

OT217



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Table Of Contents.

1.	1-2 Numbers Joshua –Video Lecture	3.
2.	1-4 Overview	8.
3.	1-5 Numbers – An Arm Too Short	10.
4.	1-5 Numbers 14 – Mutiny	11.
5.	1-8 Course-Discussion	12.
6.	2-2 Numbers-Joshua – Video Lecture	13.
7.	2-4 Overview	19.
8.	2-4B-D Overview-Review	21.
9.	3-2 Numbers Joshua - Video-Lecture.	26.
10.	3-4 Overview	32.
11.	3-5 15 Deuteronomy-Joshua - 7 Lessons	34.
12.	10 Reasons-To-Believe-In-A-God-Who-Allows-Suffering	41.
13.	Knowing God-Through Exodus	44.
14.	Multimedia Lesson-Outline	58.
15.	Charts	61.

OLD TESTAMENT FOUNDATION ;
LESSON FOUR SCRIP 1 NUMBERS:
THE WILDERNESS YEARS

I. Preparation for Conquest of the Promised Land (1:1; 10:36.)

The book of Numbers is the story of Israel in the wilderness. Why were they there? The answer is that they started out there because Numbers tells the story starting out from Mt. Sinai after the Israelites had completed the process of receiving the Law, had built all the things they needed to worship God, had been organized as a people. They were ready to enter into the Promised Land.

A. Soldier Census and Camp Organization (1:1; 2:34).

Indeed in Numbers 1, we see them leaving Mt. Sinai, organized and counted according to military units: that is. men who draw the sword for battle. But you know, at the end of the book there is another census in Numbers 26 that indicates they had to be counted again for battle because in between a whole new generation had grown up, and the reason for their being a whole new generation was sin, disobedience, lack of faith.

The story begins at Sinai: the Israelites leave and head for the Promised Land. They are going basically to the north. And we find that in the process of traveling they also are learning more about God's covenant. This is an important thing to appreciate about the book of Numbers, a book in which there is a mixture of historical and law, on and off through the various chapters.

B. Organization and Laws Related to the Levites (3:1; 4:49).

Early on in the third and fourth chapters of the book, we get laws related to the Levites. It is helpful to appreciate the fact that God chose one of the tribes of Israel to be His special ministers. The whole nation was His people and His priests in one sense: but in particular, the tribe of Levi constituted the clergy. It was they who were specially entrusted with keeping His covenant laws, and teaching the people the content of those laws, and seeing to it that the nation remained pure. Of course, from the tribe of Levi came the priests: in particular. all those descended from Aaron constituted the priests.

C. Elimination of Defilement (5:1; 6:27).

We have in chapters 5 and 6 some laws relating to the elimination of defilement, again, the kind of thing that is related to the purity of the people and along the lines of some of what was introduced in the book of Leviticus. Also in chapters 5 and 6 there is some teaching to the Israelites about property, the importance of respect for it, about adultery, and about the taking of vows. Vows are not something that the New Testament spends much time on, but in the Old Testament, especially for certain categories of people. Vows were very important. They represented a commitment to serving God in a particular way, and so regulations for how vows are to be taken properly are provided in those early chapters.

D. Laws and Events Related to Worship and the Tabernacle (7:1; 9:23).

With chapters 7-9, there are quite a number of laws and events that relate to worship at the tabernacle. The Tabernacle had just been built as the Israelites were at Mt. Sinai and now it was their responsibility to learn to use it, for the priests to learn how to take it down and put it back up again day after day as

they traveled in the [wilderness, so](#) that it could be used properly for worship. The tabernacle was a portable tent shrine and it represented God's presence in the midst of the people, especially as the ark that held the Ten Commandments was in the midst of the tabernacle. Through it God represented himself among the people and His glory was manifested there. So laws concerning the tabernacle and worship thereat and its transportation are provided for us in chapters 7-9.

