God is going to use Pharaoh's stubbornness to reveal His power, His unique care for His people and His wrath ('righteous anger'). This will take the form of the ten plagues, all of which demonstrate the uselessness of Egypt's 'gods' and the surpassing power and might of God.

Exodus 6:6b says, 'I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgement', and Deuteronomy 26:8 declares, 'So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and powerful arm, with overwhelming terror, and with miraculous signs and wonders.' The Bible speaks of a future time when God's wrath will once again be 'poured out' on the world, with a series of fearful signs and wonders. Only those who are considered righteous (through faith in Jesus) will be saved for eternal life with God forever. The plagues of Egypt parallel many of the judgements written about in the book of Revelation, so as we learn about them today, it offers a glimpse of that future endpoint, a time when all evil is finally and completely dealt with.

NB: God's wrath is not uncontrollable rage, or spite, nor is unjust judgement. It is 'strong indignation directed at wrongdoing.' God's wrath is spoken of many times in the Bible, often related to the eternal judgement upon those who are still tied to their sin nature because they have not turned to Christ in faith to save them. God's wrath is stored up as He is patient, wanting people to be saved.

Key Reading: Exodus 9, Revelation 16

Questions

1. What three plagues are mentioned in Exodus chapter 9? Who is affected by these plagues?
2. The first nine plagues are (in order that they happened): Water turned to blood, frogs, lice, flies, animals die, boils, hail, locusts, darkness. The first three plagues affected all of Egypt including the Israelites, after which God protected them from further suffering. Why do you think God has sent these plagues - what purposes do they fulfil? (NB: In 'Going Deeper' we will look at the hardening of Pharaoh's heart which prolongs the time that Egypt experiences the wrath of God.)
3. One suggestion for the specific plagues God sent is that they deliberately prove each of Egypt's main 'gods' and 'goddesses' have no power to save. One example is Re, the sun god (the plague of darkness), another is Heqet, the goddess of birth who has a frog head (the plague of frogs) and a third Nut, goddess of the sky (hailstones). If this is the reason for God's choice of plagues, what additional horror do the plagues hold for the Egyptians?

4. What saved the Israelites from experiencing most of the plagues - in other words, how did God choose who was saved and who was not? (Do not include the tenth plague in this answer, as we will look at that tomorrow.)

5. Looking at Revelation chapter 16, what 'judgements' mentioned are similar to the nine plagues mentioned in Question 2? How do the people of Earth respond to these plagues?

6. What does Revelation 16:5 say about the judgements of God?

7. Revelation 15:2-4 describes a contrasting scene to that of the terrors happening on the Earth below. The verses state, 'And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb:

"Great and marvellous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations.
Who will not fear you, Lord,
and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Who is the Lamb referred to here? (Revelation 15:3) What does Paul write in 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 about His 'anger' and the believer; 'For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.'

Prayer Starter

The concept of a God of wrath is abhorrent to many people; upon this thought alone they turn away. On the flip side, the concept of an entirely loving God who saves all mankind is appealing, but removes free will from our salvation. According to the Bible, the consequence for our sin nature is death, but the consequence of our faith in Jesus is eternal life. Salvation aside, some Christians do not believe that the judgments of God as described in Revelation will really happen. End times scriptures will remain contentious until ... well, the end of time ... but whatever you believe about them, there is no doubt that the Bible preaches there is one saviour to follow in order to be saved, just as the Israelites followed Moses out of Egypt. Reflect on what you have read today and pray to your Heavenly Father about it.

Going Deeper: Exodus 7:3-5, Romans 9

This is a very deep topic, the deepest of dives anyone can take into the fundamental truths of Christianity. It seems to be a topic that humans can't necessarily understand, not in a way that satisfactorily answers this question; 'How is it that some people are saved - is it their free will, or are they predestined, chosen by God?' Some people believe fervently one way, and some the other. The Bible seems to answer 'yes' to both, which creates a 'do not compute' scenario for most human minds. We are not going to solve this dilemma today, but because the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a major theme in the first chapters of Exodus, it seemed impossible to ignore. So put on your scuba gear for this study, you are going to need it!

