

The Road to Redemption

Part 2 (Days 21-40)

21		Friday Mar 17	Water from the Rock - The Holy Spirit
22		Mar 18	The Ten Commandments- Jesus Fulfils the Law
		Mar 19 FOURTH SUNDAY	Movie night - Prince of Egypt
23	The Priesthood	Mar 20	The Tabernacle - God With Us
24		Mar 21	The Sacrificial System - Jesus the Perfect Sacrifice
25		Mar 22	The Priesthood - Jesus our High Priest
26		Mar 23	The Day of Atonement - Jesus our Scapegoat
27		Mar 24	The Golden Calf - The Old and New Covenant
28		Mar 25	The Bronze Serpent - Jesus is Lifted Up
		Mar 26 FIFTH SUNDAY	
29	The Kingdom	Mar 27	The Kingdom Begins - The Kingdom of God
30		Mar 28	King David - Jesus the Son of David
31		Mar 29	The Shepherd King - Jesus the Good Shepherd
32		Mar 30	The Suffering King - Jesus the King of the Jews
33		Mar 31	Daniel's Vision - Jesus the Son of Man
34	Son of God	April 1	The Triumphal Entry - The Coming of the King
		April 2 SIXTH SUNDAY	
35	It is Finished!	April 3	The Sign of Jonah - Repentance and Resurrection
36		April 4	Isaiah's 'Man of Sorrows' - Jesus the Suffering Servant
37		April 5	Day 37 - Light in the Darkness - Jesus the Light of the World
38	(Tenebrae Service)	April 6	Day 38 - Words of Comfort - The Testimony of Jesus
39	(Walk of Witness)	April 7 GOOD FRIDAY	Day 39 - The Last Supper - Covenant and Communion
40		April 8 Easter Saturday	Day 40 - Journey's End - Redemption and Resurrection
		EASTER SUNDAY	Celebration Service

Day 21 - Water from the Rock - The Holy Spirit

What things annoy you the most in life? What is something that will always push that button and make you want to snap at someone? For me, it is whinging, whining, grizzling ... any version of 'peevisish and fretful complaining' as the dictionary puts it. I can't stand it, and yet I am surrounded by whinging animals ... goats bleating, cats wanting to be fed, cows up the road mooing for their calves ... it all acts on my nerves like fingernails on a chalkboard.

The Israelites were champion whingers. They 'murmured' and 'grumbled' so effectively that, one day, God's anger literally ignited against them; ('Soon the people began to complain about their hardship, and the Lord heard everything they said. Then the Lord's anger blazed against them, and he sent a fire to rage among them, and he destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp.' (Numbers 11:1.))

The wilderness was a time of incredible challenge for the Israelites, whose ideas of freedom did not match up with the reality that confronted them. It was their own lack of faith that kept them in the desert far longer than they would have been, but there is no doubt hunger, thirst and tiredness were constant trials to them. They SHOULD have had faith for God to provide but, like grizzly kids on a long car journey, 'I'm hungry', 'I'm thirsty' and 'Are we there yet?' are the words which we remember them by, rather than, 'We trust God to provide.'

Water is something the Israelites craved; fresh, cool, clear life-giving water in huge, gushing amounts, rather than lukewarm sips of stale water carried along the way, or worse, no water at all. Today, we look at the miracle of water from the rock, and discover its real meaning, which was fulfilled through Jesus.

Key Reading: Exodus 17:1-7, John 4:1-26

Questions

1. Aside from being thirsty, what does Exodus 17:1-7 say that the complaint of the Israelites was? (v.7)
2. What specific way was Moses instructed to 'release' the water from the rock? What ideas do you have for what the water might represent to believers (if we think of spiritual water, rather than physical water)?
3. In John 4:1-26, Jesus has a conversation with a Samaritan woman. What does he tell her that she should ask him for? (v.10) How does she respond?
4. In verse 13, Jesus gives her more information about the water he offers. What does he tell her? Does Jesus say that he 'is' the water, or that he 'gives' the water?
5. What hint is there in v. 23-24 as to what the water is? What do you think it means to 'worship in spirit and in truth'?
6. In 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 Paul makes it very clear who the rock is that Moses struck; 'They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.' Why do you think that Moses was told to 'strike the rock'?
7. Jesus speaks again about this 'living water' in John 7:37-39. What does Jesus say that would have reminded the Jews about the water from the rock in their ancestors' time? How does John explain the meaning of Jesus' words? ('On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, "Rivers of living water will flow from his heart."'" When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.'))
8. Thinking back to the conversation with the Samaritan woman, who does Jesus confirm that he is? (John 4:25-26.)

Author's Note

Just as the Israelites would have died without the life-giving water in the desert, so too is the Holy Spirit needed for our new spiritual life in Christ. All believers have the Holy Spirit within them; it is the

gift given to us through Jesus ('And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."' (Galatians 4:6.)) The New Testament is full of references to the Holy Spirit and all that He does in the life of a believer, from the 'fruit' he brings such as love, joy, peace, patience etc. and the 'gifts' he endows, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith and healing; from the close relationship He helps us have with the Father, to the sin He convicts us of. Truly, 'rivers' of 'living water' flowing from our hearts! And our rock, Jesus, is the source.

Prayer Starter

According to Romans 8:26-27, 'And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.' Trust that the Holy Spirit will guide you into praying for what is needed today, and have faith that, just as you are prompted to pray, so your prayers are powerful and effective. ('The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.' James 5:16b.)

Going Deeper: Exodus 17:8-16, Ephesians 6:10-19, John 16:7-15

In 'Going Deeper' today we look at the Israelites' first battle, which was a sneak attack by the Amalekites, a nomadic people whose hatred for the Israelites caused them to repeatedly attack them over the following years. The Amalekites engaged in battles with Joshua, Gideon, Saul and David before they were finally wiped out during the reign of King Hezekiah. During this first attack, the Amalekites targeted the stragglers at the rear of the travelling Israelites, no doubt the young, elderly and frail. ('Never forget what the Amalekites did to you as you came from Egypt. They attacked you when you were exhausted and weary, and they struck down those who were straggling behind. They had no fear of God.' (Deuteronomy 25:17-18)) God demonstrated during this battle that it was His power rather than the Israelites' own strength which won the fight. We will consider this battle in the light of the 'spiritual battles' mentioned in the New Testament, and the role that the Holy Spirit plays in those.

Questions

1. In Exodus 17:8-16, why do you think Moses chose to stand on the hill holding up his staff during the battle? What happened whenever his arm became tired and dropped?
2. What caused the Israelites (led by Joshua) to win? What do you think God was teaching the Israelites on this day?
3. The NLT version misses out the weapon that Joshua used, but most versions mention that it was a sword. ('So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.' (v.13 NKJV).) According to Ephesians 6:10-18, who is the enemy that believers fight? Out of all the parts of our spiritual armour, what is the only weapon that we are given to fight with?
4. What does Ephesians 6:18 tell us we should be persistently doing? What do you think it means to 'pray in the Spirit'?
5. According to Hebrews 4:12, what is sharper than any sword? ('For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.')
6. It seems that the Holy Spirit and God's word (the Bible) work constantly together so that we can be effective in spiritual warfare. What does 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 tell us about our weapons? ('We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.')
7. How could you improve on your ability to wield God's word against temptation, deception, false teaching and other spiritual attacks?
7. In John 16:7-15, why does Jesus say that it is better for the disciples that he goes to heaven? According to his words, what are some other roles that the Holy Spirit (called advocate, comforter, helper or intercessor according to the translation) plays in the life of believers?

Day 22 - The Ten Commandments - Jesus Fulfils the Law

The end! Those two words usually mean something is finished, whether it is a book or movie, the end of a journey, or just the end of a packet of biscuits. There is an 'end' mentioned in Romans 10:4, 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.' Many people assume this verse means that Jesus has 'done away' with the law (God's commands, statutes, and ordinances given to the Israelites in the desert to tell them how to live a perfect life.) But Jesus, himself, said that he did NOT come to *abolish* (do away with) the law, but to *fulfil* it (Matthew 5:17.)

So, today, as we learn about the Israelites receiving the Ten Commandments, we consider a different meaning to the word 'end'. It can mean, 'intention, goal, purpose, design or aim' such as, 'to this end, she studied day and night'. As the NLT puts it, 'For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given' or, according to the NIV, 'Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.' (Romans 10:4.)

When God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments (and many other rules) thousands of years ago in the wilderness of Sinai, He was already looking ahead in time to when His Son would fulfil their purpose.

Key Readings: Exodus 20:1-20, Matthew 5:17-22

Questions

1. The law was given to the Israelites as part of a covenant with God - they agreed to keep His law and He promised they would be a nation special to Him. According to Exodus 19:5-6, what three things did He say they would become? ('Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.')
2. Using just a few words to describe each one, what were the ten commandments given to the Israelites?
3. There are, in total, over 600 commands given by God to Moses for the Israelites to live by. Will any of the Israelites be able to keep them all? Do you know the system that God put in place so that the Israelites could have their sins covered when they did sin, so they could remain in covenant with Him?
4. In the Key Reading from Matthew, what does Jesus say about the 'least detail' or ('jot and tittle' or 'least stroke of a letter') of the law? (v. 17-18) In what way do you think Jesus 'fulfilled the law' ('accomplished its purpose'), remembering that the law demonstrated what a perfect standard of life was?
5. In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus takes the command not to murder and explains it in a deeper and fuller way. How does he go further into the command than simply 'do not murder'? What effect do you think this would have had on those who heard him speak?
6. How did Jesus summarise the Ten Commandments in Matthew 22:37-40? ('Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.') Which of the ten commandments do you think fit into 'Love your God' and which fit 'Love your Neighbour' (other people.)
7. What does Romans 8:3-4 tell us about believers and the law? ('The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.')
8. Do you agree with the following quote? 'God's requirements have not altered, but we are not the ones to meet them. Praise God, He is the Lawgiver on the Throne, and He is the Lawkeeper in my heart. He who gave the Law, Himself keeps it.' -Watchman Nee, The Normal Christian Life

Prayer Starter

The law of God acts to show us the standard that we would need to live by for us to be righteous based on our own thoughts and actions. Jesus made it clear that this includes our thoughts and emotions as well as how we act. We can't meet that standard - which is why we need to put our faith in the one righteous person who *did* fulfil the law in order to be saved. Jesus summarised the Ten Commandments as 'Love God' and 'Love your Neighbour' - as you reflect on the different commandments, ask yourself if there are thoughts, feelings and actions in your life which you need to ask God to forgive you for. Are there ways you can love God better? Ways you could love the people you live with, work with, worship with better?

Going Deeper: Galatians 3:1-14, 19-29

Questions

1. The law was fulfilled when, finally, a man without sin died in the place of all people. According to Galatians 3:1-5, why did Paul call the Galatians foolish?
2. The scripture Paul refers to when he says, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law' is Deuteronomy 27:26; ('Cursed is anyone who does not affirm and obey the terms of these instructions.') What do you think it means, in this reference, to be 'cursed'?
3. What does Galatians 3:19 state is the reason that the law was given? How long was it designed to last? (NB: This can sound like a contradiction of Jesus who said he had not come to abolish the law, but fulfil it, so think carefully here. Consider the 613 Jewish laws given to Moses, many of which are ceremonial - are those still required by Christians? Does getting rid of the need to wear tassels on clothing and to keep the prescribed festival days also mean the moral law of God is abolished? When Jesus fulfilled the law, both by living without sin, and by covering the sin of all who failed to meet the standard of the law, how did the law cease in the lives of the Jews? How does the law yet stand as a testimony of God's perfection and man's inability to be righteous?)
4. In Galatians 3:21-25, Paul uses the idea of 'prisoners of sin.' He describes the law being a guardian and us kept in 'protective custody' (or 'locked up') for our protection. What do these images tell us about the law?
5. Verse 27 says that those who have been united with Christ in baptism, have put on Christ, like 'putting on new clothes'. What does this mean? (Romans 13:14, 'Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires'; Colossians 3:10, 'Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.')
6. On the evening before he was crucified, Jesus said to his disciples, 'If you love me, obey my commandments.' (John 14:15.) What do you think Jesus was referring to when he asked them to 'obey my commandments'? One clue is found in John 13:34; 'So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.' What other teachings might he be referring to?



Day 23 - The Tabernacle - God With Us

The Israelites agreed to obey God's law, and a special covenant ceremony took place. ('Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. Again they all responded, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded. We will obey."' Then Moses took the blood from the basins and splattered it over the people, declaring, "Look, this blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these instructions.'" (Exodus 24:7-8)) Next, seventy elders had an incredible encounter with God, where they saw Him standing on a floor of dazzling blue, and ate a meal in His presence. (see Exodus 24:9-11.)

Then, Moses vanished up the mountain for forty days and nights so God could give him specific instructions about building a 'tabernacle' or 'dwelling place' for God in the midst of the people. That,

while Moses was gone, the people demanded that Aaron build them an idol to lead them shows just how quickly good intentions can be undone (the second commandment being, ‘You shall not make for yourselves an idol.’) However, our focus today is on the Tabernacle and how it points ahead to a time when God would *always* ‘dwell’ (live/stay/reside) with mankind.

Key Reading: Exodus 25:1-9, Exodus 40:36-38

The tabernacle was a temporary place of worship for the Israelites in the desert which was eventually replaced by a temple under King Solomon. We will look more closely at the purpose of the different parts/furnishings of the tabernacle tomorrow.

Questions

1. What does God tell Moses about the purpose of the tabernacle? (Exodus 25:8)
2. The Tabernacle was a structure like a tent, set inside a courtyard made of curtains held together by hooks and poles. What do the following verses tell you about where the Tabernacle was placed? (“When the Israelites set up camp, each tribe will be assigned its own area. The tribal divisions will camp beneath their family banners on all four sides of the Tabernacle, but at some distance from it. (Numbers 2:2) and ‘Then the Tabernacle, carried by the Levites, will set out from the middle of the camp. All the tribes are to travel in the same order that they camp, each in position under the appropriate family banner.’ (Numbers 2:17.)
3. The Tabernacle was a place where a holy God could dwell in the midst of sinful people. According to Exodus 40:36-38, where did the presence of the Lord stay?
4. In the following prophecy of Isaiah, repeated in the instruction to Joseph, betrothed to Mary, what name was to be given to the promised seed when He came to Earth? (‘All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’.) (Isaiah 7:14); “And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All of this occurred to fulfil the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”(Matthew 1:21-23)
5. How does John emphasise God ‘dwelling’ with us through Jesus when he says, ‘So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.’ (John 1:14) Other versions say, ‘The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us’ (NIV) and ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (NKJ.) What difference is there between God ‘visiting’ His people/mankind and God ‘dwelling’ or ‘making his home’ amongst them?
6. The Tabernacle provided a place where God could dwell once more with people, as their sins were covered by blood sacrifices. Now, for us who live in the times after Jesus’ perfect sacrifice, where can God dwell? (‘No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. (1 John 4:12-13.))

NB: If you read the full Exodus account you will find a ‘Tent of Meeting’ outside of the camp mentioned as well as the Tabernacle in the centre of the camp. Whether they become the same ‘tent’ later in Exodus, or remain two separate places is a point on which scholars have different views. The key message is that God desired to ‘dwell’ with his chosen people.

Prayer Starter

God desires to *dwell* with you. If you have faith in the Son of God, then the Spirit of God *lives in* you. Think about the permanence of those words. God does not wish to remain distant, nor to visit briefly and depart. God wants to ‘stay, abide, inhabit, reside.’ His favour is upon *you*. Respond to God in prayer as the truth of those words settles within you.

Going Deeper: Revelation 21

The Tabernacle of the wilderness (and the temple in Jerusalem) provided a place where a holy God could dwell/reside/stay with sinful mankind (though always with a curtain separating them from the Most Holy Place.) Jesus became the ‘tabernacle’ where God dwelt with mankind on Earth, and through faith in Him, all believers now have God dwelling *inside* them. In ‘Going Deeper’ today, we look at a vision John describes in the book of Revelation about a future fulfilment of the Tabernacle, a place where God and people freely live together face to face as they did in Eden.