E. Departure from Mt. Sinai (10:1; 36).

With chapter 10, we actually have the story of the departure from Mt. Sinai. The Israelites are on the road. Now they will be on the road unfortunately for thirty-nine years. They don't know that yet, as far as they know they are going to head straight for the Promised Land and enter into the land of Canaan and begin their conquest of that land under God's good grace. It could have been that way, but unfortunately, as the book goes on to describe, the people sinned against God.

II. Wilderness Years (11:1; 25:18).

If we think of chapters 1-10 as a kind of first third of the [book, an](#) opening section-Part One let's say-we can think then of chapters 11-25 as a kind of middle section. We will call chapters 11-25 Part Two of the book of Numbers. This is the section of the book where we read about those long years of wandering in the wilderness. What happened? Why were the Israelites stuck in the huge Sinai Peninsula going around from place to place and not making it into the Promised Land? What happened were two kinds of things that indicated lack of faith: one was regular and constant grumbling; a second was the Israelites chickened out from entering the Promised Land.

A. God Judges Complainers (11:1; 12:16).

We read in chapters 11 and 12 how the people complained about their food. They didn't like the food that they were getting. They didn't like the fact that God provided for them, daily. the same good nutritious stuff called -manna? They began to complain about it. Imagine giving people everything they actually need, but wanting more. It is not hard to imagine at all, because that is what we do. It is natural with human nature.

But in those same chapters, there is also an interesting account of how Aaron and Miriam complain about Moses. Now Aaron is Moses' older brother and Miriam is his older sister. They were with him. They helped him. They supported him through all these events, the trials in Egypt, and the Exodus from Egypt, and the year spent at Mt. Sinai. and so on. But people can get tired of what they are used to. They can become dissatisfied with circumstances that do not move as quickly as they would want them to, and they can single out somebody and begin to complain about some aspect of his leadership or character, or in this case his family.

We read that Moses had married a Cushite woman. The Cushites in the Old Testament were from the area of Africa that is called the Sudan. In other words, Moses had married a black woman. A woman who was not exactly of his race. It may well be that Aaron and Miriam were not usually racist in their thinking, but in this instance they adopted a racist posture and complained about that woman. God took care of the situation. It was an affront to Moses' leadership and it was an attack on a black woman. And God turned Miriam white, white with leprosy. Shocked and corrected, they appealed to God for mercy and He did indeed heal them, and there was no more talk of criticism of Moses' Cushite wife.

But it was characteristic of what was going on among the people. They left Egypt, were glad to get out. wanted to be headed for the Promised Land: but as they encountered difficulties, as they encountered

just the time involved, as they encountered trials of traveling, they began to grumble.

B. Kadesh Barnea (13:1; 15:41).

A second big event that occurred during that same block of material in the book of Numbers is the fact that the Israelites chickened out from entering into the Promised Land. Numbers 13 tells the story of sending scouts in to look over the land of Canaan. Each tribe sent a representative scout or spy. They traveled around the land, they looked it over they saw the cities. They saw the countryside. They saw the agricultural areas, and they came back and gave a report to Moses and the people that described the wonderful land. A land where God would indeed bless them, where they could be happy and at home. But they also described the inhabitants of that land as giants.

We have no reason to think that anything but a very small number of them were tall like Goliath. Goliath was a part of a very small ethnic group that could grow to his very substantial stature. But they were not all basketball players: most of them were normal height. Yet the scouts were afraid-this from people who had been delivered by God from Egypt miraculously. This from people who had been through the Ten Plagues, from people who have seen God defeat the Amelikes before them back in the book of Exodus as they were approaching Mt. Sinai, from people who have been fed miraculously and provided for every step of their journey, from people who crossed the Red Sea on dry land. Now, they were afraid to fight.

You can understand some of it from a human point of view. Here are people who have never fought before. They were never part of any army: they were not good at what they did. They had a little bit of practice and a couple of encounters in the wilderness. But to think of themselves as fighting now as conquerors, rather than just defending themselves as they traveled along in the wilderness. That was hard for many people. Only two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, said, Las go. We can take it. God will be with us?