Questions

1. According to Exodus 9 (from the Key Reading section) Pharaoh was stubborn in his own strength through the plagues of water to blood, frogs, gnats, flies and the death of the livestock, dismissing the terrors as things his own magicians could do, and then initially agreeing to letting the Israelites go into the desert before immediately changing his mind once the plague disappeared. A key change happens once the plague

of boils appears. What do the following verses suggest is the reason that Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go?

'So they took soot from a brick kiln and went and stood before Pharaoh. As Pharaoh watched, Moses threw the soot into the air, and boils broke out on people and animals alike. Even the magicians were unable to stand before Moses, because the boils had broken out on them and all the Egyptians. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and just as the Lord had predicted to Moses, Pharaoh refused to listen.' (Exodus 9:10-12)

2. A hardened heart is one which was *already* resolved, but that resolve is *strengthened* by God - in Pharaoh's case he had demonstrated his hatred and abuse of the Israelites and his determination not to set them free. Reasons are given in Exodus 7:3-5 as to *why* God 'hardened Pharaoh's heart'. What are these reasons?

3. We have looked at Romans chapter 9 before, but now return to it in view of Pharaoh's hardened heart. What does Romans 9:14-21 say regarding mercy and hardening?

4. What further insight does Romans 9:22-23 give on the topic of God's wrath versus God's mercy?

5. Romans 9:32-33 explains why many Israelites will miss out on salvation whilst many Gentiles (non-Jewish) people will be saved. Who is the 'stumbling stone' and the 'rock that makes them fall'?

6. To balance this idea of God's sovereign will (as in, He will choose what He will, because He is God) we have verses such as 2 Peter 3:9 ('The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.') How do you bring together satisfactorily the concept of God 'having mercy on whom He will have mercy and hardening who he wants to harden' with the patience of wanting everyone to repent and the iron-clad in scripture free will of all people to choose their eternal destiny?

7. In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus' disciples ask him about his return and the 'end of the world'. Jesus tells them 'You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.' (Matthew 24:44.) Only 'the Father' knows the exact hour, but Jesus mentions signs to look out for which will show that he is 'at the door'. He also tells them, 'For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God's chosen ones. (Matthew 24:21-22.) Bearing in mind the terror of the plagues of Egypt, it is sobering that Jesus says there is even 'greater anguish' than that yet to come. Look again at Romans 9:22-24 for encouragement.



Day 18 - The Passover Lamb - Jesus the Lamb of God

Today our study brings us to the highest point of our journey, the top of the hill after a long and difficult climb. Here we stop and marvel at the perfect plan of God - the way He has worked through the generations of descendants of Adam and Eve to arrive at a place where people are helplessly trapped in slavery, but by the mighty hand of God, and through His particular mercy towards them, they are about to set free. There is no story more powerful and more directly pointing to Jesus in the Old Testament than that of the Passover and how, through the sacrifice of an unblemished 'lamb', those who choose to be 'covered' by his blood are saved from death and are free to cross into new life.

Key Reading: Exodus 12:1-13, Exodus 12:21-30

Questions

1. In Exodus 11:4-8 Moses announced to Pharaoh, "This is what the Lord says: At midnight tonight I will pass through the heart of Egypt. All the firstborn sons will die in every family in Egypt, from the oldest son of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, to the oldest son of his lowliest servant girl who grinds the flour. Even the firstborn of all the livestock will die. Then a loud wail will rise throughout the land of Egypt, a wail like no one has heard before or will ever hear again. But among the Israelites it will be so peaceful that not even a dog will bark. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites." Upon what basis is the Lord making a distinction between which families will be touched by this plague and who will not?

2. When God spoke from the burning bush in Exodus 4:21-23, he told Moses, "When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will harden his heart so he will refuse to let the people go. Then you will tell him, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. I commanded you, "Let my son go, so he can worship me." But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!'" How do these verses explain the final plague of Egypt?

3. What are the requirements for the chosen lamb or goat in Exodus 12:5?

4. What instructions are given regarding the blood of the slaughtered lamb?

5. Exodus 12:13 says, 'But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.' On what condition are the Israelites to be saved? What will happen if a household does not fulfil the instructions regarding the blood? How is this different from your answer in Question 1?

6. In the second passage of scripture, Exodus 12:21-30, what does Moses tell the people regarding 'Passover' in the future? Is it still observed by Jewish people today?