Questions

1. What is said in verse 3 of this passage that suggests the ‘New Jerusalem’ to be the final fulfilment of the promise of the Tabernacle - God with Us. (‘And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’ (NKJV) and ‘And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.’ (NIV.)
2. In verse 6, what does God call himself? What do you think this title means?
3. In verses 22-24, what are we told is the reason for there being no temple?
4. In Revelation 22:1-4, what similarities/references are there between the New Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden? (‘Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.’)
5. What does Revelation 21:2 and 21:9 say the city is/is like?
6. There are different interpretations of John’s vision ... that this chapter is about a literal city as it is described; that it is actually a picture of God’s people (his ‘bride’) or that it is today’s city of Jerusalem in Israel made new again. Whichever you decide is the most likely interpretation, this vision shows a glorious endpoint to what was begun in the wilderness tabernacle. What does it mean to you, personally, to know God desires to ‘dwell’ with and in His people? How does this perspective help you to understand the redemption story which began in the Garden of Eden and ends with ‘everything made new?’ (‘And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!”’ (Revelation 21:5))



Day 24 - The Sacrificial System - Jesus the Perfect Sacrifice

The purpose of the Tabernacle was to provide a place where a holy God could dwell with a sinful people. Any sin brings with it the same penalty that Adam and Eve experienced - death and separation from God. So, in His great mercy, God established a system of sacrifices by which the sins of the people could be covered (forgiven) until the promised seed came and redeemed (paid the debt, brought back) mankind once and for all. The animal sacrifice was a ‘substitution’ - the animal’s life instead of the sinner’s life and it pointed ahead, in faith, to when Jesus would be the substitute for every person in the world, once and for all time.

The different ‘furnishings’ of the Tabernacle (the Ark of the Covenant with its cover called the Mercy Seat, the Table of Showbread, the Golden Lampstand, Incense Altar, Bronze Altar, and Wash Basin) were all there either to symbolically cleanse and purify the people through the shed blood of animals, or to bring the people closer to God. God set aside the tribe of Levi to be priests serving in the Tabernacle and He put in place five different offerings that people could bring; some of these were for forgiveness of sins, some to show devotion and worship to Him and others to make their relationships right with fellow Israelites.

Today, in Going Deeper, we will look briefly at each of the furnishings of the Tabernacle and how they pointed ahead to Jesus, but in the Key Reading we will focus on him as the perfect sacrifice.

Key Reading: Leviticus 1:1-9, Hebrews 9:11-23

NB: the system of sacrifices is so intertwined with the priesthood that it's impossible to fully separate them, but we will focus mostly on the sacrifices today and the priesthood tomorrow.

Questions

1. According to Leviticus 1:1-3, what type/condition of animal is suitable for a burnt offering? Where should it be brought to?
2. What is the purpose of the burnt offering? (v.4-5) Why does God instruct the person to lay their hand on the animal? Who kills the animal - the person or the priest?
3. What was the role of the priests - what did they do to the blood and the body of the animal once it was killed? (v.5-9) NB: the burnt offering was unique in that the entire animal was burnt/consumed by fire except its skin.
4. As well as for individual sins, a burnt offering of lambs was carried out on behalf of all of the people daily (morning and night), and for Sabbaths, the New Moon, Passover and on certain special days. Why might God have instructed this offering to be always given, day by day?
5. In Hebrews 9:11-15, Paul compares the old system of sacrifices with Jesus' sacrifice. Describe why Jesus' sacrifice is superior (far better) than the old system. What has his death done for us?
6. Hebrews 9:16 explains that a will only comes into effect when the person whose will it is has died. What this means is there is no inheritance until the death is confirmed. However, the will exists in a legal form before that person's death, and the beneficiaries live in expectation that they will receive their inheritance at that time. How are the Israelites in Moses' time like the beneficiaries of a will that exists but is not yet in full effect?
7. Remembering that the curse of sin (from Eden) was death, and the sacrificed animal represented the person whose life it took the place of, what does it mean that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness?' (v.16-22) If Adam's sin separated people from God, why do you think blood came to be used to bind and enforce covenants between God and mankind?
8. How do Hebrews 9:11 and Hebrews 9:23 show that the things of the Old Testament are more than just things that happened in the past, for the past? It is an intriguing thought that the earthly Tabernacle is patterned after 'real things' in heaven. What do you think this means?

Prayer Starter

Unfortunately, God frequently had to rebuke the Israelites for bringing their offerings without meaning it within their hearts. Hosea 6:6 says, 'I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings' and 1 Samuel 15:22, 'What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of ram.'

Consider your own heart and mind when it comes to your Christian life. Do you find yourself often going through the motions rather than coming to God with your obedience, your desire to grow in knowledge of Him and your loyalty to Him above all? In Romans 12:1, Paul pleads with believers to bring acceptable 'sacrifices' to God; 'And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him'.

Reflect on these things and pray.

Going Deeper: Exodus 40:17-33

For the following questions, read the descriptions of the different parts of the Tabernacle, and compare them to the New Testament scriptures at the end of the Questions section. Decide which scripture/set of scriptures you think best matches a fulfilment of the part's purpose by Jesus in his life and death. For example, Question 5, the Table of Showbread is obviously a match to the scripture, 'I am the bread of life' so '5' matches with 'A'.

Questions

1. The Tabernacle included a fenced courtyard made of curtains (150 feet x 75 feet, with the fence 7 feet high), with only one entrance through a 30 foot wide curtained gate. Exodus 27:16, ““For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Make it from finely woven linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet thread. Support it with four posts, each securely set in its own base.””
2. Once an Israelite had entered the gate, the first thing they saw was the Brazen Altar (brazen means ‘bronze’ in the Bible.) Here, they presented the animal they had brought with them, and sacrificed it. The Altar was the largest Tabernacle item; no one could go further into the area without being reminded that access to God depended on being cleansed by blood. Exodus 27:1-2, ““Using acacia wood, construct a square altar 7 1/2 feet wide, 7 1/2 feet long, and 4 1/2 feet high. Make horns for each of its four corners so that the horns and altar are all one piece. Overlay the altar with bronze.”” Leviticus 17:11 says, ‘for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the Lord. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible.’
3. The courtyard was also called the ‘Outer Court’. The second piece of furnishing in the courtyard was the bronze washbasin (or laver) used by the priests for ceremonial washing, to cleanse themselves before entering the tent and before offering sacrifices. ““Make a bronze washbasin with a bronze stand. Place it between the Tabernacle and the altar, and fill it with water. Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there. They must wash with water whenever they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the Lord and when they approach the altar to burn up their special gifts to the Lord—or they will die! They must always wash their hands and feet, or they will die. This is a permanent law for Aaron and his descendants, to be observed from generation to generation.”” (Exodus 30:18-21)
4. Only priests were allowed to enter the tent, which was divided into two spaces by a thick veil which separated the Holy Place from the ‘Most Holy Place’ or ‘Holy of Holies’ where only the high priest was allowed to go, and only once a year. We will look at the Holy of Holies tomorrow. The Holy Place contained, on either side, the Golden Lampstand and Table of Showbread, with the golden Altar of Incense directly in front of the veil. In terms of the lampstand, ““Make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold. Make the entire lampstand and its decorations of one piece - the base, centre stem, lamp cups, buds, and petals. Make it with six branches going out from the centre stem, three on each side.”” (Exodus 25:31-32.) God commanded the light to be always burning, ““Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to keep the lamps burning continually.”” (Exodus 27:20.)
5. The Table of Showbread (or ‘Bread of the Presence’ or ‘Shewbread’) was a table made of pure gold that always had twelve loaves of bread on it, in two piles of six, one loaf to represent each tribe of Israel. The bread was sprinkled with frankincense and changed weekly; a food offering to the Lord. ‘Place the Bread of the Presence on the table to remain before me at all times.’ (Exodus 25:30) and ‘Every Sabbath day this bread must be laid out before the Lord as a gift from the Israelites; it is an ongoing expression of the eternal covenant.’ (Leviticus 24:8.)
6. The Altar of Incense was where the priests burned a mixture of spices and resins twice a day (at the same time as the burnt offerings.) The white smoke represented the prayers of the people ascending to God. Exodus 30:6, ““Place the incense altar just outside the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant, in front of the Ark’s cover—the place of atonement—that covers the tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. I will meet with you there.””

Match with the following scriptures that show Jesus fulfilled the purpose of that part of the Tabernacle:

- A. ‘Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again.” (John 6:35a) and ‘As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take this and eat it, for this is my body.”’ (Matthew 26:26)
- B. ‘For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.’ (Ephesians 5:25-27). Also, Hebrews 10:22, ‘Let us go right into the

- presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.'
- C. Hebrews 13:15, 'Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name' and Revelation 8:3-4, 'Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and stood at the altar. And a great amount of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people as an offering on the gold altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, mixed with the prayers of God's holy people, ascended up to God from the altar where the angel had poured them out.'
- D. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." and Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."
- E. John 1:8-9 speaks of the true light coming into the world, 'John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world' and John 8:12, 'Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness because you will have the light that leads to life."'
- F. From 2 Corinthians 5:21, 'For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.' Leviticus 1:9 states, 'But the internal organs and the legs must first be washed with water. Then the priest will burn the entire sacrifice on the altar as a burnt offering. It is a special gift, a pleasing aroma to the Lord' and Ephesians 5:2, 'Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.'



Day 25 - The Priesthood - Jesus our High Priest

When you were growing up, was there a place in your home that you were not allowed to go? A cupboard not to open, something special you were not to touch, a part of your property you were ordered to keep away from? For me, it was the china cabinet where my mother's precious collection of breakable things was kept. I beheld it with a touch of awe and fear because I knew the punishment for opening it would be swift and painful!

After God appointed Moses' brother, Aaron, to be the high priest of Israel, his sons soon found out that the role of priesthood given to them came with high expectations of their behaviour. Nadab and Abihu decided to offer some incense outside of the very strict commands God had given, and fire from the Lord 'consumed them' right there on the spot. Their bodies, still dressed in their new priestly tunics, were carried out past the watching Israelites. I wonder if some were secretly glad they were not appointed priests so they could never enter the Tabernacle themselves and risk such a fate.

The two men died in the 'Holy Place' where the priests went daily to tend to duties such as the lamps, bread and incense. Far more sacred was the 'Most Holy Place' or 'Holy of Holies' which could only be entered once a year, and only by the High Priest. When he went behind that veil, he went knowing that he was entering the presence of God, and that only by the blood he carried could he possibly survive. I suspect nervous and fearful, or perhaps 'secretly terrified' might be some of the emotions he felt. We, however, are told to 'have confidence' to enter the Most Holy Place (Hebrews 10:19) and to 'approach God's throne of grace 'boldly' (Hebrews 4:16.) That is the difference faith in Jesus makes.

Key Reading: Hebrews 9:1-8, Hebrews 10:19-25

NB: tomorrow we will look more specifically at the Day of Atonement, which was the only day when the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place.

Questions

1. According to Hebrews 9:1-5, what did the Ark of the Covenant have inside it? What did its cover (also called the Mercy Seat) have on it?
2. What warning did God give to Aaron in Leviticus 16:2 and why? ('The Lord said to Moses, "Warn your brother, Aaron, not to enter the Most Holy Place behind the inner curtain whenever he chooses; if he does, he will die. For the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—is there, and I myself am present in the cloud above the atonement cover."')
3. What were God's instructions for when the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and what was the Holy Spirit teaching us through this? (Hebrews 9:7-8)
4. The 'Going Deeper' study today focuses more on Jesus, our high priest, but what do the following verses tell us about his role? ('Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people's sins. The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever.' (Hebrews 7:27-28))
5. The veil within the tabernacle that blocked the way to the Most Holy Place (God's presence) was replaced by a far larger curtain when the temple was built. Jewish tradition suggests the curtain in the temple at the time of Jesus' death was the thickness of a man's hand and around 60 feet (18 metres) high. What does Matthew 27:50-51a say happened to this curtain at the exact time that Jesus died? ('Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.') What was God telling us by tearing this curtain apart?
6. In Hebrews 10:19-25, what is the 'curtain' and who is the 'great priest'? What does this passage teach us about our own lives? (NB: the NIV version says, 'by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body' and the NKJV, 'by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.')
7. The role of the priests included presenting offerings and incense, teaching the law, looking after the Tabernacle and a variety of other tasks, including deciding who needed to isolate for an illness and speaking blessings over the people. In 1 Peter 2:5, all believers are said to be part of a 'royal priesthood'; ('You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.') 1 Peter 2:9 adds, 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.' How do you think believers are like a spiritual priesthood? If one of our roles is to 'declare the praises of God', how do we go about it?

(NB: if you are extremely observant, you may have noticed that it states in the Hebrews 9 reading that the altar of incense was in the Most Holy Place, when all other references have it in the Holy Place - possibly this is because the altar of incense was so closely associated with the Ark of the Covenant that they are linked in the writer's description, or perhaps because on the one day that the veil was drawn back it appeared as if they both were in the Most Holy Place. The gold standard of where it was positioned lies in the instructions God gave to Moses, which situated it in the Holy Place.)

Prayer Starter

What does it mean to you, to be able to go freely into God's presence? Do you approach boldly and with confidence because of Jesus' sacrifice for you? Do you keep that sense of wonder and awe which the Israelites would have felt if they had been told they could now enter the Holy of Holies (and survive?) How should being one of the 'royal priesthood' affect your life? What sacrifice can you offer today - praise to God, prayer for others, your time, your talents, your entire self?

Going Deeper: Hebrews 7:1-4, 7:15-28 (Read the whole chapter if you have time.)

All priests were Levites, but of them, it was only descendants of Aaron who could minister inside the Tabernacle (or temple) and become ‘high priests’. Other Levites assisted by acting as guards, singing psalms, looking after the tent/building and serving as teachers and judges. Jesus was born through Mary as a descendant of Judah, therefore his priesthood could not come to him by birth - instead, God appointed Jesus a priest in a greater priesthood than Aaron’s, that of the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is quite a mysterious character whom Abraham met after he had rescued his nephew Lot from King Kedorlaomer’s army. Melchizedek brought Abraham bread and wine, and blessed him. Abraham responded by giving Melchizedek a tenth of what he had recovered from the skirmish with the army. (‘After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you.” Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.’ (Genesis 14:17-10.)).

Hebrews chapter 7 is dedicated to showing how Melchizedek is a ‘type’, pointing towards Jesus our High Priest, and that the type of priest that Jesus is, (one of the ‘order of Melchizedek’) is far greater than those of Aaron’s line.

Questions

1. What two kinds of positions/roles did Melchizedek have that no one else in the Bible (aside from Jesus) ever held at the same time (Hebrews 7:1)
2. What does it suggest about the importance of Melchizedek compared to Abraham, that Abraham gave him a tenth of what he had?
3. What does Hebrews 7:3 tell us about how Melchizedek resembles Jesus (NB: it was unusual for a man not to be identified by his lineage. This does not mean Melchizedek was immortal, just that he was a ‘type’ or ‘foreshadowing’ pointing to Jesus, who was not a priest through his birth.)
4. In Hebrews 7:16, what requirement did Jesus meet to become a priest in the order of Melchizedek? How is this priesthood better than the other one (verses 7:15-24)? (NB: The prophecy regarding the ‘oath’ comes from King David and is written in Psalm 110:4, ‘The Lord has taken an oath and will not break his vow: “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”’)
5. What does Jesus do for those who come to God through Him (v25)?
6. What kind of high priest is Jesus - what characteristics does he show (v26-28)?
7. In Hebrews 6:18-20, Paul says, ‘So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.’ How does knowing that Jesus has ‘gone before us’ give us confidence to follow him into the presence of God? What do you think the hope is that Paul refers to in this passage which ‘anchors our soul’ and leads us into the presence of God?



Day 26 - The Day of Atonement - Jesus our Scapegoat

For Christians, our main celebrations of faith in the year are Christmas Day and the Easter weekend, which includes both Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Of those, the most solemn ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ day is, without doubt, Good Friday, when we remember the death of Jesus on the cross and how it was our sins which placed him there.

The Jewish people have a regular cycle of seven feasts or festivals, each full of deep meaning, as well as weekly Sabbaths (Shabbat.) Of all the holy days, the most solemn of all is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is marked by twenty-four hours of prayer and fasting, asking for forgiveness of sins and also that each person's name might be 'sealed' in the book of life so they can spend eternity in heaven.

The Jews have not had a temple in Jerusalem since 70 AD, and so for almost 2000 years they have not been able to carry out any of the animal sacrifices or the instructions for the Day of Atonement that we will study today. Christians believe that God has provided the perfect 'scapegoat' and 'sacrifice' so that no further sacrifices will ever be needed. Jesus has fulfilled the true meaning of the Day of Atonement and it is through faith in him that our names are securely written in the 'Book of Life' (see 'Going Deeper' today for more on this.)

The truest meaning of the Day of Atonement is revealed when the shadow of the cross falls across it and we see it as a 'type' pointing to Jesus.