Ten of them said. We haven't got a chance. We were as grasshoppers in their sight? That lack of faith meant that God turns them back and lets them wander in the wilderness until the new generation grows up. In other words what God does is to say. Since you do not have the faith after all I have done for you to be my soldiers and enter into this Promised Land, then I will let you die out in the wilderness. I will let you wander around for year after year until most of you are dead and a whole new generation is grown up. I will let your children enter the Promised Land, but I will not let you?

C. Rebellion and God's Reaffirmation of the Priesthood (16:1; 19:22).

So that is actually what happened. We see the Israelites traveling around the wilderness. As they travel, year after year. they begin to grumble as well. One of the big events takes place in chapters 16-19, where there is a rebellion led by Korah, Dathan. and Abiram. They begin to talk about how wonderful Egypt was-all the vegetables they ate, the fresh vegetables, and all the nice times they had there, all the countryside that they enjoyed, and so on. 'We come out here in this wilderness and we are just going to die? They begin blaming Moses for that and they launch a rebellion and launched a rebellion against him with the idea that they would assume leadership and actually lead the people back to Egypt. How soon we forget! God handles that rebellion very efficiently. He causes the earth to open and swallow them up-an earthquake-like fissure opens up in the ground, and they and those with them are simply swallowed up by the earth.

D. Defeat of Enemies East of the Jordan (20:1; 25:18).

This does not mean, however, it is a good time in every way. The Israelites are inclined to all sorts of things that are far from what they should be. When we come to chapter 20, for example. we find the

Israelites near the end of their journey. They are in Moab, which is a country that is just to the east of the Promised Land-right across the Jordan River. Basically all they will have to do is cross through part of Moab and then ford the Jordan and enter into Canaan and begin the conquest. From one point of view it looks like it is fine: they are ready to go, and things will go well. But some complications ensue.

The king of Moab is a character named Balak. He knows that his own forces will be quite inadequate to attack and prevent the Israelites from moving through his territory. Moab at this time was newly settled and probably had just a very small number of citizenry capable of coming out and forming a volunteer defense force. Balak gets the idea that if he cannot defeat the Israelites militarily maybe he can defeat them spiritually. In particular, he has a couple of things in mind. The first option is to hire a prophet. There is a well-known prophet to the east named Balaam. This prophet Balaam is one who has a reputation as being able to prophesy in the name of various gods and goddesses.

Balak sends messengers to hire Balaam to come and to prophesy in the name of Yahweh-the Hebrew for "Lord," the God of the Israelites. His theory is that if he can get this prophet (these prophets are supposed to be in good with the gods) to curse the nation of Israel maybe that will turn them back and prevent them from going through his territory, perhaps taking some of it in the process of their conquest. When Balaam agrees to go he says to Balak. Now remember. I can only prophesy what this god Yahweh tells me to prophesy: It may have been something of a kind of an idle boast in the first instance, but God does in fact speak through Balaam.

Visualize this scene in chapters 22, 23, and 24: Balak has a whole group of government officials up on a high hill. They are standing there with Balaam the prophet, and looking forward to seeing how Balaam will curse the Israelites. And Balaam opens up his mouth and says things like this. "Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains, Come, he said, Curse Jacob for me: come, denounce Israel How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced? From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous. May my end be like theirs!"

And Balak, of course. said to Balaam. "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!" Try after try Balak gave Balaam one more chance. but Balaam kept prophesying as God put the words in his mouth. In spite of the fact that God's people had been so disobedient, in spite of the fact those Israelites had flaws and faults and grumbled a lot, in spite of their limitations, in spite of their weaknesses. God notified even the pagans that He was going to bless His people, make them mighty. and fulfill His promises concerning them to Abraham.