7. In John 1:29-30 John the Baptist sees Jesus for the first time. What does he say about him? ('The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'") On the following day, John uses the phrase again and two of his disciples immediately turn and follow Jesus; ('As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.' John 1:36-37) Why would John refer to Jesus in this way?

8. 1 Peter 1:18-20 has a wonderful summary of the message of the first Passover and the 'Lamb of God'; 'For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.' When did God choose Jesus to be 'our ransom'? What has Jesus bought for us using his blood instead of gold or silver? What requirements (like those of the Passover lamb) did Jesus meet?

Prayer Starter

All of the Israelites were able to be saved from the tenth plague of Egypt, however this final plague had an additional requirement added to it. All first-born males **COULD** be saved, but only those who stayed behind the door where the blood of lamb had been brushed across the frame, **WOULD** be saved. It was their choice, therefore, whether they demonstrated faith in God and lived. Imagine how the Israelites must have felt that final night in Egypt - were they fearful in case the blood was not enough to save them? Were they full of faith because they had seen what God's power could do? Were they excited, anticipating being free the next day, or perhaps not quite daring to believe it would ever happen? How do you feel about what Jesus has done for you? Do you share some of the Israelites' emotions? Pray to the God who delights to save those who turn to Him in faith.

Going Deeper: Exodus 12:11-20, Matthew 16:5-12

In 'Going Deeper' we are going to look at another aspect of the night of the first 'Passover' that was pointing ahead to Jesus; the 'unleavened bread.' This 'flat' bread made without yeast was significant enough to God that He included a law in his instructions to Moses. The law was that from that time on, *for all time*, a festival was to be observed where yeast was not used in bread, or even allowed in the house. So, along with the sacrificed lamb of the Passover, this 'unleavened' (without raising agent) bread was a huge part of all the remembrances that followed that miraculous escape from Egypt. The impeccable timing in Jesus, the Lamb of God, being killed during the week of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is incredible - miraculous - *planned*. Let us see, then, if we can understand a little more how flatbread became so significant that it named a seven day holy festival, 'for all time.'

Questions

1. In Exodus 12:11-20, what instructions are given to Moses regarding bread and yeast for the night of this first Passover and all the years to come?
2. What consequences are stated for any Israelite who eats bread with yeast during the seven day observance period?
3. Exodus 12:39 explains why the Israelites left Egypt with 'unleavened bread'; (For bread they baked flat cakes from the dough without yeast they had brought from Egypt. It was made without yeast because the people were driven out of Egypt in such a hurry that they had no time to prepare the bread or other food.) Deuteronomy 16:3 refers to this bread as the bread of 'affliction,' 'hardship,' or 'suffering. Why might the bread be called this? When the Israelites looked back at Egypt, what did God want them to remember?
4. Bread was a subject referred to many times in both the Old and New Testaments (almost 500 times in all.) How many times can you think of where bread featured as the subject either of a significant meal, a miracle, or a learning lesson? Which of these featured unleavened bread, and which featured 'regular' bread?
5. Jesus called himself the 'Bread of Life' and we will study that on Day 20 when manna miraculously appears in the desert to feed the starving Israelites. For now, we will focus on the topic of yeast ... why was it (and still is) such a specific command for the Jewish people to get rid of yeast during Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread? Consider the passage from Matthew 16 to find out what yeast symbolises in scripture.
6. What other insight to this teaching does Luke 12:1-3 give? ('Meanwhile, the crowds grew until thousands were milling about and stepping on each other. Jesus turned first to his disciples and warned them, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees—their hypocrisy. The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear!')
7. What else does Paul explain about this 'yeast' when he says, whilst dealing with a case of sin in the church, 'Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realise that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth.' (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)
8. Bearing in mind what yeast symbolically means, think about what it teaches us that the Israelites did not take any yeast with them when they left Egypt for their new lives.
9. Jesus uses unleavened bread when he tells his disciples, 'Take this and eat it, for this is my body.' (Matthew 26:26.) What is the significance of the bread having no yeast within it when Jesus says it is his 'body'.