Key Reading: Leviticus 16:1-25

Questions

1. In Leviticus 16:8-10, Aaron 'casts lots' to decide what happens to the two goats. What are the two different fates (outcomes) that are being decided on? (NB: casting lots means that Aaron would shake a box holding two stones, one labelled 'For God' and one 'For Azazel', then, without looking at it, he would take a stone out in his right hand and lay it on the goat to his right, and do the same with the left hand with the other stone and goat to see which lot fell to which goat. 'Azazel' may represent either the physical wilderness, or the spiritual kingdom of evil - or both.)
2. What does Aaron do with the blood of the goat for the 'sin offering'? What do the verses say was the reason for doing this? (v.15-19) (NB: remember that 'atonement cover' and 'mercy seat' are both names for the lid of the Ark of the Covenant.)
3. Leviticus 4:2 and 4:13 explains the reason for a sin offering - what is it? "Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. This is how you are to deal with those who sin unintentionally by doing anything that violates one of the Lord's command" and, "If the entire Israelite community sins by violating one of the Lord's commands, but the people don't realise it, they are still guilty."
4. Jesus became the ultimate sin offering for us; 'For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.' (2 Corinthians 5:21) and Romans 3:23-25a, 'For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.' In these two readings about Jesus, what was the result of his sacrifice ... how does God view people now (if they have belief in his Son?) What did Jesus free us from - what would the penalty for sin have been without his sacrifice?
5. 'Atonement' is the bringing together of God and man by the paying of the price for sin. God himself paid this price through his Son becoming the substitute to stand in our place. (1 John 2:2, 'He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.') If the goat that was sacrificed represents this payment for sin (the turning away of wrath/judgement), what do you think the message of the second goat is? (Leviticus 16:20-22)
6. Who 'lays' the sins of all people on Jesus? ('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.' (Isaiah 53:6))
7. The scapegoat never returned to the camp ... it either died in the wilderness or, according to Jewish tradition, it was 'pushed off a cliff' by the man who took it out of the camp to make certain it never returned! What do the following verses say happens to all of the sin that Jesus carried in our place; 'He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west' (Psalm 103:12) and 'Then he says, "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds." And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.' (Hebrews 10:17-18.)

Author's Note

After pondering for some time why God gave two, separate messages via two, separate goats on the Day of Atonement, this is my conclusion; The Day of Atonement shows us there are two things which happen through the death of Jesus. The *penalty for sin is paid*, so that eternal judgement does not come upon believers. Also, *all of our sins are taken away from us*. This means we are fully reconciled, brought back to that close relationship with God because we are 'counted as righteous.' (As Romans 4:8 says, 'Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin.')

For example, it is the difference between being given a hefty fine for speeding, then at court a judge declaring it is paid already on your behalf COMPARED TO the judge saying, 'Not only is this fine paid, but your record has been wiped clean.'

I believe this conclusion is confirmed in Jeremiah 31:34b which we will look at closely on Day 39, but for now, "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." 'I will forgive their sins' (sin offering goat) AND 'I will never again remember their sins' (scapegoat.) What do *you* think?

Prayer Starter

We all have regrets - things we have said or done in the past that pain our hearts and make us want to slide under the bed and hide in shame. What hope does the message of the scapegoat give to us? Paul, who had much to regret after persecuting Christians and having them jailed and killed, could have been so consumed with guilt that he never wrote the wonderful letters that have helped millions of people come to faith. Whilst never forgetting who he was before he encountered Jesus, and, at times using it as his testimony of the mercy of God, he says this, 'I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.' (Philippians 3:13b-14.) What do we do with those regrets, some years old, that continue to plague us? Seek prayer and the support of others if this is an area of difficulty for you.

Going Deeper: Leviticus 23:23-32

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, follows after Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets. According to Jewish tradition, on Rosh Hashanah, God opens three books and each person's name is recorded in one depending on the types of lives they are living. Their name is written in the Book of Life if their deeds are good, written in the Book of Death if their deeds are evil or in a third book for those who are in between. The Ten Days of Awe (as the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called) are a period of time where people can change their hearts and minds to ensure they are safely sealed into the Book of Life rather than the Book of Death at the end of the ten days (i.e. have their names moved from that third book securely into the Book of Life.) Whichever book they are in determines if they live or die that year. Repentance, prayer and good deeds are all ways to have their name placed in the Book of Life.

In 'Going Deeper' today we look at the original command God gave for the Feast of Trumpets, how the feast points to Jesus, and what a Christian perspective is of the Book of Life.

Questions

1. The Feast of Trumpets is one of three feasts that are held in Autumn. Given that ten days later, the solemn Day of Atonement would be held, what do you think the blowing of trumpets was announcing to the Israelites?
2. In the scriptures, trumpets were blown to mark Sabbaths and holy days, for war, to announce a king, as a musical instrument and to call the community together. However, it was as a warning that the trumpets were sounded at the Feast of Trumpets telling the people to prepare themselves in prayer and repentance for the upcoming Day of Atonement. Look at the following verses and see what the trumpet blast is being used for each time:
 - 'Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem! Raise the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the Lord is upon us.' (Joel 2:1)
 - 'For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died

will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.’

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

- ‘And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.’ (Matthew 24:30-31)
 - ‘But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.’ (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
3. If the Feast of Trumpets is a ‘type’ or ‘foreshadowing’ pointing ahead and warning us to be ready for the ‘Day of the Lord’ when all mankind is judged except for those who prepared well by repenting and turning to Jesus in faith, then it makes sense that it is linked to the ‘Book of Life’. This book, according to the Bible, is a list of all those whose faith has guaranteed their eternal life in heaven. Whilst Revelation 20:15 contains a sombre warning, ‘And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire’, what hope and encouragement is there for the believer in Revelation 3:5; “‘All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine’” and “‘But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.’” (Luke 10:20.)
 4. The Jews who spend the Ten Days of Awe attempting to have their names recorded in the ‘Book of Life’ have missed what vital point about salvation? (“‘For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, ‘The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.’ There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.’” (Acts 4:11-12)



Day 27 - The Golden Calf - The Old and New Covenant

Before we leave the books of Exodus and Numbers to explore other scripture in the Old Testament that points to Jesus, we are going to look at two of the Israelites’ greatest failures from their wilderness years. Between the Israelites entering the covenant with God by promising to obey his commands and laws, and Moses receiving the Ten Commandments inscribed on stone, there is the not-so-little problem of the golden calf. That the Israelites failed so completely and so soon (it only took forty days) shows how impossible it was for the ‘old’ covenant to save anyone; it could only point out the sinfulness of mankind and their need to be saved by someone other than themselves. A second example of human failure is shown in the story of the Bronze serpent, which we will study tomorrow.

Thankfully, a new covenant was foretold by the prophets Ezekial and Jeremiah, and finally brought into effect by Jesus. Today’s study of the Golden Calf is a reminder of how hopelessly trapped mankind is in sin, despite our best efforts, and how wonderful (and necessary) the new covenant is, a covenant that God himself writes on our hearts rather than on tablets of stone.

Key Reading: Exodus 32

Questions

1. What reason did the Israelites give Aaron for wanting him to make them another ‘god’? What did they want this ‘god’ to do for them? (v.1)
2. How did Aaron make the statue? Who did the Israelites say the statue was? (v2-4)

3. Aaron tells the people that the next day there will be a festival to the Lord. Do you think he is buying time (as he expects Moses to return), blending together the Golden Calf with God (so that it is a mixed religion of the God of the covenant and the Egyptian gods they had lived with until recently), wholeheartedly agreeing that the golden calf is indeed their 'god', or something else?
4. What does God tell Moses he intends to do because of the idol worship? (v7-9)
5. What is Moses' response? (v11-20.) Why do you think he broke the stone tablets?
6. How does the story of the Golden Calf end? (v.21-25.) Despite the terrible events of that day, do you think it was long before the Israelites grumbled or rebelled again?
7. The Covenant of Moses (the 'Old Covenant') relied on the behaviour of the Israelites to keep their side of the agreement and was written on tablets of stone. Compare this Old Covenant to what was prophesied about the New Covenant; "The day is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord. "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbours, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the Lord. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."
(Jeremiah 31:31-34) How is our relationship with God different in the new covenant than the old?
8. The old covenant required the shed blood of sacrifices day after day, year after year. Even then, no one was saved by those sacrifices but only because of the future, final sacrifice that Jesus made which ushered in the New Covenant. What do we do regularly at church on purpose to remind us of this new covenant (we will look at this more on Day 39.)

NB: See 'Going Deeper' for more study about the new covenant versus the old covenant

Prayer Starter

For almost 4000 years (from Adam to Jesus) mankind had looked, in faith, to the time when the promised seed would break the curse of death once and for all. It took the Son of God, a pure, sinless sacrifice, standing in our place to pay the price of our sin. He brought us back, *redeemed* us, to eternal life and close relationship with God. Jeremiah 31:34 shows us how God views this new covenant, "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." Price paid, absolute forgiveness, righteousness received. Sin offering AND scapegoat. Reflect on this as you pray today.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 10:1-18

Questions

1. What does it mean that the law was only a 'shadow', a 'dim preview' of the good things to come? (v.1)
2. Why did the sacrifices have to be repeated year after year (v.1-4)
3. Why do you think v.5-8 states that God did not 'want' sin offerings and burnt offerings, nor was He pleased by them, when he had directed Moses to establish the system of sacrifices?
4. What is there in verse 9 to show that the old covenant is no longer valid/needed/in place? (NB: the law is fulfilled in Jesus, and still exists to show mankind we are sinners unable to meet the perfect standard of a holy God, but the covenant based on that law has been replaced by a new covenant.)
5. What is God's will for us? How has it been achieved? What does it mean that we are 'made perfect' (or 'perfected')? (v.10-14.)
6. Verses 15-18 are taken from Jeremiah 31:33-34 (as in Question 7 of the 'Key Reading' section today.) How are they also reflected in this prophecy from Ezekiel, "And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." (Ezekiel 36:26-27) What do you think it means that God 'writes

his commands on our hearts and minds'? What helper has He given us to help us 'follow His decrees and obey His regulations'?

7. In 2 Corinthians 3:3 and 3:6 Paul again refers to the new covenant being 'of the Spirit' and 'carved on hearts' rather than on tablets of stone. ('Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.' 'He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.') What do you think it means that the covenant is 'of the Spirit'? What part do we play in this new covenant, if it is not that we *have* to keep all of the laws that God commanded Moses?



Day 28 - The Bronze Serpent - Jesus is Lifted Up

The Bible verse of John 3:16 is dearly loved by Christians all over the world. No doubt the sentence has been used countless times to explain to unbelievers the 'gospel' (the Good News of Jesus) as well as being a source of comfort and confidence to the believer. '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.' Such wonderful words that capture the essence of redemption - mankind brought back to their loving creator because of the price willingly paid by the Son of God. Despite the profound truth they contain, these words do not stand alone, yet how many people remember the sentences Jesus spoke on either side of this famous sentence?

The John 3:16 verse is found in the middle of an explanation of how Moses' bronze serpent of the desert pointed directly ahead through time to Jesus, and how he fulfils its true meaning. 'And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.' (John 3:14-15) and 'God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.' (John 3:17.)

Today, we look at this short but powerful story of the bronze serpent, which clearly foreshadows the work of the promised seed, Jesus, on the cross, as he breaks the curse of sin (death) from everyone who looks to him in faith.

Key Reading: Numbers 21:4-9, John 3:13-21, John 12:27-36.

Questions

1. In Numbers 21:4-5, what do the Israelites complain about?
2. How did the Lord punish the Israelites, and what was Moses' response? (v.6-7)
3. Whose idea was it to make the serpent out of bronze? What instruction does God give about how to use the bronze serpent to be saved from the snakes?
4. Does it seem strange that the Israelites were saved by looking at the bronze serpent since the second commandment forbids idols, and they were harshly punished by God for making the golden calf? We have seen before that things in scripture that seem very peculiar might well be a 'type' pointing ahead to Jesus. Think about the different parts of the bronze serpent and what they might represent:
 - The serpent (1 Peter 2:24, 'He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.') NB: the answer is not Jesus!
 - The pole (Galatians 3:13, 'But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."')
 - Bronze metal is said to represent God's 'righteous judgement' in the Bible. The bronze altar (where blood was shed) was where sin was 'paid for' in the substituted death of an animal, and the bronze wash basin was where the priests were cleansed. These were outside of the

tabernacle but the items inside the tabernacle were gold. How does the bronze serpent also show that the penalty for the Israelites' sin was dealt with?

- Jesus directs us to make the connection between the bronze serpent and himself. Look at his conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:13-21. What does Jesus mean when he says he must be 'lifted up.' (v.14-15) What do verses 18-21 say about why people are judged and 'perish'?
5. The passage from John 12 speaks of the time when Satan is to be 'cast out'. How is this a fulfilment of the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 ('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.')
 6. The Israelites had only to look at the bronze serpent and be saved, but this was not an act of worship towards the bronze serpent, trusting it had healing powers in itself. Rather, it was an act of faith that God would save them if they did as He instructed them. How can that simple act of faith of the Israelites (raising their eyes to the bronze serpent) give further comfort and confidence to people who love the words of 'John 3:16'? How could the story of the bronze serpent give more understanding of John 3:16 to those who do not yet believe?

NB: Many years later, King Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent because 'the people of Israel had been offering sacrifices [burning incense] to it.' (2 Kings 18:4) They had forgotten the message of the bronze serpent was that God, not the serpent itself, was powerful to save and were not only worshipping it, but other false gods such as the goddess Asherah. They did not understand that the bronze serpent was part of the story of the Messiah, a prophecy of how he would die whilst bearing their sins. Most of their descendants who saw Jesus and spoke with him did not 'recognise the light' who was God amongst them. They completely missed the point of all the things that had gone before that showed the Messiah MUST die for all to be saved (John 12:34.)

Prayer Starter

The Israelites were instructed to 'look at' the bronze serpent to be saved AFTER they were bitten by a snake, rather than being told that God would prevent them from being bitten in the first place. Those people already knew they were dying and so, in desperation, looked to the bronze serpent or, as the NLT puts it, 'simply' looked at the serpent and were healed.

All of us have been bitten by the same 'serpent' which is sin. All of us are under a death sentence because of it. All of us can 'simply' look to Jesus in faith for the true cost is upon him. However, the 'look' must be one of faith, for others have stared at Jesus and turned away, despising him or deciding he was 'only' a man, and unable to save anyone.

Who do you need to pray for who does not realise they have been 'bitten' by the curse of sin? Have you, yourself, come to understand your need for a saviour and to look to Jesus in faith? Is your prayer one of thankfulness for the 'simplicity' of the way we are saved, through faith, and not of our own value/works/pain?

Going Deeper: Exodus 34:28-35, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

We complete our time with the Israelites in the wilderness with another symbol that travels through time to teach us about the new covenant we have in Jesus which is far greater, and far more permanent than the old. As Paul explains, 'If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way.' (2 Corinthians 3:9-10.) In our key reading today, Jesus prayed and said, "Father, bring glory to your name." Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, "I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again." (John 12:28.) Let us see if we can understand a little deeper about this 'glory' by looking at the 'veil' which Moses wore.

Questions

1. The Exodus passage comes from Moses' second forty day period on Mt. Sinai after the incident of the Golden Calf. He prepared two more stone tablets to replace those he had broken, and climbed

the mountain to where ‘The Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh.’ (Exodus 34:5.) Moses prayed that God would forgive the people and still make them His special possession. The covenant (the ‘old’ covenant of laws) is confirmed with God inscribing on the new tablets the Ten Commandments. What does Moses look like on his return, and why do Aaron and the people of Israel react like they do? (v.29-30)

2. What reasons can you think of why Moses might have veiled his face then, and in future times he spoke with God? (v.31-35)
3. ‘Glory’ in the Bible is defined as brightness or splendour, great power and strength, majesty and honour ... or a combination of all those things. What does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 3:7 about the glory of the first covenant, and why Moses veiled his face?
4. In 2 Corinthians 3:8-11 how does Paul compare the glory of the old and new covenant?
5. How does Paul use the image of the veil to explain why some people do not yet believe the truth of Jesus? (v.13-16.) These verses from 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 help further explain this idea; ‘If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. You see, we don’t go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.’
6. How should we, as believers with the ‘veil removed’, act? (2 Corinthians 3:12, 17-18.)
7. Read these different translations of 2 Corinthians 3:18 and see if you can reach a fuller understanding of the ‘glory’ we are growing in:
 - ‘But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ (NKJV)
 - ‘So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.’ (NLT)
 - ‘And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.’ (NIV)



Day 29 - The Kingdom Begins - The Kingdom of God

We sing many songs about Jesus (or God) being king. ‘Crown Him with Many Crowns’, ‘Praise my Soul the King of Heaven’, and ‘All Creatures of our God and King’ are well-known hymns where the words directly speak of a supreme king ruling over all of the Earth and the people who live in it. Contemporary songs such as ‘Amazing Love’ and ‘What a Beautiful Name’ include lyrics such as ‘How can it be that You, my King, would die for me’ and ‘What a beautiful name it is, The name of Jesus Christ my King’, and Christmas carols are full of references to the ‘newborn king.’ I wonder, however, how many of us spend time thinking about this kingdom.