A very bad thing happens right after the Balaam incident. The Israelites are at a location called Baal of Peor, part of Moab, and they get into one of the most severe. sad religious practices of the day-that is, ritual prostitution. Chapter 25 of Numbers tells of one instance of the corruption of the people: how they engaged in the sexual practices that accompanied worship in the corrupt Moabite way of doing things. as people worshiped Baal and his girlfriend in the mythology of that day. Asherah. Part of what they did was have sex with prostitutes. The Israelites get into this as well. A plague ensues, and God stops that plague only when the Israelites take firm action and even kill the perpetrators. But it is a sad time and it is an indication of how God's people tend. easily enough, to turn away from Him. <>

III. New Census and Preparation for Conquest (26:1; 36:13).

The third part of the book. chapters 26-36, involves the new census and the preparation for the conquest.

A lot of time has passed: there is actually the passage of approximately thirty-eight years of time within the space of just a few verses.

A. Instructions and Preparations for Entering the Promised Land (26:1; 30:16).

The second census is taken in chapter 26. The people are ready now. The count is of those who have basically been born and grown up in the wilderness. It is time to get ready for the entering into the Promised Land. This brings questions with it, for example a group of women who are all the daughters of one Israelite named Zelophehad. They come to Moses and say, 'We are almost ready to enter into the Promised Land, the troops are being counted, everybody is organized, the invasion is being put into motion, but our father died without leaving any sons? The usual cultural expectation is that it is the sons who inherit the land and then they make sure that the women also get their fair share. The boys look out for the girls. The men look out for the women: that is how it works within the family, But we have no brothers. What are we going to do.

Moses brings their concern to God. And God gives them the answer that if there are no men in the family to inherit land of course the women must inherit. He instructed Moses that they must marry within their tribe so that the land must stay where maximum access to the family can be provided. After clearing up that and other kinds of questions, then the Israelites do prepare to enter the Promised Land.

B. Defeat of Ivlidianites and Allocation of Land (31:1; 35:34).

They are still on the east side of the Jordan River, so the chapters from 31-35 in this book talk about some battles that they fight on the east side of the Jordan where they are starting the process of entering the Promised Land. The Promised Land does go east of the Jordan. and so they must take care of that minor portion of the territory that they want to control first. All the tribes get together and they attack first the Midianites, then they attack other groups as well, and they begin to settle in the eastern regions of the Jordan River, across the Jordan from the main part of the Promised Land. Ivlloreover they receive information about a variety of laws, about offerings, about vows, about festivals, and even more information about how inheritance laws will work. You can see that there is a combination here beginning to take the land and wanting properly to possess it, God wanting them to possess it in an equitable way, to have access for everybody to that land. In modern times, most of the revolutions that have been fought have been fought over land, people who do not have access to ownership of land fighting for that right.

C. Fulfillment of Inheritance (36:1-13).

God wanted His people to distribute their land properly and fairly, and have everybody get equal access to the land. So concerns in the book of Numbers, as they will also be reflected in the book of Deuteronomy, tend toward this direction. There is that expectation that it is just not a matter of getting there and capturing the territory, but it is a matter of being a righteous people who occupy the land fairly, and to distribute it among themselves fairly according to Gods design so that everybody is treated equally, everybody is a brother and a sister, everybody is receiving the land and caring about his neighbor as himself in the way that God designed. The book of Numbers comes to a close with the conquest starting and with the land, in a small way, being possessed and with God's nation. for all their faults, finally entering into Canaan.

Numbers

The book of Numbers reveals what happens when people fail to trust God and disobey him. It is the tragic story of a nation poised to enter a fruitful land God has promised them. Because of fear and unbelief, they refuse to enter it. The first section of Numbers tells about the generation that drew back and who ended up wandering in the wilderness. The second section of Numbers centers on their descendants. They are preparing to enter the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

Numbers ends with that second generation poised to enter the land but it closes with nothing settled. The reader is left with the question: Will they trust God and take the land or will they too draw back?

What does it say?

The book of Numbers covers the wilderness wanderings of the nation of Israel. In fact, the Hebrew title appropriately means "in the desert." After their stay at Mount Sinai, God wanted Israel to enter the Promised Land. However, they failed to trust God and refused to take the land. As a judgment from God, they wandered in the desert for nearly forty years.