Day 19 - The Red Sea Crossing - Baptism

The Bible is clear that it is faith alone that saves each person. However, closely tied with repentance (the turning away of the past self as you turn towards Jesus in faith) is baptism (a symbolic cleansing in water.) Just as Jesus spoke of communion (the sharing of bread and wine in memory of Jesus' sacrifice) as the expected practice of believers, so also he gave instructions regarding baptism when, in Matthew 28:19, he told his disciples to, 'Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'

The 'crossing of the Red Sea' is a type, pointing directly towards the future where, like the Israelites went through the waters and were 'baptised as followers of Moses', so too will believers be baptised as followers of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 states, 'I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptised as followers of Moses' or, in other versions, 'they were baptised into Moses in the cloud and the sea.'

Today, as we read of the Israelites' miraculous escape, we do it with our eyes towards the future, to where, just as the Israelites were finally freed by crossing out of Egypt, Pharaoh and all his army killed by the waters that swamped them, so too are people freed from their old selves as they begin their new lives in Jesus.

Key Reading: Exodus 14, Romans 6:3-7

Questions

1. According to scripture, 600 000 Israelite men left Egypt, along with women and children (Exodus 12:37.) What do the following verses tell us about God being present with the Israelites; 'The Lord went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. And the Lord did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.' (Exodus 13:21-22)
2. In Exodus 14:1-9, where does God instruct Moses to tell the people to camp? Why?
3. How do the Israelites respond to the armies of Pharaoh chasing after them? How does Moses encourage the Israelites? (Exodus 14:10-14)
4. Exodus 14:15-22 shows God preparing an escape route for the Israelites. What is the part they must play in their escape?
5. The remainder of Exodus 14 speaks of what happened to the Egyptians when they tried to recapture the Israelites. What is the response of the Israelites in verse 31? Is the transition from their old life to their new life finally complete?
6. Thinking about the big picture, of the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt pointing to the slavery of all mankind to death ... how important is it that the slave masters are gone? What does this represent in a believer's life? The instruction given to Saul (who became known as the disciple Paul) by Ananias after he met (and believed in Jesus) was, 'What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptised. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.' (Acts 22:16) What role do you think baptism plays for those who have turned to Jesus in faith (remembering that it is not salvation?)
7. What additional insight does Romans 6:3-7 bring?

Prayer Starter

Baptism is one of the topics that Christians possess different views on, from whether people should be sprinkled with water or fully immersed in it, if being christened as a baby fulfils the same role as an adult version and what the point of it is, if even it is necessary at all. The Red Sea Crossing can provide some helpful insight into the purposes and effects of baptism. As you pray today, ask God to help you more fully understand the significance of baptism, and to help you live your life as one whose past self, the sinful nature, has been left behind like Pharaoh's army, dead at the bottom of the sea!

Going Deeper: Matthew 3

Questions

1. John 'the Baptist' was already baptising people before Jesus died - in fact, even before Jesus began his active ministry. What was John's message to people? How does Matthew 3:2-3 explain what John's purpose was?
2. What does Matthew 3:11 say the people needed to do to be baptised (there are two requirements that John gives.) We have previously looked at repentance and faith being two sides of the same coin - as you turn away from your sinful nature, you also turn, in faith, to God. What faith was required for people to have, before Jesus was identified as God's chosen saviour?
3. Luke 3:15 says, 'Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah.' In which ways in Matthew chapter 3 did John say he was very different from the promised one who would come?
4. Luke 3:16 and Matthew 3:11 both say that Jesus will baptise 'by fire'. What do you think this means?
5. What occurred during Jesus' baptism?
6. It was after his baptism that Jesus began his ministry, leaving his life as a carpenter to travel the roads and towns of Israel teaching and performing miracles to authenticate his status as the promised one. Why do you think God 'required' Jesus to be baptised, or, as other translations put it, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' (Matthew 3:15)
7. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon certain people at particular times to fulfil specific purposes, for example, Moses, Joshua, Samson and Gideon. However, Jesus' parting words to the disciples (after his resurrection) include; 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere - in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 1:8) What has changed about who the Holy Spirit will 'come upon' (dwell within) after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Ephesians 1:13-14 also helps us to answer this question; 'And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.'



Day 20 - Manna - Jesus the True Bread from Heaven

The Israelites have left slavery behind them and are elated, worshipful and full of hope for the future ... until they get thirsty and hungry. It is no small matter to supply food and drink to a million or more people in a desert wilderness, and as soon as the threat of their new environment hits home, the people of Israel begin grizzling. They grumble against God, against Moses, and against Aaron and they look back longingly to the food and drink of Egypt. Slavery begins to look a bit appealing, compared to the alternative.