The Jews had had kings in the past, beginning with Saul, but their kingdom’s history was one of division and being conquered and exiled by powerful forces such as the Assyrians and Babylonians. At the time Jesus was born into the world, the Jews were anxiously looking ahead for the promised Messiah, a conquering hero, who would overthrow the Roman authorities. Jesus spoke of the ‘kingdom’ fifty-three times in the book of Matthew alone, but this kingdom was very different from what the Jews were expecting ... for now, at least.

Key Reading: 1 Samuel 10:17-26 and individual verses about the Kingdom of God (see Questions)

NB: God is the mighty and powerful creator, the ruler of this and all worlds, high above all. However, because the focus of the Road to Redemption is on how the Old Testament points to Jesus, it is Jesus' role as king that we will be looking at specifically. God expected the Israelites to want a king (once they were settled into the land He had promised them) so he gave them instructions on how a king should behave (in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, which you can look up if you are interested.) Today's first key reading shows the point in time where the first king of Israel was established, and the other Bible verses show us that Jesus is king of a kingdom not 'of this world'. 'Going Deeper' looks at what it means to be 'born again' into the kingdom.

Questions

1. What reason is given in 1 Samuel 10:18-19 for the Israelites wanting a king?
2. Saul had known he was the chosen one after being anointed by Samuel on a previous day - why do you think he hid in the baggage? What is it about Saul's appearance that makes the people approve of him as a king? (NB: After this the Spirit of God came upon Saul so he could lead the Israelites to an amazing victory over the Ammonites. The people were delighted with their new king and confirmed him in the role.)
3. Fast forward to Israel at the time of Jesus, where the Jews were longing for the Messiah to come and lead them to victory over the Romans, and to set up an eternal kingdom where they would be rulers. What do these prophecies from the Old Testament say about a victorious Messiah?
 - Daniel 2:44 (During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever.)
 - Zechariah 14:9 ('And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one Lord—his name alone will be worshipped.')
 - Genesis 49:10 ('The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honour.')
4. In Mark 1:14-15, what was Jesus' message to the people? ('Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"')
5. What did Jesus say the kingdom of God was NOT? ('Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."' (John 18:36))
6. What did Jesus say about the importance of the kingdom? ("The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field." (Matthew 13:44))
7. Who is part of the kingdom of God? ("Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:47-50))
8. How can someone enter the kingdom of God? ('Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' (John 3:5-7.)')

Prayer Starter

The Kingdom of God is a huge subject and too much to cover in a short day or two. However, Jesus being a king is the third vital role he fills on our behalf. He is our *prophet* - the messenger from God telling us about Him and making us understand how to be saved; the *priest* - the one who intercedes for us, bringing man to God through the sacrifice of himself that he offered up, and now the *king* - the authority and power to rule the nations in a kingdom that never ends. We, who are part of this kingdom of God, are

given the responsibility to pray for the kingdom to come, and to spread the good news of Jesus throughout the world. In Matthew 6:10 Jesus tells us, “Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.”

Going Deeper: John 3:1-21, John 1:10-13

Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as both a present and future kingdom. When Jesus was on Earth, he said that the kingdom was ‘in the midst’ of the people and that his power was proof of that; (‘But if I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. (Luke 11:20)), (‘One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will the Kingdom of God come?” Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God can’t be detected by visible signs. You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is already among you.” (Luke 17:20-21.)) It is also a future promise of a glorious reality to come; (‘Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: “The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15.)) In Going Deeper today we look at what Jesus declared about how to enter the Kingdom of God.

Questions

1. We have looked at aspects of Jesus’ talk with Nicodemus but here it is in its entirety in John 3:1-21. What did this respected Pharisee, expert on the law and committed to obeying all of God’s commands, believe about Jesus (v.2)?
2. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus he needed to do to see the Kingdom of God? What was Nicodemus’ response? (v.3-4)
3. What is the importance of the Holy Spirit in people being ‘reborn’ to spiritual life? (v.5-6) Titus 3:5 helps us to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives; ‘He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.’
4. What do you think it means that the Spirit is like the wind? (v.8)
5. In verse 9, Nicodemus wonders how it is possible for anyone to be born again. Given his likely level of intelligence and wisdom, it may well be that he is not confused about physically being reborn, but rather marvelling at how any sinful man might be made whole and new again. Either way, what do verses 10-21 explain about how this new birth is possible?
6. In verse 5, Jesus says a person must be born of ‘water and the spirit’. There are several views on what this might mean: 1) ‘water’ refers to human physical birth and ‘spirit’ the new birth; 2) that ‘water’ refers to baptism (however scripture makes clear that it is faith alone that saves us and baptism is not a salvation issue) and 3) that ‘water and spirit’ are both speaking of the Holy Spirit - his *cleansing* and *renewing* as explained in Titus 3:5 (above.) What do you think?
7. What does John 1:10-13 confirm about our rebirth - who gives it to us and what we must do to receive it?
8. What do you think Jesus was telling us when he said that ‘anyone who does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it? (‘When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.” (Mark 10:14-15))



Day 30 - King David - Jesus the Son of David

It was not long before King Saul sinned enough that God decided to replace him with a different man, someone who, at the time, was the unimportant youngest son of Jesse (the grandson of Ruth and Boaz), a sheep breeder and farmer in Bethlehem. Samuel the prophet came and anointed David in preparation, after hearing from God that none of David's older brothers were the chosen one.

God was with David throughout his years of waiting until Saul died in battle and David was finally established the king. He is the most well-known and dearly loved king of all the kings of Israel (and Judah.) Known as the man 'after God's own heart' David is also called the shepherd king and wrote many psalms including ones with direct prophecies about the coming seed, the Messiah. We will look at those two attributes of David as they point ahead to Jesus on Day 31 (The Shepherd King) and Day 32 (The Suffering King) of the Road to Redemption. Today, however, we focus on the scriptures which gave rise to the name that Jesus was often called by, 'Son of David.'

Key Reading: 1 Chronicles 17:1-15, Mark 12:35-37

The ways in which the life of David is a foreshadowing of Jesus are too many to list here. Some examples are that they were both born in Bethlehem, both are known as shepherds, both wept in deep agony on the Mount of Olives, both cast out demons and both conquered powerful enemies (David conquered the mighty enemy, Goliath, and Jesus conquered Satan.) Both men were beloved by God, harassed by enemies, betrayed by someone close to them and were called King of Judah. Above all, however, they are linked because of the birth line which means Jesus was born as the 'Son of David' in fulfilment of the promise God declared when he made a covenant with David - the 'Davidic Covenant' of the coming eternal king.

Questions

1. What did David want to do for God? (1 Chronicles 17:1-2)
2. God explains to David (through the prophet Nathan) that it will not be him but one of his sons that builds the temple. What does God promise David in v.9-10?
3. Verses 11-14 are an example of a dual prophecy - that is a prophecy that has an immediate, partial fulfilment AND a long-term, complete fulfilment. How is this promise partly about King Solomon (the son of David who built the temple) AND fully about Jesus?
4. What relationship is mentioned between God and the 'son of David' whose throne was secure forever (v.13)?
5. When the angel visited Mary and spoke of the baby she would bear, he gave her the following encouragement, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33) How are these words of the angel similar to the covenant promise given to David?
6. Just as the Old Testament begins with a verse full of truth and deep meaning (In the Beginning, God created the heavens and the earth) so too the New Testament begins with a very profound truth which holds deep meaning. Matthew 1:1 states, 'This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham'. From all you have learnt on the Road to Redemption, why is it significant that Jesus is the son of Abraham? The son of David? (From Genesis 12:1-3, 'The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through

you.” and from 2 Samuel 7:16, ‘Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.’)

7. In Mark 12:35-37, Jesus poses a question to those he is teaching in the temple. Those listening did not know how to answer it. Do you?

Prayer Starter

If we are part of the Kingdom of God, then we are subjects in that kingdom, under the authority of God. Philippians 2:9-11 says, ‘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’.

But first Paul tells us, ‘You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 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.’ (Philippians 2:5-8)

Our King is authority, power and might. He is also the servant king, humbling himself as if a ‘slave’. How should you respond to this servant King who is ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’?

Going Deeper: Prophecies from Scripture (See Questions below)

The prophets were people who God used as messengers to speak His words to different generations. Often, a prophet rose during a time when God’s people had turned their backs on Him and embraced idols and other forms of sin. The prophet would receive a message from God through a vision, dream, angelic visitor or God’s voice and then would warn the people of God’s approaching judgement. At times, God would also raise a glimmer of hope by placing into these messages references to the promised seed and a coming kingdom that did not end.

Today we will look at some of the prophecies which Jesus fulfilled through his birthline including his ancestors David, Jesse and Judah; (NB: Jesus’ mother, Mary, was a descendant of David through David’s son, Nathan (as per the genealogy in Luke 3). Jesus’ ‘adopted’ father, Joseph, was a descendant of David through Solomon (as per the genealogy listed in Matthew 1.)) This is also the bloodline of Abraham and therefore confirmed as that of the promised seed. We have glanced at some of these prophecies briefly before, but now linger a little longer to understand them in a more meaningful way.

Questions

1. According to Genesis 49:10, on his deathbed, Jacob gave this blessing to his son, Judah. What does it say about the promised seed to show that he would come from the tribe of Judah? (‘The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honour.’)
2. The prophet Isaiah warned God’s people that their wickedness would result in judgement (attack by enemy nations including the Assyrians.) Not even a tenth of the people would be left in the land, which would lie wasting and desolate. There was, however, one sign of life that would remain - how would you explain the two following prophecies of Isaiah (11:1 and 11:10) in terms of what that hope would be (you could read all of chapter 11 for more context if you have time.)
 - Isaiah 11:1 ‘Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot - yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.’ (NLT), ‘A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.’ (NIV)
 - Isaiah 11:10 ‘In that day the heir to David’s throne [the Root of Jesse] will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.’
3. The prophet Jeremiah foretold the Babylonian invasion and the capture of the city of Jerusalem. Again, in amongst the hopelessness of the upcoming judgement, God gives a message of hope. This is the type of Messiah the Jewish people of Jesus’ time were watching for, and still are - how would you describe him based on these prophecies?
 - Jeremiah 23:5-6, “‘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.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.'"

- Jeremiah 33:17, "For this is what the Lord says: David will have a descendant sitting on the throne of Israel forever."
4. Ezekiel prophesied to the exiles of Israel and Judah that they would return to the land and, under a new king, be unified. Given that Ezekiel lived approximately 400 years after the time of King David, what do these verses about 'David' mean and what does this future kingdom look like? What other promises are given about this king, the 'servant David'? ('They will never again pollute themselves with their idols and vile images and rebellion, for I will save them from their sinful apostasy. I will cleanse them. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God. "My servant David will be their king, and they will have only one shepherd. They will obey my regulations and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave my servant Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren after them will live there forever, generation after generation. And my servant David will be their prince forever.' (Ezekiel 37: 23-25)
 5. Having looked at the promises given to Israel regarding the promised seed (the Messiah) to come, can you understand why they might be looking for a 'majestic' man, one with power and authority able to gather the tribes together and keep their land and people safe from other nations? What is the reason that the above prophecies can yet come true, although Jesus of Nazareth was killed on a cross some 2000 years ago?



Day 31 - The Shepherd-King - Jesus the Good Shepherd

Throughout the Old Testament scriptures, God was showing mankind who to put their faith in - in other words, to recognise the promised seed when he came and to turn towards him to be saved. God was also showing mankind the love and compassion he had for them, which was the motivation behind his entire plan of Redemption. Whilst Jesus, the Son of God, *would be* a king of an eternal kingdom, powerful and righteous to remove all evil, and with the authority to rule over all of creation, he would not be a stern and distant king. Instead of being unapproachable and uninterested in the people he came to save, Jesus would be a *shepherd*-king, guarding his flock, leading them to good pasture, and even laying his life down for them. This is a personal king, one who *knows* each of his sheep and they *know* him. Even after David left his boyhood far behind and became a famous warrior, he was still known as the shepherd who killed a giant, calling on skills he had used to drive away bears and lions from his flock. He was the king who wrote a beautiful psalm about a shepherd and his sheep. David, the shepherd turned king, points ahead through time to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Key Reading: John 10:7-18, Psalm 23

Questions

1. The scripture reading from John occurs during a conversation Jesus has with some Pharisees who are upset about a claim by a blind man that Jesus had healed him, and had done so on the Sabbath. Jesus tells these spiritual leaders that they 'think they can see but are spiritually blind' as they don't believe the man was ever lacking in sight, or that Jesus would have healed him on the Sabbath if Jesus was 'from God'. Who, in the story he tells about the Good Shepherd, do you think the Pharisees might be represented by?
2. Who is the 'gate' or 'door' for the sheep? (if you want a challenge, read also John 10:1-6 and try to decide who the 'gatekeeper' is)
3. In the passage from John, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd (v.11, v.14) which is a direct claim to be the messiah as it fulfils a prophecy given in Ezekiel 34 (NB: we will look at this more in Going Deeper.) Aside from being the prophesied shepherd, for what other reasons given in this passage does Jesus call himself the 'good shepherd'?

4. Who are the 'other sheep' Jesus speaks of, that he seeks to bring into his flock?
5. What claims does Jesus make in v. 17-18, which show he is not 'only' a man? How would you describe this shepherd king to someone who thinks of God as distant and uncaring about mankind?
6. In Psalm 23, what are the different ways the shepherd cares for his sheep? What situations in the lives of people might match the different places in the psalm - the green pastures, peaceful streams, paths, deep valleys and enemies?
7. What is the mood of the psalm - what sort of relationship does it point to between God and man? (NB: the shepherd of ancient Israel is very different to a modern Kiwi farmer, who usually has very large flocks which are chased/guided by sheep dogs while the farmer whistles to them from his ute or motorbike.)

Prayer Starter

Slowly read aloud the wonderful words of Psalm 23, keeping in mind that Jesus has purposefully called himself the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep, and who lays down his life for them. Is there any aspect of the psalm you wish was more a part of your life? Rest? Strength? Righteousness? Listen to your shepherd, for he is trustworthy to lead you.

Going Deeper: Ezekiel 34:1-24

As part of Ezekiel's prophecy of the coming shepherd-king, 'David', who would care for and tend the 'sheep' (people), God makes a scathing rebuke against those who were in leadership roles (physical and spiritual) and whose greed and cruelty hurt those they should have been caring for. Ezekiel wrote the words whilst in captivity in Babylon, addressing the leaders of the exiles living there. Around the same time, Jeremiah was prophesying to those Israelites remaining in Judah and Daniel was prophesying in the Babylonian court. Ezekiel's words in today's reading would have been hope and comfort to the exiles, who were desperate to return to the land of Israel. Their own leaders had abandoned them, but God would rescue them and set his own shepherd over them, a trustworthy shepherd who cared far more for his sheep than for his own life.

Questions

1. What crimes does God say the leaders of Israel have committed against their people (sheep)? (v.1-8)
2. What punishment does God have in store for these leaders? (v.9-10)
3. How will God treat the people (v.11-16)? Which of these phrases are also found in Psalm 23?
4. What warning is there for the flock (the people?) (v.20-22).
5. Jesus' words to the Pharisees in John 10 are also a mixture of rebuke to leaders and care towards the people, including bringing sheep into the flock. What extra insight does the parable of the lost sheep tell us about the sheep that our shepherd seeks? ("If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!") (Luke 15:3-7)
6. We will finish our study of the shepherd king with these verses from the prophet Isaiah; 'Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.' (Isaiah 40:10-11.) How do these words reflect both the might and authority of the king, and the tender care of the shepherd? What does it mean to you, personally, that our God is a 'shepherd king'?



Day 32 - The Suffering King - Jesus the King of the Jews

David knew about suffering. He was unfairly persecuted by King Saul, forced to live as an outlaw for seven long years while Saul hunted for him. David had difficulties in his relationships, falling into the temptation of adultery then arranging a murder to cover it up. His infant son died, and his grown son tried to take the throne from him. He had periods of illness and constant conflict within his family. The psalms he wrote are often full of raw pain and utter despair, until David reminds himself of God's faithfulness and fixes his eyes once more on Him.