Numbers focuses on two distinct generations. The first generation, and their disastrous rebellion, is the focus of the first 25 chapters. They are carefully "numbered" and prepared to take possession of the land of Canaan, only to reject God's promptings. The second generation is the focus of chapters 26 through 36. They, too, are numbered and prepared, being reminded of their ancestors' failure.

The book closes with Israel camped across the Jordan river from the Promised Land, again poised to enter.

Faces & Places

The central character in the book of Numbers, as in Exodus and Leviticus, is Moses. He serves as God's voice to the grumbling and rebellious children of Israel. Moses' brother Aaron also plays a significant role, primarily as the leader of the priests. Caleb and Joshua stand out as courageous men willing to trust God, and are rewarded accordingly. A fascinating character by the name of Balaam emerges in this book. He is summoned by a foreign king to curse Israel, but can only respond with blessings.

Significant places include Mount Sinai, the starting point in this book. A location called Kadesh in the desert of Paran is where the Israelites camped while waiting to see if they were to enter the Promised Land. The land of Canaan is entered only briefly by twelve men, but still looms large throughout Numbers as the ultimate goal. The dominating "place" in the book, however, is the desert. A number of different deserts are mentioned, emphasizing that this was truly a desert experience for Israel.

Key Verses & Themes

Blessing:

Numbers 6:24-26 "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Disobedience:

Numbers 14:22-23 "Not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times not one who has treated me with contempt will ever see [the Land]."

Worship:

Throughout this book, despite the repeated rebellions by the people, attention is given to Israel's worship of God.

So what?

Numbers presents two strange bedfellows: God's wrath and his blessings. The focal point of the book is God's extreme displeasure over the Israelites' refusal to trust and obey (chapter 14). Their penalty was years of wandering around the desert. How do I experience God's displeasure? What does discipline or chastening look like? Has God ever placed me in a "desert" in order to shape me (as he did Moses), to discipline me (like the Israelites), or for some other reason?

Another major thrust of this book is that God deeply desires to enrich his people. He even instructs the priests how to ask God to bless! (6:22-27) Because of God's leading, a strange man (Balaam) can only utter blessings rather than the curses he was hired to pronounce. What blessings from God's hand am I aware of today? If I am not experiencing his riches, is there something that might be getting in the way?

An Arm Too Short? - Numbers 11:4–23; 31–34

The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you." (Num. 11:23)

The book of Numbers covers a journey through the desert that should have lasted about fourteen days, but instead lasted forty years. When they first crossed into the Sinai Peninsula, the Israelites were bursting with a spirit of hope and adventure. Free at last from the chains of slavery, they headed toward the Promised Land. But the weeks, months, and then years of wandering in a hostile desert soon wore down all positive feelings.

With relentless honesty, Numbers tells what happened to change a short excursion into a forty-year detour. Petty things seemed to bother the Israelites most, as their constant complaints about food indicate. With a few exceptions, they ate the same thing every day: manna (meaning, literally, "What is it?"), which appeared like dew on the ground each morning. A monotonous diet may seem a trivial exchange for freedom from slavery, but read their grumbling for yourself in this chapter.

The rebellion portrayed here was typical of the whole journey. And the more childishly the people acted, the more their leaders were forced to respond like stern parents. As this chapter shows, Moses and God took turns getting exasperated by the Israelites' constant whining.

True, conditions were rigorous: Facing a constant threat from enemy armies, the tribes had to march under a broiling sun through a desert region oppressed by snakes, scorpions, and constant drought. But the underlying issue was a simple test of faith: Would they trust God to see them through such hard circumstances? Would they follow the terms of the covenant he had signed with them and depend on his promised protection?

Life Question:

Do you ever "grumble" against God? If so, what tends to make you do so?