God, however, has a plan to feed them through all their years in the wilderness. The plan involves the Israelites relying on His provision to keep them alive, for without it they surely would have starved. The events that happen in the following forty years before the Israelites enter the promised land provide some of the richest and clearest 'types' of Jesus and his redeeming work. He, himself, claims the link to these distant shadows and tells the Jews that He is the fulfilment of these things 'written by Moses'. Jesus' seven stunning 'I Am' statements begin with the topic of today's study, the bread from heaven.

Key Reading: Exodus 16:11-26, John 6:29-40

Questions

1. The word 'manna' means, 'What is it?' This 'bread' was like nothing the Israelites had ever seen. Describe its appearance and how it formed each night. (Also look at this verse; 'The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers.' Exodus 16:31)
2. What special instructions were given about storing the manna on normal nights, and what was different for the night before the sabbath? What happened to the manna when these instructions were disobeyed?
3. What does Exodus 16:17-18 tell you about the amount of manna each person received? According to Exodus 16:35, for how long did this provision of food last? ('So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.')
4. Earlier in John chapter 6, Jesus had miraculously fed 5000 men (plus women and children) and now, the next day, some of these people are looking for him. What does he accuse them of really looking for in John 6:26? What does he tell them they should worry about instead?
5. What is the 'only' work Jesus tells them God wants them to do? (v28)
6. The people demand another miracle from Jesus, telling him that Moses gave their ancestors manna. How does Jesus reply in verses 32-33?
7. What does Jesus mean that he is the 'true bread of heaven' and the 'bread of life'?
8. How do the people react to his claim? How is their attitude similar to that of the Israelites in the wilderness? (v.41-42)
9. Read these verses from John 6:47-51, reflecting on this very clear explanation Jesus gave of how the miraculous manna of the wilderness pointed ahead to him; "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh." What other insights have you taken from the two key reading passages today?

Prayer Starter

Bread is life-giving, it is filling and sustaining, and for the Israelites, it was exactly the right amount for each person. No more, no less. Jesus told the Jews that they needed to 'eat his flesh and drink his blood' to receive eternal life, which, along with the claim that he had come down from heaven, was too offensive for them so that many followers left him that day. Even though all that Jesus was asking was for their faith in Him, the Son of God, they could not and would not understand or believe. What is God saying to you through the idea of 'bread from heaven'? Spend some time reflecting on what this means to you and respond in prayer.

Going Deeper: John 6

In 'Going Deeper' we are going to study John chapter 6 more extensively.

Questions

1. Why were a huge crowd of people following Jesus? How did he provide food for them all?
2. Looking at verses 12-13, imagine the scene. What about it might remind the people of manna?
3. The prophet the people speak of in verse 14 would be the one mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15; 'Moses continued, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.'" What has Jesus done in the first section of John chapter 6 to be 'like Moses?' Why would they want to 'force Jesus to be king'?
4. What do you think the 'seal of God's approval' is that Jesus speaks of in verse 27? According to Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV), what is the believer's 'seal'? ('And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal,

the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.')

5. What do you think the motives are of the Israelites as they search out Jesus the day after the miracle of the loaves and fishes? Why do they have such trouble believing Jesus could be anything more than just a man (rather than someone sent down from heaven?)

6. In verses 55-56 Jesus says, 'For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.' The idea of eating flesh and drinking blood would have been incredibly offensive to Jews as their law forbade eating any meat with blood in it as the 'life' of the animal was in its blood. ('The life of every creature is in its blood. That is why I have said to the people of Israel, 'You must never eat or drink blood, for the life of any creature is in its blood.' So whoever consumes blood will be cut off from the community.' Leviticus 17:14) What was Jesus trying to achieve by making such a stark statement?

7. Why did so many people desert Jesus after this teaching given that John 6:63 says the words were 'spirit and life'. What would you say to someone who found this scripture passage offensive, to convince them that Jesus was not speaking of literally eating flesh and blood?

8. What do you learn about God the Father in this chapter?

Congratulations! You have reached the halfway mark of The Road to Redemption! Part 2 continues tomorrow with The Water from the Rock - Jesus the Living Water.