Out of all of David's writings, there is no psalm so pain-filled, both physically and emotionally as Psalm 22. It is more than an outpouring of emotion, however; the psalm gives such specific prophecies regarding the crucifixion of Jesus that it is impossible for a man who lived a thousand years before Jesus was born to have written them unless directed by the Spirit of God. Crucifixion wasn't even invented until 400 BC, when the Persians came up with what is thought to be the most painful death known to mankind. It is from the word 'crucifixion' that we get the word 'excruciating'. It is to that fate that the Son of God willingly went; Jesus, the suffering servant.

NB: From Abraham's time until the 6th century BC, God's people were known as 'Israelites' or 'Hebrews'. After the Assyrians captured the kingdom of Israel and caused the loss of ten tribes, leaving only the Kingdom of Judah (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with some Levites) to carry on the lineage of Abraham, the people became known as 'Yehudim' (of the Kingdom of Judah). The word gradually transformed in the English language, until around the year 1275 AD the term 'Jews' became commonly used in the form we see it in scripture today.

Key Reading: Psalm 22:1-18, Mark 15:24-38, John 19:23-37 (we will be flicking to and fro through these readings so put some bookmarks in your pages!)

NB: Here in the 'Key Reading' today we will focus on how the crucifixion was a fulfilment of David's prophetic words in Psalm 22. 'Going Deeper' looks more in depth at the trial of Jesus which led to Pilate ordering the words 'The King of the Jews' to be placed on the cross. The well-known words written by Isaiah about the 'suffering servant' we will study on Day 36 of The Road of Redemption.

Questions

1. We do not know exactly what illness or other agony David was suffering when he wrote Psalm 22, but with what cry of distress does he open the psalm in Psalm 22:1? Jesus quoted these words whilst he was on the cross (Mark 15:34) - why do you think he did that? (NB: Some people believe it was because he had taken the sin of the world upon himself which meant separation from God, as all mankind experiences; other people believe God never abandoned or 'forsook' Jesus, but instead in quoting Psalm 22, Jesus was making the connection with the prophecies of the suffering Messiah in the minds of those who watched. A third suggestion is that he was identifying with all mankind in their suffering, as David had suffered. It could be a mixture of those, but what do you think most likely ... or have you another idea?)
2. In verses 6-8 of Psalm 22, how does David describe his treatment by other people during his distress? Exactly what bodily action/s do they use to show their contempt?
Match the actions of those people David described to those of the people at the cross as reported in Mark 15:29-32
3. In Psalm 22:14 David writes specifically of symptoms experienced in the bones and heart. During the crucifixion, Jesus would have suffered his joints dislocating as he was unable to hold his body weight up. The membrane surrounding his heart would have filled with serum/fluids and put pressure on his heart, resulting in heart failure. How do these reflect the description David wrote? (NB: The blood and water that flowed from the soldier's spear attested to this - John 19:33-34)
4. How would you describe what David is experiencing in Psalm 22 verse 15? How is this matched by John 19:28-29
5. Psalm 22:16 is the most obvious reference to crucifixion of all. See Mark 15:24a, John 19:23, 19:37.
6. What happens to the clothing of the sufferer in Psalm 22:18? What happens to Jesus' clothing in John 19:23 and Mark 15:24?

7. Though not included in the key reading, Psalm 22 changes mood after verse 18 and becomes full of faith and praise to God, who does not ignore the suffering, and who will be worshipped by the nations. The final verses declare, 'Our children will also serve him. Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything he has done.' How are those words also a prophecy?
8. The final words of Jesus before he died are also a declaration - it is with triumph and not despair that Jesus breathed his last breath. What do you think those words meant? (John 19:30.)

Prayer Starter

It is never easy to read the details of the suffering of any one, let alone Jesus, the Son of God. That it was a choice he made, a voluntary laying down of life, is undeniable - he himself said it was so. The death of an innocent, righteous man was required as an offering to pay the penalty/remove the judgement of sin, and Jesus is the only one who, being both God and man could achieve that. However, why crucifixion? It is likely the most painful way to die, and it was a death reserved for criminals. Public, prolonged and confronting, it still has the power to reach across thousands of years to us today and bring us to our knees, just at the thought of the harrowing torture of it. What ended on the cross for all time, however, was not Jesus but death itself. 'IT IS FINISHED' he declared. At that moment, mankind was redeemed.

There is nothing you have suffered, or are suffering, that Jesus cannot understand. He fully experienced all the emotional and physical pain of mankind and is with you in your place of sorrow, ready to comfort and carry you.

Going Deeper: John 18:28-40, John 19:1-22

Questions

1. When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem, seeking the child whose star had risen in the East, they asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:2) King Herod was so disturbed by this that he ordered all male children two years old and under to be killed. The only other time the title, 'King of the Jews' was used is by Pilate during the trial and crucifixion of Jesus - he was never referred to as 'king' by the Jewish leaders of the time. How does this reflect the truth of John 1:11 ('He came to his own people, and even they rejected him') and the scripture today, John 18:33-35?
2. The word 'Messiah' means 'anointed one'. Kings were anointed into their role by having oil poured onto their heads (such as the prophet Samuel did for Saul and David), therefore the 'Messiah' the Jews were waiting for was a king, a political ruler. At times they tried to grab Jesus and force him into this type of role, but he always evaded them (see John 6:14-15 for an example if you are interested.) What did they not understand about his purpose that he had come to earth to fulfil? What mistake did they make about the kingdom he is the ruler of? (John 18:36-37.)
3. It was the religious leaders and elders who wanted Jesus killed, for fear his miracles would create a following that would cause the Romans to 'punish the nation and take away the temple.' ('Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together. "What are we going to do?" they asked each other. "This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation.'" In response, Caiaphas, the high priest, said, "... "It's better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.'" (John 11:47-50)) How did they manipulate the Roman Governor, Pilate, who had found Jesus not guilty, into sentencing Jesus to death? (John 19:12-16.) Who did they claim as their king instead of Jesus?
4. What happens during the trial which emphasised that the focus was on the supposed 'king' status of Jesus (how did the soldiers torture and mock him?) (John 19:1-3)
5. In John 19:7-8, Pilate is 'more frightened than ever' when he hears the Jewish leaders say that Jesus has provoked the death penalty of the Jewish law by claiming to be the Son of God (blasphemy.) With his background in the Roman military, his high status and experience in governing the trouble spot of Judea, Pilate would not have been a man easily shaken. What do you think it is about the trial of Jesus that disturbed him so much?

6. All those crucified had their crimes written on a sign nailed to their cross to shame them in front of the onlookers. What is the important difference between what Pilate wrote on Jesus' sign and what the Jewish leaders wanted it changed to? (John 19:19-22)
7. Throughout history, the Jews have suffered persecution, some of it 'because they killed Jesus' which is a shocking misrepresentation of scripture. Jesus was born as a Jew, into a lineage of profound faith in God and a nation known as His treasured possession. While non-Jews (Gentiles) have been 'grafted' into this tree of faith, God has by no means given up on the people of Israel, who will see long-awaited prophecy fulfilled in the end times when God's kingdom fully comes. Though the title 'King of the Jews' has only been used by Gentiles so far, what does Zechariah 12:8-10 say about the future acknowledgement the Jews will give to Jesus? ('On that day the Lord will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will be as mighty as King David! And the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the Lord who goes before them! For on that day I will begin to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.')



Day 33 - Daniel's Vision - Jesus the Son of Man

What titles can you think of that we call people? New Zealanders aren't as used to 'Your Highness' or 'Your Majesty' as some cultures are, however we have a few 'Sir' and 'Dame's. More commonly, we use titles such as Doctor, Reverend, Mayor or perhaps President or Chairman of a company or volunteer organisation. Each of these titles give some meaning to the person, whether it is the work they do or, in the case of royalty, the family they come from.

Jesus was known by a number of titles, including some we have looked at during The Road to Redemption. We have seen Jesus referred to as The Last Adam, The Son of David, The Lamb of God and the King of the Jews, but the title he most commonly called himself by was the 'Son of Man'. We tend to assume that Jesus called himself this to identify himself with the humans he came to save, but we will learn today of an additional reason why he favoured the title so much, using it a total of seventy-eight times in the gospels.

Key Reading: Matthew 26:57-67, Daniel 7:13-14

Questions

1. Here are some well-known verses where Jesus calls himself the 'Son of Man': "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28), 'No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven.' (John 3:13), 'For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes' (Matthew 24:27) and 'Jesus replied, "Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory."' (John 12:23.) Why do you think Jesus favoured the title 'Son of Man' over any titles he could have used for himself?
2. In Matthew 26, the religious leaders and elders have succeeded in arresting Jesus and are now putting him on trial in front of Caiaphas (the high priest) and other leading priests and councilmen. They are struggling to convict him of any crime, let alone one worthy of the death sentence (his execution is their intention, not an honest trial.) What does Caiaphas finally ask Jesus directly? (v.62-63) What do you think Jesus' reply, 'You have said it' meant? (Other translations have these words as, 'It is as you said', 'You have said it yourself' or similar.)
3. What else does Jesus add to his reply? (v.64) How are these words a direct connection with the vision described in Daniel 7:13-14?
4. What does the description in Daniel 7:14 of the authority given to the 'Son of Man' and the type of kingdom he rules tell you about who this person is?

5. How does Caiphias react to Jesus' words? On what grounds do those watching call him 'guilty'? (v.65.)
6. When you go back and read the verses in Question 1 that contain the title 'Son of Man', what difference does it make to know that the title is a direct reference to the one who rules forever in God's kingdom, as well as the one who humbly put on human flesh to live as a man?
7. Another Old Testament reference which uses 'son of man' is the prophet Ezekiel, who was called that name by God. God tells Ezekiel to act out in advance a judgement that is coming to Israel and Judah. What do you notice in the command given by God that is something which Jesus, the Son of Man, did for mankind? ("Now [son of man] lie on your left side and place the sins of Israel on yourself. You are to bear their sins for the number of days you lie there on your side. I am requiring you to bear Israel's sins for 390 days—one day for each year of their sin.") (Ezekiel 4:4.)
8. The image of 'coming on the clouds' is used several times in the Bible related to the return of Jesus to Earth (the 'Second Coming'; the first being when he came as a baby and grew up to die for the sins of the world.) As you read these verses, consider how the 'Son of Man' is changed from the first time when he came, to the second time when he returns to fulfil a very different purpose on Earth. Also consider how he will be the same. As the common phrase from Thailand says, 'same, same, but different'.
 - 'And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.' (Matthew 24:30)
 - Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.' (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
 - 'Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him - even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen!' (Revelation 1:7)
 - 'Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory.' (Mark 13:26)

Prayer Starter

The only person who could have redeemed mankind was someone who was both man and God. The one who carried all the sin of the world had to be human, in order to die in our place, paying the penalty of death on our behalf ('Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. (Hebrews 2:14.) He also had to be God, for only God could withstand the temptation to sin ('And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.' (James 1:13.)) Jesus, as human, felt the pull of temptation but Jesus, as God, did not give into it.

In one title, the Son of Man, Jesus shows he suffers with man, but he also is God, able to break off the curse of death and separation *forever*. Pray to the 'Son of Man' who came once and will return again, 'same same but different.'

Going Deeper: Daniel 9:1-3, 17-27

Daniel was a prophet whose dream interpretations and visions foretold the rise and fall of the various powers of the world from the time of his captivity in Babylon in 605 BC through to the final kingdom, the eternal one ruled by the 'Son of Man.' His writings accurately foretold the succession of empires from the Babylonian empire (ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar) to the Medo-Persians (led by King Cyrus) to the Greek Empire (led by Alexander the Great) and then to Rome.

In today's reading, the exiled Daniel has read the words of the prophet Jeremiah (who is living in Jerusalem at the same time as Daniel is in Babylon) and realised that the seventy years prophesied that Judah would serve Babylon was reaching its end. He responds with an outpouring of prayer and repentance on behalf of his people.

There are different views of why he prayed so fervently - perhaps he was worried that God might extend the captivity of the exiles, or wanted the people to be ready for their deliverance or, according to

some calculations, was asking for God to release His people early. Another explanation is that perhaps Daniel thought the Jeremiah prophecy meant that the time had come for the Messiah and his kingdom, so God sent him a prophecy to correct that misunderstanding.

Whichever the case, Daniel is interrupted by the angel Gabriel, who gives him a specific explanation of the time at which the Messiah would appear. This prophecy written in Daniel chapter 9 is likely why the 'wise men' knew to be expecting a new king in Israel at the time when the star rose in the sky heralding the birth of Jesus. It is considered one of the most crucial prophecies in the entire Bible.

Questions

1. The prophecy of Jeremiah which Daniel read is likely this one; 'This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighbouring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins,' says the Lord. "I will make the country of the Babylonians a wasteland forever.' (Jeremiah 25:11-12) What was Daniel's response to this Word from God ...do you know what sackcloth (burlap) and ashes represent? (v.3)
2. What does Gabriel tell Daniel happened the moment he began to pray? (v.23) (NIV - 'As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision'; NKJV - 'At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.')
3. According to Gabriel's announcement, what six glorious goals would be fulfilled by the Jewish people by the end of the 'seventy sets of seven'? (v.24) Can you suggest any specific meanings for any of these goals?
4. The seventy sets of sevens, is based on the Hebrew word used either for days or years. Seventy sets of seven years is the interpretation which makes sense for those goals, and fits what we know now, looking back. Doing your maths, what is seventy times seven years? ($70 \times 7 = ?$)
5. The time period is split into two (the shorter 7×7 period for rebuilding the city and its walls and the longer 62×7 period added to that before the Messiah arrived.) What does v.25 say is the command which acts as a starting point for the time period to begin? How many years total from the command being given and the anointed one (Messiah) arriving?
6. There are various opinions on which decree is 'the' decree sent out as Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes all give decrees regarding the temple. For example, the decree of Cyrus matches the 7×7 rebuilding the temple, however, Artaxerxes' decree in the book of Nehemiah is the only one that included instructions for the city and its walls, and was given in 445 BC. Adjusting for a 360 day year, that would have the Messiah 'arrive' in 32AD which fits with Jesus' 'triumphal entry' on what we now know as Palm Sunday. Verse 26 says that after the 7×7 and 62×7 (69 'weeks' or 483 years) is passed, 'the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing.' How does 'killed' ('cut off' in some translations) and 'appear to have accomplished nothing' fit with the Jewish perspective of Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth?
7. Following the death of Jesus (the 'anointed one') what does God tell Daniel will happen to the temple, the city and the peace of Israel? (v.26)
8. The remainder of the verses in this prophecy seem to have been partially fulfilled by the Romans in AD70 when Emperor Titus Vespasianus destroyed Jerusalem. However, there are verses yet unfulfilled which leaves us living in a period of grace between the end of the 483 years and the final 7 years of history. The last seven years begin once a ruler arises who makes a treaty with Israel, and the events which will then take place are described in other visions of Daniel and in the Book of Revelation. What did Jesus say this time would be like? ("The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place. Then those in Judea must flee to the hills." (Matthew 24:15-16), "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) and "Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be

shaken. And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.’ (Matthew 24:29-30))



Day 34 - The Triumphal Entry - The Coming of the King

The nearest thing I can think of that New Zealand has experienced to that of the first ‘Palm Sunday’ would be the All Blacks Victory Parade after winning the World Cup in 2015, or perhaps a large Santa parade, where massive crowds of people line the street all craning their heads for that magical moment when the person they are waiting for finally comes into sight. The arrival of royalty, though less familiar to us, is also an occasion where crowds of people come together eager to greet a king, queen or other member of the royal family. For the Jewish people of Jesus’ time, there was a far deeper meaning to the arrival of their promised king. All hoped that the Messiah, the Son of David, would come in their lifetime, and that he would crush the Roman Empire and set them free once and for all from the nations that continually overpowered them. The words they shouted as Jesus rode into Jerusalem were words from a prophetic psalm that Jesus was fulfilling right before their eyes.

That these same crowds would turn on Jesus so swiftly that by the end of the week they were shouting ‘crucify him’ instead of ‘blessed is he who comes’ is a sober reminder of how fickle mankind can be. The people wanted a conqueror hero - they got a sacrificial lamb. That hero IS Jesus and he IS coming to establish God’s kingdom as promised, but he had work to do that Passover week they did not understand. The second time when the king returns, EVERY prophecy will have been fulfilled and the complete story of what Jesus, the promised seed, has done will be known throughout the Earth.