Mutiny - Numbers 14:1–44

The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?" (Num. 14:11)

Most ancient histories record the heroic exploits of mighty warriors and unblemished leaders. The Bible, however, gives a strikingly different picture, as seen in the brutal realism of Numbers. On a dozen different occasions the Israelites lashed out in despair or rose up in rebellion, plotting against their leaders and denouncing God. The spirit of revolt spread to the priests, to the military, to Moses' family, and ultimately to Moses himself.

This chapter recounts the pivotal event of Numbers, the most decisive event since the Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites were poised on the very border of the Promised Land. If they simply trusted God, they could leave the torturous desert and walk into a land abundant with food and water.

Yet despite the miracles God had already performed on their behalf, the Israelites chose to distrust him once again. Cowed by a military scouting report of potential opposition, they loudly bemoaned the original decision to leave Egypt. In open mutiny, they even conspired to stone Moses and his brother Aaron.

The real object of revolt, the Israelites' God, felt spurned like a cast-off lover. Convinced at last that this band of renegades was unprepared for conquest of the Promised Land, he postponed all plans. The covenant promise of a new nation in a new land would have to wait, at least until all adults of the grumbling generation had died off. And that's why, out of the many thousands who had left Egypt, only two adults, Joshua and Caleb, survived to enter the Promised Land.

The Israelites had lost faith not only in themselves, but in their God. The apostle Paul points out that these failures "happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:11–12).

Life Question:

What "giants" cause you fear? How do you respond?

How does the book of Numbers serve as a warning to believers today?

A theme of Numbers is trusting God. Trust is similar to, synonymous with, or analogous to faith. Nevertheless, like most analogies, at some point they separate or fall apart. Faith is to have confidence in a promise made by God. Faith carries with it a clear expectation of what the outcome will be. For example, “Honor thy father and mother, that thy days may be longer upon the face of the earth.” On the other hand, trust implies that I do not necessarily know what the outcome will be. Nevertheless, I trust that the outcome will be favorable to me, because I know that God has my interest at heart. What I know is that, although I might have control over inanimate objects, I do not have control over other people’s behavior. But, I trust that whatever the other person’s behavior is towards me, it will inevitably be to my advantage.

This lack of understanding of trust is why so many Christians never seem to find victory until they have a crisis experience followed by a new beginning. Sometimes we are willing to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, but we are not as willing to walk through the waters of the Red Sea. We are slow to take that step which burns our bridges, cuts us off from the world. In our minds and thinking, we are still back in Egypt. We will not move forward through the Red Sea. We want to maintain the option of going back to Egypt. Until we break our ties with Egypt, we are still under the bondage and control of Egypt.

Decision is one thing. Decision brings the power of God to bear on our lives and sets us free from the guilt of the past and we can rejoice in that. God's word is true. But there is also the experience of passing through the Red Sea, that call to move forward, and cut off your ties with the world, and take steps that will allow the river of God's judgment to flow between us and the ways of the world. When we take this step, we move out into that place where God dwells within us. God often uses our Red Sea experiences to draw us to him.

OLD TESTAMENT FOUNDATION;
LESSON FIVE SCRIPT DEUTERONOMY AND JOSHUA:
THE RENEWED COVENANT AND THE CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND

I. First Sermon: Review of Israel's Recent History (Dt 1:1-4:49).

A. Emphasis on the Covenant.

Deuteronomy and Joshua go together in many ways. Deuteronomy brings to an end the books of Moses. It is a restatement of God's covenant for the new generation about to enter the Promised Land: and then Joshua is the story of the conquest of that land, at least the beginnings of it. When we look at Deuteronomy we see that it is not giving the Israelites a whole bunch of new information, but it is stating for them God's law in a way that sort of packages that law around the emphasis on covenant. The book of Deuteronomy is organized especially as a covenant all by itself as a book. The original Sinai covenant starts with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai in the second part of Exodus and continues with the book of Leviticus, and then even has some sort of appendixes in the book of Numbers as the law is being fleshed out in the action and lives of the people as they traversed the wilderness. <>

B. Renewal of the Covenant.

In the case of Deuteronomy, Israel is gathered in one place: the plains of Shittim in Moab, right across the Jordan River from the nation. Is this because God does not like other nations? Certainly not-that is not the emphasis at all. But rather, to this nation has been entrusted the responsibility of specially serving God, of being the stewards of His Word, of knowing His covenant and what His righteousness consists of, of living as a holy people for Him. This means they are under a burden, and so they are warned. If they do keep His law, their life on the earth will be long. But if they don't, they will rapidly be thrown off from the Promised Land into captivity.