Key Reading: Matthew 21:1-11, Psalm 118:22-28

Questions

1. As Jesus and the disciples walk towards Jerusalem near the start of Passover and the Festival of Unleavened bread, what does he tell two of his followers to do and why? (Matthew 21:1-5)
2. The prophecy referenced in verses 4-5 is that of Zechariah 9:9 (‘Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey - riding on a donkey’s colt.) What do these verses suggest about the sort of king Jesus was coming there to be (compared to a military king who would ride in on a mighty war horse.)
3. According to John 12:16, the disciples did not understand all of this (‘His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfilment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realised that these things had been written about him.’) However, the people (who were excited and hopeful after his miracles, including raising Lazarus from the dead) greeted him as a king. What did the people do and say in verses 8-11 that showed they thought he was the Messiah? (NB: in 2 Kings 9:12b-13 a similar scene happens when Jehu is anointed as king: ‘So Jehu told them, “He said to me, “This is what the Lord says: I have anointed you to be king over Israel.’ Then they quickly spread out their cloaks on the bare steps and blew the ram’s horn, shouting, “Jehu is king!”’)
4. Find the words which the people spoke written in the scripture reading from Psalm 118. John 12:13 adds to them the specific greeting to the king, “‘Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!’” (NB: some translations use ‘Hosanna’ and ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven’ instead of ‘God save us’.)
5. Most scholars think King David wrote Psalm 118. What picture does he use in Psalm 118:22-23? The day after the triumphal entry, Jesus references this prophecy when he speaks to the religious leaders. (‘Then Jesus asked them, “Didn’t you ever read this in the Scriptures? ‘The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful to see. I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit. Anyone who stumbles over that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will

crush anyone it falls on.” (Matthew 21:42-44.)) We will look at this cornerstone reference more in ‘Going Deeper’ today, but what do you think it means? Who is the stone, who are the builders and what is the ‘nation’ who will ‘produce the proper fruit’? (NB: the cornerstone is the first stone set in a stone foundation, that must be laid straight and sure as all the stones that follow are placed in reference to it.)

6. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 (the king riding into Jerusalem on a donkey) is only one of many that Jesus fulfilled that Passover week. We will look at some of the other specific prophecies before the Road to Redemption ends, but what other written prophecies can you remember from the past 33 days which Jesus fulfilled? What picture lessons (such as the bronze serpent) did he claim were pointing to him? Use the timetable at the front of the Road to Redemption as a memory prompter if need be!

Prayer Starter

What or who excites you enough that you would go out into a crowd and wait, perhaps for many hours, to see it/them? What tickets would you buy months in advance, and spend more money on than you can easily afford because, to you, that experience is worth it? There is no shame in enjoying a sporting victory or appreciating someone’s musical talents but how can we ensure that our best excitement, time, money and anticipation is for our God? Scripture says there is a time coming when the entire world will see the Son of Man arriving on the clouds with glory - all will be spectators and participants in the second arrival of the King of kings. How should you prepare? How should you prepare others? What words of praise do you have for your king today?

Going Deeper: Matthew 21:33-46, 1 Peter 2:4-10

NB: The cornerstone was the very first stone placed in the foundation of a building. It was chosen carefully and was large and sturdy and perfectly shaped so that the rest of the house or temple that followed it would be strong and straight and perfect. Any other stones were placed using the cornerstone as their guide.

Questions

1. Jesus tells the Parable of the Evil Farmers in response to the chief priests and elders demanding to know on what authority he is teaching. Match the following images used in the story to their meanings : Images - landowner, vineyard, farmers, landowner’s servants, landowner’s son and the ‘other farmers’ that the elders spoke of in their reply. Meanings - Israel, prophets, God, the religious leaders, the Gentiles, Jesus.
2. What do you think Jesus was saying to the religious leaders through this parable?
3. In Matthew 21:42-44, Jesus uses a prophecy from Psalm 118:22 to add meaning to his parable. The prophet Isaiah also referenced the stone in Isaiah 8:14; ‘He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.’ And in Isaiah 28:16, ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken.’ What extra insight do these prophecies add to the parable and what was the effect on the leaders when Jesus made reference to the cornerstone? (Matthew 21:45-46)
4. According to Ephesians 2:19-20, who is the cornerstone and what is the foundation? What house has been built on this foundation and who is part of it? (‘So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.’)
5. In 1 Peter 2:4-10, Peter speaks at greater length about this cornerstone and those who are now the ‘living stones’ in God’s ‘spiritual temple’. What do you think it means for believers to be ‘living stones’ and ‘holy priests’ offering ‘spiritual sacrifices’?
6. 1 Peter 2:7 says those who trust in Jesus ‘recognise the honour God has given him’ but other versions such as the NIV and NKJV say instead, ‘Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.

But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.' What makes those who do not believe 'stumble' - what is the message in God's word they do not obey? (v.8)

7. What do verses 9 and 10 tell us we, as God's people, are? What have we received and what does God want us to do with our lives?



Day 35 - The Sign of Jonah - Repentance and Resurrection

We have now entered the final week of the Road to Redemption and are swiftly approaching the cross, which is where the 'Last Adam' will redeem mankind and give us life in exchange for the death that the 'First Adam' brought into the world. It is a week of holy awe, as in hushed reverence we reluctantly dwell upon the price Jesus paid for our sin, but a week also of unmitigated joy as we celebrate death giving way to life, for Jesus and for us all.

The question, for each person in the world, is do they 'repent' (*turn away* from that sin nature they were cursed with) and *turn to* Jesus in faith (trusting he is able to save them) or do they look upon him in scorn, disbelief or disinterest and refuse to acknowledge the gift of forgiveness for sin that he so freely offers.

That is the choice that the religious leaders faced in today's reading, where Jesus used the story of Jonah both as a 'type' pointing to his death and resurrection and also to shame the leaders by comparing them to the people of Nineveh who, though 'wicked' Assyrians and enemies of the Jews, repented when confronted by the prophet Jonah. The Son of God stood before these leaders and yet they *refused* to believe. The only sign Jesus said he would give them was the 'sign of Jonah'.

Key Reading: Jonah 3, Matthew 12:38-42, Luke 11:29-32

Nineveh was the major city of the Assyrian empire with more than 120 000 inhabitants. Enemies of the Jews, the Assyrians ruled by terror and later destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, taking captive ten tribes who from there were lost to history. If there was anyone in the world that a Jewish prophet would NOT want to save from God's judgement, it was Nineveh. If there was ever a city less likely to listen to a Jewish prophet and repent, it was Nineveh. Yet the Ninevites were held up as an example to the religious leaders of Jesus' time.

Nineveh, Jonah and the three days he spent in the 'great fish' all point us towards Jesus and the cross. The similarities of the sudden and violent storm which caused Jonah to be thrown into the sea, compared to Jesus' ability to calm a similar storm (see Mark 4:35-41) point out that Jonah was merely human whereas Jesus was, of course, God. The passages of scripture from Matthew and Luke make it very clear 'one greater than Jonah' is there. The 'type' is always a weak shadow of the 'real' and only points the way ahead in time to that reality.

Continue on to the 'Going Deeper' section for another scripture from the Old Testament about the resurrection.

Questions

1. In Jonah 1:1-2, 'The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgement against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."' Instead of obeying God, Jonah heads in the opposite direction, determined NOT to save the Ninevites from any judgement of God. Whilst on a ship sailing for Tarshish, a great storm comes up and Jonah ends up in the sea. What does Jonah 1:17 say happened next? ('Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.') Was this planned by God? What sort of creature might it have been? (the Bible does not call it a whale though it may have been.) What do you think it would be like for Jonah inside the fish?
2. The Ninevites worshipped pagan gods, including a fish-god called Dagon who was half man and half fish. What impact do you think it had on the Ninevites' willingness to listen to Jonah's message if they saw him deposited onto dry land by a 'great fish'. (NB: this is not in the Bible account, but is a definite likelihood, given how carefully they listened to his warning and heeded it!)

3. In Jonah 3, what was Jonah's message to Nineveh and what was the response of the people and the king? What happened to the destruction God had planned for them?
4. In Matthew 12:38-40, what do the religious leaders want Jesus to do for them, and what is his reply?
5. On Judgement Day, why will the people of Nineveh call those speaking with Jesus 'guilty'? (Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32.) What will the Queen of Sheba accuse them of? (Matthew 12:42 and Luke 11:31.)
6. Who/what do the people of Nineveh, Jonah and the period of time inside the great fish each represent if they are 'types' pointing towards Jesus and the cross? What was the message that Jesus was giving the religious leaders through reminding them of Jonah? What is the message for our generation today?
7. Jesus declared, 'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the stomach of a big fish so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [grave].' (Matthew 12:40.) Whilst people say that the days could be partial days, the specific mention of three nights is problematic for the accepted view that Jesus died on Friday and rose on Sunday. The Sunday resurrection is undisputed - that's locked in for sure - but many western people are not aware that the Passover week includes an extra Sabbath as commanded by God for the Festival of Unleavened Bread. When this 'High Sabbath' is placed into the timeline alongside the weekly Saturday Sabbath, it does allow for an earlier crucifixion and therefore the full three nights in the grave. It does raise other issues of timing of the events of the Passover week, however, which is why it is something worth personal research. Whilst this is not important compared to the fact Jesus died and rose again, it is worth considering for yourself if Jesus specifically mentioned the timeframe in his 'sign of Jonah' reference to speak of the exact length of time between death and resurrection, or if it was only a figure of speech meaning something less literal. (NB: We touch on this again on Day 39.)
8. The sign of Jonah - his time in the great fish and his 'resurrection' represented by being spat out of the depths of the ocean onto the land - confronted the Ninevites and caused them to listen to his warning of God's judgement. What can we learn from this about the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus to evangelism (the sharing of the Good News)? How has the message to the Ninevites changed now we are 3000 years on from Jonah's time? How is it the same?

Prayer Starter

The story of Jonah is easily dismissed as a quick read; a nice story of an unexpected rescue of a man who first ran from God, then obeyed Him. That's true, but it is only when viewed through the lens of the death and resurrection of Jesus that the three days in the 'great fish' makes sense. Our choice is to be either the people of Nineveh, repenting and turning to God, or the Jewish leaders, refusing to acknowledge who Jesus was. As you reflect on the mercy of God towards Jonah personally, and the Ninevites as a whole (their wickedness going unpunished), and the amazing provision of God to give us this picture of the death and resurrection of Jesus nearly 800 years before the picture was fulfilled by him - how do you respond? One 'far greater than Jonah' listens to your prayer.

Going Deeper: Psalm 16:8-11, Acts 2:22-41

Questions

1. Fifty days after Passover, the Jews celebrate the Feast of Weeks (or Day of First Fruits) known to us as 'Pentecost'. On this day, as promised by Jesus before he returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit came mightily upon the disciples and they praised God in many languages. The explosion of sound drew the interest of thousands of those in Jerusalem, and it is to this audience that Peter preached the truth of 'Jesus of Nazareth' being the Messiah. In Acts 2:22, what does Peter tell the crowd was proof of Jesus being 'endorsed' or 'accredited' by God? (That means 'approved in public', recognised.)
2. What summary does Peter give of the death and resurrection of Jesus in verses 23-24?
3. Peter uses a psalm of David (Psalm 16) as proof that David was speaking of someone who would come after him, that would be raised from the dead. What explanation does Peter give in Acts 2:25-31 to show this was a prophecy of the Messiah, rather than speaking only of David himself?
4. What claim does Peter make in verse 32? What does Peter go on to claim about Jesus, and what was the response of those who listened?

5. In the prayer Jonah prays inside the great fish, he mentions 'Sheol' or the 'Land' or 'Realm' of the Dead. ('He said, "I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and he answered me, I called to you from the land of the dead, and Lord, you heard me!" (Jonah 2:2.)) This is the same word used in Psalm 16:10, though the NLT translates it as 'among the dead'. 'Sheol', the 'land of the dead' is spoken of several times in scripture as a place separate to hell, somewhat like a waiting room for the resurrection. It could mean, as some believe, that Jonah literally died and was resurrected by God, though we will have to wait for heaven to know that for sure.

Another intriguing thought to end with today, is what this report from Matthew means, 'Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. They left the cemetery after Jesus' resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.' (Matthew 27:50-53.) Why the body of 'godly' men and women came out of their tombs at the point Jesus died on the cross, why they waited until his resurrection to go into the city and appear to people and why it happened at all is a mystery I shall leave with you to ponder!

Day 36 - Isaiah's 'Man of Sorrows' - Jesus the Suffering Servant

Isaiah is the Old Testament book quoted most often in the New Testament. It has astounding parallels with the structure and theme of the whole Bible, with its first part comprising 39 chapters focussed on Israel's history and sin, and its second part comprising 27 chapters focussed on the Messiah. This exactly matches the Old Testament's 39 books and the New Testament's 27 books making a total of 66 books.

Isaiah lived in the middle of the 8th Century BC. He was likely a priest and he worked ceaselessly throughout the reign of four kings of Judah to turn Israel back towards God. Isaiah predicted the birth of Jesus, the ministry of John the Baptist, and the two different natures of the Messiah - both the lamb (the dying sacrifice) and the conquering king. He describes the fall of the kingdom of Israel to Assyria and the kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians, and predicts the return of the exiles. Entwined in the writing about the people of Israel, is prophecy about the coming servant of God who will bear their sins. The Book of Isaiah ends in the same way as the Book of Revelation - with a glimpse of a new heaven and a new Earth.

The Book of Isaiah includes some of the most familiar texts known to Christians; amongst those is the passage now called the 'Suffering Servant' which we will look at closely today, as we draw ever closer to the cross.

Key Reading: Isaiah 53

Questions

1. Read through the chapter of Isaiah 53 and highlight or make a note of any phrases that you think Jesus clearly fulfilled in his life and death, for example, that the 'servant' would be 'whipped'.
2. Some of the verses from Isaiah were directly quoted in the New Testament as evidence that Jesus was the promised 'servant'. Find these quotes/images in Isaiah chapter 53 (remember they will be slightly different if you have a different translation):
 - 'But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him. This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted: "Lord, who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?" (John 12:37-38)
 - "But now," he said, "take your money and a traveller's bag. And if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one! For the time has come for this prophecy about me to be fulfilled: 'He was counted among the rebels.' Yes, everything written about me by the prophets will come true." (Luke 22:36-37)
 - When Jesus arrived at Peter's house, Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for him. That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick. This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said, "He took our sicknesses and removed our diseases." (Matthew 8:14-17) [NB: the NLT translates this as 'weaknesses' and 'sorrows' in the main text of Isaiah 53 and 'sicknesses' and 'diseases' in the footnotes.]

3. In Isaiah 53:2, Isaiah describes this 'servant' 'growing up' in 'dry ground' and not possessing any great beauty or 'majesty' to attract the attention of people. How does this fit with Jesus' birth and his life before his years of ministry?
4. How do verses 3-4 reflect the way most of the Jewish leaders and people acted towards Jesus? What are some of the other 'sorrows' (grief and hardships) Jesus experienced?
5. What forms of torture are mentioned in verse 5 that Jesus endured at his trial and crucifixion? ('Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. "Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.' (John 19:1-2))
6. Verses 6-7 use the image of a lamb/sheep. We have looked at the sin offering before in Days 24 and 26 of The Road to Redemption. What can you recall of that? How is verse 6 reflected in this quote from John the Baptist; '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 1:29)
7. How does Jesus fulfil verse 7 at his trial? ('But when the leading priests and the elders made their accusations against him, Jesus remained silent. "Don't you hear all these charges they are bringing against you?" Pilate demanded. But Jesus made no response to any of the charges, much to the governor's surprise.' (Matthew 27:12-14))
8. Verse 8 speaks of the servant being 'unjustly condemned' and we know that is so, because the Jewish leaders condemned him to death for blasphemy when, in fact, he was God. Also, Pontius Pilate declared him innocent of any political charges. What does it mean that his life was 'cut down in midstream'? Was he buried in a 'rich man's tomb'? (v.9) ('As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus, went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And Pilate issued an order to release it to him. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth. He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left.' (Matthew 27:57-60))
9. The verse about the servant having descendants is used as an argument that this prophecy in Isaiah 53 is not about Jesus, who died childless, but that does not answer the conundrum that verse 8 states he will have no descendants, followed by verse 10 saying he will have many! Who ARE the 'descendants' in verse 10? (NB: consider Abraham's 'descendants' of faith.)
10. Thinking about the different verses in Isaiah 53 which speak of the sin and rebellion of the people, and that Jesus was 'counted among the rebels' before he made it possible for 'many to be made righteous' - do you think it was an important message to mankind that Jesus died a 'criminal's' death rather than a less public and humiliating one? (NB: crucifixion was used on rebels and on those who had committed crimes as a public warning to others.)
11. Hazard a guess at understanding the first part of verse 12 - its one that scholars are not in total certainty or agreement on. [NB: NIV and NKJV translate verse 12a as 'Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,' whereas NLT says, 'I will give him the honours of a victorious soldier] It is likely there would be a triumphant ending to the prophecy and somehow the verse reminds me of 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.' What do you think the end message of Isaiah 53 is?

Prayer Starter

The prophets of the Old Testament clearly pointed ahead to Jesus and the cross, even describing details of crucifixion long before it was invented as a method of death. The probability of one man fulfilling most, let alone all, of the prophecies is too small to imagine, and yet Jesus did so and proved not only he is the Messiah, the promised one, but that the prophets wrote the truth. In chapter 53 of Isaiah, our Lord is a 'servant', a 'man of sorrows' who is despised and rejected, beaten, whipped and pierced; given a criminal's death and buried in a rich man's tomb. Jesus fulfilled all of this and, as the sacrificed lamb who carried the sin of the world, he made many righteous. Thank him for the sorrows he endured.

Going Deeper: Isaiah 9:1-7, Matthew 1:18-23, Matthew 3:1-11

In 'Going Deeper' we will look at some of the other prophecies written by Isaiah that Jesus fulfilled.

Questions

1. Isaiah predicted that the coming promised one of God would be a KING. A king was desperately needed for Israel, one who brought the nation back together after they had splintered into the

northern kingdom of Israel (ten tribes, ruled by King Jeroboam) and the southern kingdom of Judah (two tribes, ruled by King Rehoboam.) Both kingdoms had fallen into idol worship and turned away from God. What does Isaiah 9:1-7 predict about this king - which geographical area would he be in, how is he given to us (in what form), who is his ancestor, what names is he called and what do they mean (is he God or man.) How long does his reign last?

2. Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy partially fulfilled in the lifetime of King Ahaz, but ultimately fulfilled when Jesus, the promised one was born; 'All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').' Matthew quotes this scripture in the passage from Matthew 1:18-24. How is the virgin birth also a fulfilment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy, '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'?
3. Isaiah foretells that before the arrival of the promised one, someone will come to 'prepare the way'. ('Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! (Isaiah 40:3)) Use the passage from Matthew 3:1-11 to explain how this prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Also, John 1:29-31, '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.' I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptising with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.'"
4. What in Isaiah 52:14 suggests the promised one would be badly beaten? ('But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man.')
5. In Luke 4:14-21, how does Jesus publicly identify himself as the one Isaiah wrote of? ('When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favour has come." He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!") Not long after, those of his home town who heard him say these things tried to kill Jesus by pushing him off a cliff. How are their actions also a fulfilment of Isaiah's writings that you have looked at today?
6. Given that Isaiah lived almost 800 years before Jesus was born, yet wrote so many, stunningly accurate phrases, how likely is it that his predictions were simply a lucky guess? How likely is it that Jesus (if merely a man) could have manipulated everything from the different tortures he went through, to the fact he was buried in a rich man's tomb? How might you be able to use the specific fulfilments of prophecies such as those in Isaiah to spread the Good News of Jesus convincingly?

Day 37 - Light in the Darkness - Jesus the Light of the World

We only have four days left of the Road to Redemption and my mind is full of so many stories that point to Jesus we have not had time to study - like how Boaz, Ruth's kinsman redeemer, paid a price to 'redeem' his Gentile bride ... how Queen Esther was herself a Jew and risked her life to mediate for them before the king ... Enoch who 'walked with God' and then simply 'was not' (he vanished one day as Jesus did after his resurrection) ... Job the righteous sufferer, Joshua who led the people of God into their inheritance and King Solomon who was the 'man of peace' known for his wisdom (whilst Jesus is the 'Prince of Peace' and the 'wisdom of God'.) I wish I could tarry over the stories of Elijah and Elisha, who pointed forward in time to John the Baptist and Jesus, with Elisha's miracles sharing stunning similarity with some of Jesus' miracles - but we have run out of days.

As we near the foot of the cross, and look back at our journey from Creation to Redemption, I am reminded of how we began the study with Jesus, the Word of God, creator and sustainer of all life, coming into the very world he created in order to give those who believed in him the right to become 'children of God.' John wrote, 'The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world'. Some Christian denominations hold a Tenebrae service during the three days before Easter Sunday (Resurrection Day.) These services are held in darkness, lit only by fifteen candles which are gradually snuffed out until only one candle, the Christ candle is left. Then, that is taken away and the congregation sits in total darkness before a loud clap of noise signals the earthquake that shook the ground when Jesus

died. The darkness remains and the congregation leave feeling the burden of the light of the world now lying dead in a tomb. They feel an understanding of the hopeless grief of those who had loved Jesus and were reeling from his inexplicable loss.

However, in a different version of *Tenebrae*, the noise represents the stone rolling away from the tomb and the Christ candle returns, signifying the resurrection. The congregation leave with a sense of hope, knowing that the darkness of death was overcome by the Son of God.

Darkness did cover the land while Jesus was dying on the cross but, as John also wrote, 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.' Today, therefore, we will look again at the words of John chapter 1, as well as the declaration of Jesus when he proclaimed, I am the Light of the World.

Key Reading: John 1:1-14, 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

Questions

1. In John 1:1-9, make a note of all the times light is mentioned. What does each reference tell us about Jesus?
2. Light was the first thing spoken into existence by God on Day One of Creation. Light is needed for life - sunlight sets in motion the different physical and chemical processes which makes Planet Earth a place where life exists. Light is needed for sight - we cannot see in the darkness without some source to light the way for us. Light also exposes what hides in the darkness. When Jesus said he was the 'light of the world' what do you think he was claiming? (NB: it could be more than one thing)
3. Isaiah (in Isaiah 9:1-2) prophesied that a 'great light' would come to Galilee. This was fulfilled by Jesus, as written in Matthew 4:12-17, 'When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah: "In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined." From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."'
What sort of darkness was mankind in before Jesus came? Why would Isaiah have described the coming one as 'light'? Use 1 John 1:5-7 to help with this answer; 'This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practising the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.'
4. In John 8:12, Jesus explains that he is the light that leads to life, 'Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." Also, in John 12:35-36a, 'Jesus replied, "My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going. Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light.'" Where does Jesus lead us to? How do we become 'children of the light'? ('For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.' (1 Thessalonians 5:5.))
5. In the key reading passage from 2 Corinthians 4:1-7, the Good News (or gospel) is described as 'light' or 'glorious light'. Paul says the message is about the 'glory of Christ who is the exact likeness of God' (v.4.) God's 'glory' is usually seen as bright, shining light, and also represents magnificence, beauty, splendour and majesty. In verses 6-7, where does Paul say this light is shining, and what are we, believers in Jesus, like?
(NB: 2 Corinthians 4:4 touches on the idea of 'spiritual blindness' where Satan blinds the people of the world so they cannot 'see' the glorious light of the Good News. We will look at spiritual blindness in 'Going Deeper' if you are keen to know more.)
6. Look at what Paul says Jesus told him to do, when Jesus confronted him in a 'bright light from heaven, brighter than the sun'; "Who are you, lord?" I asked. "And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power

of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.' (Acts 26:15-18.) What can we, as believers, be doing to help reveal the 'light of the world' to those who do not believe in Jesus, the Son of God?

Prayer Starter

In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus says, "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

Jesus has passed His light on to us - just like he was the light of the world, so now his followers are the light of the world. What ways can you think of that you personally could obey this command of Jesus? Pray that the light that shines in your heart might be seen by others and they also might know the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:6.)

Going Deeper: John 9

Questions

1. In Isaiah 42:6-7, what does the prophet predict Jesus, the promised light to guide the nations, would do? ("I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons.") What was the fulfillment of that prophecy in the story told in John 9?
2. Jesus uses the healing of the blind man to demonstrate the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees. In this story, what does the blind man know and believe (before he meets Jesus again at the end?) How do his parents react when pressed by the Pharisees and why? How would you describe the attitudes of the Pharisees mentioned?
3. Spiritual blindness is described as not seeing that Jesus is God, being blind to God though He is revealed in scripture, or rejecting Jesus *and* God's word. What evidence is there in John 9 that the Pharisees meet these definitions of spiritual blindness?
4. In John 9:39 Jesus says that he came into the world to give judgement, but in John 3:17-18 he had previously said, '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.' How does this situation with the Pharisees show how Jesus does both - saves the world and does not judge it, while at the same time bringing judgement. (Look at John 9:41 to help with this.)
5. What does 2 Timothy 2:25-26 suggest is one of the causes of spiritual blindness? What does Paul encourage Timothy to do for those who are 'trapped' or 'snared' by the devil and do not understand the truth? ('Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.')
6. In Matthew 13:15, Jesus said, 'For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them' (which is a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10.) What hope is there for the spiritually blind, remembering that most of us (unless we became believers at a very young age) were once spiritually blind. (Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, 'God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.')
7. In John 9:35, Jesus asked the healed man if he believed in the Son of Man. On Day 33 we learnt that 'Son of Man' is a reference to the prophecy of Daniel, of a 'son of man', given authority over the nations of the world, coming on clouds of glory. What is the healed man's response?
8. A final warning for the Pharisees of Jesus' day is found in Matthew 15:14, '... Ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.' What does this saying mean, and what warning does it hold for people in the world today?



Day 38 - Words of Comfort - The Testimony of Jesus

Jesus purposefully spends his last evening before his death alone with his disciples. He is in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread - a time of great significance to the Jews as they remembered God saving their ancestors out of slavery in Egypt. Little did the Jewish leaders realise, but they were about to arrange the death of the real Passover Lamb, Jesus the Lamb of God, who would save all of mankind from their slavery to sin and death.

Whilst we have looked at many Old Testament people and prophecies that pointed ahead to Jesus, we have only included snippets of his actual teaching and miracles. On our third to last day of the Road to Redemption, we will let the promised seed, the Messiah, the Son of God, speak to us through his final words to his disciples. Jesus is his own witness, and his Father is a second, so it is right that we listen to him speak and hear his own testimony. ('Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about me. You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. And if I did, my judgement would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other.'" (John 8:14-18.))

Jesus' words to his disciples are words of comfort - they are not going to be left orphans or alone for, as well as the salvation of mankind, God has planned for the Holy Spirit to live within each believer. When the blood sacrifice is made, anyone who turns to Jesus in faith is counted as righteous, their sins taken from them, so a holy God can dwell within them. The Son, the Father and us with the Holy Spirit, each in the other, a relationship even closer than the Garden of Eden. Jesus' request to the disciples is that they love one another and he demonstrates what this looks like by washing their feet, a task usually reserved for the lowest of servants. In 'Going Deeper' today, we will look closer at that and a time when Jesus was 'anointed for burial', whilst the Key Reading focuses on his spoken message.

Key Reading: John 14

Questions

1. In John 14:1-4, what does Jesus say he is going to do? Will he be returning? Who is the Father he mentions?
2. In verse 6, we see another 'I am' statement of Jesus. How does Jesus explain how to 'come to the Father'? How do Jesus' words in v.6-9 reflect what we learnt about the role Jesus plays in revealing God to us? ('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 1:15a))
3. Jesus tells Philip; 'Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.' (v.11) What work is Jesus speaking of that should be testimony enough that he is God?
4. Jesus makes an amazing promise to believers in v.12-14. What is this promise and what do you think it means to 'ask in Jesus' name'? (NB: think beyond tagging 'in Jesus' name' onto the end of a prayer - consider instead the legal meaning; 'by the authority of'.)
5. In verses 15-17, Jesus says he will give believers another 'advocate', the Holy Spirit. Other translations use the word comforter, helper or counsellor. An 'advocate' is someone who 'speaks, pleads or argues' on behalf of a person. What do the other three words mean? What else do these verses, and verse 26, tell us about the Holy Spirit?
6. John 14:18-25 describes the close relationship of Jesus to the Father, but also our own relationship with them. How does Jesus explain this and in what way can we show our love for him?
7. In v.27-29, Jesus speaks of a gift he is leaving behind. What is the gift, and what does he tell the disciples to remember?
8. Who is the 'ruler of the world' Jesus refers to, and how much power does he have? (v.30)
9. If you have time, read John chapter 15, looking out for the same ideas that Jesus spoke of in chapter 14, but made even more meaningful and deeper by the image of a true vine and its branches. For example, "But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!" (John 15:7)

Prayer Starter

Having recently learnt about Jesus making a way for us into the 'Holy of Holies' where we can boldly approach God, his words telling us to 'ask for anything in His name' and 'ask for anything you wish' are quite exciting. According to John 14 and 15, we can ask for God's provision and help with the authority of Jesus. We are *expected* to be making heart-felt requests on behalf of the people and situations in our lives who need the power of God to help them (and us.) However, Jesus is careful to point out that he will answer our prayers in order to bring glory to the Father, and that we must 'remain' or 'abide' in him. Are you someone who needs more boldness in your prayers, or more 'abiding' in Jesus before you pray? Reading the Bible and sitting quietly 'with' God are two ways to 'abide' more with Jesus. Think about this and let the Spirit guide you as to what you should pray for.

Going Deeper: John 13:1-17, John 12:1-8

Foot washing was a common practice in the Ancient Near East, necessary because of the dirt roads and open sandals or bare feet of the time. As well as a daily part of life, it was an act of hospitality to wash the feet of guests. An example mentioned in scripture is when Abraham greeted the three visitors to his camp and said, "Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet." (Genesis 18:4) Foot washing was also a way to honour a person, as a pupil might wash the feet of a rabbi, wives would wash the feet of their husband and children their father. In these cases foot washing would represent respect and/or love. Occasionally, those of greater honour also had their feet anointed with oil. It would have been shocking to the disciples to have Jesus wash their feet - he was not a slave, but rather their teacher and therefore of far greater honour.

Questions

1. Verse 1 of John 13 says that Jesus loved his disciples 'to the very end.' The alternative meaning of this phrase is 'showed them the full extent of his love.' Whether he was about to display a final act of love before his death ('to the very end') or show them the depth of his love ('full extent') why do you think Jesus chose the humble act of washing his disciples' feet as this demonstration of love?
2. John offers us a glimpse of Jesus' thoughts/motive in verse 3. How would you explain Jesus' awareness of his authority and his place with his Father as a motive to wash his disciples' feet?
3. The disciples and Jesus had already been seated at the table when Jesus rose to wash their feet, instead of it being done as they arrived. This was out of the ordinary, and therefore even more significant. How does the conversation with Peter show that this is not merely a physical foot washing, but representative of a spiritual truth? (v.6-11.) How will Jesus' death provide cleansing for mankind?
4. At different times in the gospels, the disciples argue about who was the greatest among them, or who would be greatest in the kingdom, for example in Luke 22:24, 'Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them.' What does Jesus say in verses 12-17 (along with his demonstration of foot washing) that puts an end to such arguments and also gives all believers instructions to live by?
5. The passage from John 12 occurred a few days before the Last Supper. Three times in scripture, Jesus was anointed with oil. Once this oil was poured over his head, but twice it was done on his feet, with incredibly expensive perfumed oil (worth more than a year's wages.) Jesus had recently raised Mary's brother, Lazarus, from the dead. From what you have learnt of the washing of feet, what do you think Mary (Martha's sister) was expressing in John 12:3? What did Judas not understand about Mary's actions?
6. Jesus said Mary had been anointing his body for burial (whether or not she understood that was what she was doing, you will have to decide for yourself!) On the day of crucifixion, after Jesus' body was taken from the cross, there was no time for the women to pour the usual spices and perfumes on to Jesus' body as the Sabbath had already begun before they had it ready. ('Then they went home and prepared spices and ointments to anoint his body. But by the time they were finished the Sabbath had begun, so they rested as required by the law.' (Luke 23:56)) Did the women ever get a chance to anoint the body of Jesus, beyond this act of foot washing? Why or why not?



Day 39 - The Last Supper - Covenant and Communion

The sacred covenants God made with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David kept the hope of the promised seed alive. From generation to generation righteous (faith-filled) men and women looked forward in time to when the redeemer of mankind would come. Every sacrifice, every act of obedience, every 'type' and every prophecy was history holding its breath, waiting for God to do what no man could - pay the price of sin and break the curse of death once and for all.

On the last night before his death, Jesus gathered the disciples close and shared a solemn meal with them. He had eagerly (*fervently* in the NKJV - with 'passionate intensity') desired to do so, explaining that he would not eat of it again 'until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' We should not miss the deep significance of what Jesus instituted in the 'Lord's Supper' or 'communion', which, along with baptism, are the two sacraments ('visible symbols of a spiritual reality') ordained by Jesus as part of the believer's life. When Jesus died, the New Covenant began and, just as the Old Covenant of Moses' time was sealed by blood and marked by a meal between the parties, so too is the New Covenant sealed by blood and marked by a meal.

According to Jesus' words, the true fulfilment of communion is yet to come, but in the meantime, communion reminds us of the past (Jesus' death), and in the present brings us into fellowship with God and each other. It is a constant reminder, like the rainbow was to Noah, that we are living safely, securely, under a New Covenant. This is what Jesus' death has brought to us - the new covenant which is: the forgiveness of sins, which God will also not remember ('And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins'), relationship with God ('I will be their God, and they will be my people', 'everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already') and a new life because His will is inscribed on our minds and hearts ('I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts.') (Jeremiah 31:31-34.)

This is the work of Good Friday, which our saviour did upon the cross.

Key Reading: Luke 22:14-20, Hebrews 8:7-13

Questions

1. During his last meal with his disciples, what does Jesus say the bread represents? (Luke 22:19) Remembering that yeast represents sin, what does unleavened bread tell us about Jesus' righteousness? How was his body 'broken' for us?
2. In verse 20, Jesus explains the significance of the cup of wine. What does he say? NB: We could not enter the new covenant until Jesus had died (been 'sacrificed') to pay the penalty for our sin/disobedience. The new, permanent, covenant needed to be ratified (made official, brought into effect) by: 1. The perfect atoning (in the place of us) sacrifice of a sinless man; and, 2. A mediator who lives forever to intercede between us and God; ('There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honour in heaven. Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people's sins. (Hebrews 7:23-27) and 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:23.))
3. The 'Old Covenant' given to Moses and the Israelites was that God would make them His special people and be their God, if they would obey His commandments written on the tablets of stone and the Book of the Covenant. The Israelites failed to keep the commandments so required the blood of animal sacrifices to 'cover' their sins. What does Hebrews 8:7-12 say is the new covenant that is confirmed by Jesus' blood? How is it different from the old? (NB: some of this is revision, but it's good to repeat the most essential truths of redemption before our journey ends.)
4. According to Hebrews 8:13 what has happened to the old covenant, now that the new is in place? (NB: obsolete means 'no longer used or needed'.)
5. Aside from the old covenant with Moses, the other covenants were (at least in part) 'Royal Grant Covenants' meaning a type of covenant where a king or person of authority grants blessings such as a honourable position or a gift of land to their loyal subject. Royal Grant Covenants are unconditional - there is nothing the subject needs to do on their part except to accept the offered blessing. The New Covenant is also a Royal Grant Covenant - so what does it rely upon? What is the consequence for those who do

not accept the new covenant (turn to Christ in faith)? How do we accept this covenant offered to us ('But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.' (John 1:12.))

6. Communion was first called 'The Lord's Supper' but gradually came to be known as the 'Eucharist' ('thanksgiving') or communion ('sharing', 'participating'.) As well as reminding us of the New Covenant, and because of Jesus expressly telling us to 'do this in remembrance of me' what other reasons do we celebrate communion? Look at these verses and decide what purpose is given for the sharing of bread and wine/grape juice:

- 'For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.' (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- 'When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honour to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.' (Revelation 19:7, the likely future fulfilment Jesus spoke of when he said, "For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 22:16))
- 'Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.' (John 6:56)
NB: see 'Going Deeper' for more on this passage.

Prayer Starter

God loved us to the point where his Son sacrificed himself and died, to remove from us the penalty of sin. That is astounding, and humbling, enough. However, God loved us *even more* than that. He chooses *not to remember* our sin ('I - yes, I alone - will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.' (Isaiah 43:25)) He chooses *to be in us and us in Him*, the Holy Spirit *dwelling* inside our hearts; ('And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.' (1 John 4:13-15.)) We are His *treasured possession*; He is our God, ('But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.' (1 Peter 2:9))

How do you feel when you consider everything that Jesus' death has done for mankind - done for *you*? Overwhelmed? Cherished? Unworthy? Amazed? Speak your feelings to the one who did all this for *you*.

Going Deeper: Exodus 24:4-18, Hebrews 9:11-15, John 6:53-58

The passage of scripture from Exodus 24 reminds us of how communion represents a covenant - a sacred agreement - between God and man. Hebrews 9 explains that there is no new covenant unless an atoning sacrifice is made for the sins of the people. John 6:53-58 reminds us that this covenant is dependent on Jesus. Through him, the covenant is freely offered to all, but each must receive it in faith.

Questions

1. In Exodus 24:4, the instructions that Moses wrote down were the Ten Commandments and the other myriad of commands given by God that made up the Book of the Covenant (including rules for conduct, worship, health, relationships etc.) What other preparations did Moses make before the time of the covenant agreement? (v.4-6)
2. Verse 7 is where the Israelites agree to their side of the covenant. What does their part of the covenant involve?
3. In Exodus 24:8, what reason does Moses give for splattering the people with the blood?
4. Covenant meals were eaten to demonstrate peace had been made between the parties. For example, between Jacob and his Uncle Laban in Genesis 31:46; ('Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal.') Describe the covenant meal seen in Exodus 24:9-11.
5. In what way do the blood (wine/grape juice) and bread of communion reflect the covenant proceedings of Exodus 24?
6. What is God going to inscribe the instructions of the old covenant on to give to the Israelites (v.12) What does God inscribe his instructions on in the New Covenant and what exactly do you think it means? ("But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says

the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33)

7. Hebrews 9:15 says 'For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.' This was the redemption we needed - the ransom price paid to set us free from sin and death. According to Hebrews 9:11-12, how did Jesus 'secure our redemption'?
8. Hebrews 9:13-15 explains why it is Jesus who can mediate (bring about a settlement between God and man) a new covenant for us. Why is Jesus able to be our mediator?
9. In John 6, Jesus has just explained to the crowd that, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent." (v.9.) In verses 53-58, he IS NOT saying that taking communion is required to be saved - this passage is not specifically about communion but about the same body and blood which communion reminds us of. Neither is Jesus saying that we are to LITERALLY eat his flesh and drink his blood, though some listeners thought that was the case and left in offence and disgust. What IS Jesus telling us when he says we cannot have eternal life unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood? (v.53-54.)
10. John 6:56 speaks of 'remaining' or 'abiding' in Jesus, and he in them. What do you think it means to 'remain' or 'abide' in Jesus?

Author's Note

Things get a little confusing between the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as to exactly which meal Jesus ate for the Last Supper (i.e. the Passover, or a simple meal of bread and wine) because, just like we might talk about 'Christmas' as being the time near to December 25th (Christmas Parade, Christmas party, Christmas get-together etc) so too does the word 'Passover' get frequently used in the conversation during that week of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

The Jewish timeline, as commanded by God in Leviticus 23:5-8, is Passover at twilight on the 14th of the first month, then the next day on the 15th, a sabbath for the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (a special 'high sabbath' for the festival), finishing up with another Sabbath on the 21st day of the month, to mark the end of the festival. Depending on the year, the regular weekly Saturday sabbath would fall in amongst or on one of the two other sabbaths.

Therefore, which day of preparation is which, what 'passover meal' is referred to (any meal in that timeframe, the actual passover, or one associated with the high sabbath) and which day Jesus actually died on become points of discussion which are fascinating but in no way important compared to the moment Jesus died and made atonement for the sins of the world. Some credible timelines have him dying at the same time as the Passover lamb was killed, but others do not; the week being that of Passover is already significant for the great story of Redemption set on a backdrop of the Israelites' rescue from Egypt.

We will leave the timing intricacies here for you to set aside as irrelevant or pick up and study intently another time, as you wish! It is natural when reported by various witnesses to find some minor details different, but what the four gospels definitely agree on is that there was a Last Supper of bread and wine, Jesus was arrested, put on trial and sentenced to death, crucified, died and buried. He rose at daybreak on Sunday morning and the world would never be the same because the promised seed had done what had been planned since the fall of mankind; he had conquered Satan and death, and opened the way for men to boldly approach God.



Day 40 - Journey's End - Redemption and Resurrection

Congratulations! You have reached the end of the journey, having faithfully travelled the Road to Redemption for forty days. Forty is a special number in the Bible - often indicating a period of trial or testing. During the flood of Noah, the rain fell for forty days and forty nights; Moses spent forty years in the desert after fleeing Egypt, and the Israelites wandered there for an additional forty. Goliath taunted the Israelites for forty days and Jesus was tempted in the desert for the same.

Was some of the Road to Redemption journey a 'trial' to you? Perhaps the time involved felt burdensome, or the complexity of some of the ideas like righteousness, atonement, and reconciliation made them difficult to grasp easily. Maybe the challenging topics such as judgement and the second coming were uncomfortable, or you were confronted with a different view of a key concept to one that you had held for a long time, even your whole Christian life. That certainly happened to me more than once on this journey. Saturating yourself in scripture for an extended period *will* involve some or all of these 'trials',

as the Bible is not a passive book that can be picked up and set down, leaving you unaffected. As Paul wrote in Hebrews 4:12, 'For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.' The Bible is life and truth and you will always be changed for the better, and brought closer to God, by a time of committed study of it.

For me, I gained a new understanding of the desire of God for relationship with me. He is the Good Shepherd who calls me by name. He is the scapegoat who removed all of my sin. He is the rock, who when struck, poured forth the Holy Spirit who lives within me and he is the High Priest whose sacrifice tore open the curtain to the Most Holy Place and allowed me to boldly approach the throne. I also gained knowledge of the covenant nature of our faith - how the blood of Jesus has broken off the curse of sin (which is death) and now I know that am part of the New Covenant, forgiven AND cleansed, known by God and knowing Him, with the Holy Spirit telling me what is right because God's laws are written on my heart. Help and comfort are always at hand, and I have a mediator in heaven interceding for me, reconciling me to God. This is FAR beyond where I thought the Road to Redemption would lead. It began as a simple devotional study, finding the places in the Old Testament that pointed to Jesus and the cross, but it ended up encompassing the deepest truths of our faith, because they all hinge upon Jesus and cannot be separated from any study of him.

Today is a celebration of the resurrection when Jesus rose, victorious, to greet the dawn, having done what he set out to do - *redeemed* the people of Earth. He had paid the ransom, by his own blood, taking our place so that the 'wages of sin which is death' fell upon him, rather than us. The promised seed of woman dealt the blow to the head of the serpent, Satan. The 'bruised heel' of the cross was not enough to overcome Jesus, any more than darkness could overcome the Light of the World.

We have only looked at a fraction of the more than 300 Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. We missed out entire books of scripture which could have added strands of meaning and understanding to that golden thread of hope which was the promise of the coming seed, but I hope that, in what we have studied, you have come to a greater appreciation of how all of Old Testament scripture was pointing forward to Jesus and the cross, revealing the plan of God which never wavered from the moment of Adam's 'fall' to the moment that the Son of God redeemed mankind and opened the way for each person to have restored relationship with God, and life forevermore.

On the day that Jesus rose, he appeared to his disciples and said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." ALL of the Old Testament falls into one of those categories - it is how the Jewish scriptures are arranged. Jesus was explaining that every part of scripture was telling one story - the story of Redemption.

Key Reading: Luke 24

Questions

1. Despite everything Jesus had spoken to his followers, were any of them expecting him to come back to life? What actions and words of the women and disciples showed their expectation (or lack of expectation) of a resurrection that day? (Luke 24:1-12)
2. As the two men walk on the road to Emmaus, confused as to what was going on after the death of Jesus and the strange tale the women had told that morning of an empty tomb, what did the risen Jesus say to them (v.25-27) What are some of the things that Jesus would have explained to them that you now know about? What would be the top three examples/scriptures you might use to convince someone the Old Testament points to Jesus and the cross?
3. In v.30-31 why did the men suddenly recognise Jesus? Do you think it was his actions and words, his appearance, or, if they had been spiritually blinded for a period before God unveiled their minds, what would have been the reason for that?
4. What is significant about Jesus' body in v.38-40. Also, see John 6:27, 'Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"' Have you considered that Jesus is man (and God) *forever*? He did not lay his humanity down with the body in the grave, but rose with it and the scars are the proof of that.
5. In v.44-49, what does Jesus explain specifically that the scriptures taught (v.46.) What is the message that must be proclaimed? (v.47) What promise did Jesus say the disciples would receive. What would it do for them?
6. Redemption is the 'buying back' or 'buying out' of someone or something. A ransom is a type of redemption - the buying back of someone's freedom by the payment of a certain price. How does the following Bible verse help explain what Biblical redemption is, '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.’ (1 Peter 1:18-19.)

7. Along with redemption, in Christ we also have *reconciliation*, which is the bringing back of man to God, restoring (and deepening) the relationship. What does Colossians 1:19-22 tell us about what we receive through this reconciliation? (‘For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.’)
8. How should we live now we are redeemed and reconciled? (‘My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’ (Galatians 2:20.))
9. What is the Lord’s desire for the people on Earth today? (‘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. (2 Peter 3:9))

Prayer Starter

According to Psalm 111:9a, ‘He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them forever.’ The ascribed judgement for your sin has been paid on your behalf. (‘For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.’ (Romans 6:23)) You are *free* from death and judgement, providing you believe in Jesus, the son of God to save you, and have turned away from your sinful nature whilst turning to him in faith (repented.) As written in Romans 10:9-10, ‘If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.’ If you have never done this, then today could be the day of your salvation! Ask someone to pray with you if you are not sure how, but it only takes a moment to pass from death to life, to place your faith in Jesus, and he alone.

For those with longstanding faith, pray for power, authority and ability to obey Jesus’ final message to us, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Going Deeper: Acts 3:12-26, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Questions

1. With the power of the Holy Spirit in them, the disciples begin preaching and doing miracles in the authority of Jesus’ name. The passage in Acts 3 occurs after Peter has healed a crippled man. When the people rush up, amazed, Peter seizes the opportunity to share the good news. What does he tell the people about Jesus?
2. Why do you think he makes specific mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (v.12-14)
3. What title (in v.15) does he call Jesus by? Why?
4. What does Peter explain in v. 16-20 and what does he tell the people they must do?
5. What is the ‘final restoration’ Peter speaks of in v. 21?
6. In v.17, Peter mentions prophecy that the Messiah must ‘suffer these things’ (such as written by David and Isaiah), in v.20-22, he refers to Moses’ prophecy that a ‘prophet like him’ would come and, in v. 24-26, he is referencing the prophecies of the Messiah who would come from the house of David, (as the prophet Samuel was the prophet in King David’s time.) The blessing of Abraham is the promise that from him many descendants would come, including spiritual descendants of faith. What does this tell you about how important the ancient scriptures which point to Jesus, the Messiah were (and are) to the spreading of the Good News to the Jews? Do you think they are also important when spreading the Good News to those of other faiths, or our secular nation, who are less familiar with the Bible?
7. 1 Corinthians 15 reminds us of the great contrast between the two Adams; ‘But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun

through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.' (1 Corinthians 15:20-22.) What does it mean that Christ is the 'first of a great harvest'? How do we move from 'belonging to' Adam, to receiving life through Christ?

8. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 what is the glorious secret that Paul confides?
9. Part of the reference to death (v.54) comes from Isaiah 25:8, ('He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken!') Most people will still *physically* die, but what is the future promise to those who have trusted Jesus for their salvation? (v.55-57.)
10. Job, the man known for all he suffered, yet had this to say about his God, "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God!" (Job 19:25-26) According to Colossians 1:13-14, 'For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.' What do these two very different passages each say about redemption and our future in Jesus?



A Note of Farewell

Thank you for being part of the Road to Redemption journey during this Lenten season. If daily Bible reading and prayer is not already a discipline you practise each day, don't stop now! You could go back through the study and do the 'Going Deeper' sections if you haven't already, or begin a close reading of one of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) to soak in the three years of Jesus' ministry and all the truths he spoke. The Book of Acts shows the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the early church, including the amazing transformation of the 'Pharisee of the Pharisees' on a campaign to arrest Christians, being completely transformed into Paul, the greatest voice of the New Testament letter writers, with such deep and rich words as we read throughout the past forty days.

Even for those whose faith is long-standing and mature, I pray that you 'may have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.' (Ephesians 3:18-19.) Above all, may we all greet the Resurrection with great joy and praise the God who sought after us, to bring us back to him, and who has a wonderful future planned for us in His Kingdom.

God bless you!