Already in chapter 4 this prediction is made. The whole sweep of Israel's history is outlined in just a few verses of chapter 4, from about verses 21-31. You can see the plan there. They will be long in the land, but eventually they will worship other gods and will dishonor God, breaking His covenant. Then He will give them into the hand of their enemies who will deport them. And then in exile they will finally turn back to Him. In His mercy, He will bring them back. a renewed people-not only into their land physically, but into His protection and into His new covenant spiritually. <>

C. Unity of God's People.

Another theme that Deuteronomy brings before us is the unity of God's people. They cannot just keep some laws, spread out. and get along with some neighbors. They cannot just see themselves as free to do whatever they want, as long as it does not get them in too much trouble in the local scene. No, they are supposed to be a people who function together. One particular way in_ which they function together is worship.

We find in Deuteronomy a very strong emphasis on corporate worship. This is a very important biblical theme. Everybody has to worship together. Deuteronomy 12 tells us that God plans to take His tabernacle and place it somewhere once they get into the heartland of the Promised Land. There, everybody will gather three times a year. The whole nation will come-the people from the distant edges of the nation, the people near the central sanctuary. It does not matter, they will all gather together three

times a year. They will especially worship as a nation. They will come at the time of the Passover in the spring: they will come at the time of Pentecost in the summer: they will also come at the time of Tabernacles in the fall-three great festivals. Worshiping together, they will show their unity as a people.

Isn't that the way we show our unity? Isn't it by worshiping together? Of course. we show our love for one another and our care in many other ways. But certainly, worship is one of the key ways that God's people indicate they belong to Him, all together as a unified people. <>

D. Gods Faithfulness.

Another theme is God's faithfulness to His promises. This is very big in Deuteronomy. Moses tells the people about their responsibility to keep the law. As he describes their stipulations, he also emphasizes for them by way of the prologue, part of the covenant, how faithful God has been. God delivered you: God cared for you? Who did God do this for? Who else has ever had anything like this happen? Who worships any other gods that they think can come close to this in terms of beneficence, kindness. and loving faithfulness? The mercy of God. His constant faithfulness. His loyalty-these are great themes of the book of Deuteronomy that Moses stresses for the people. <>

E. God's Self-revelation in His Word.

There is also the concept of God's self-revelation in His Word. This is something that we do not often pay much attention to, but God's Word is where we find out about Him. If you want to know God and you do not have a Bible, you are in trouble. It is hard. You can know some things about God: you can know general things about God, but God has caused His Word to be the place where we are to go to learn. He has put it in black and white. He has written it down for us. Moses makes much in Deuteronomy of this aspect of the Israelite responsibility to know that Word, to teach it to their children, to read it regularly, to live by it, not to let it depart from their minds, but to cause it to be firmly fixed therein.

F. God's Sovereignty over the World.

Another theme is the importance of God's sovereignty over the world and world events. The Israelites were a pretty small people on the scene. There were big powers like the Egyptians, or the Hittites, or the Babylonian Empire, or the Hurrian Empire, or any of a number of other empires. Israel was pretty small. Remember that when the spies in the book of Numbers looked over even the land of Canaan, which itself was not all that big, they felt outnumbered and outclassed by what they saw. The Israelites needed the encouragement of realizing that God was really in charge of all things, all nations. God would make happen for them what He chose to make happen. They did not need to fear: they did not need to lack confidence.

People in those days often believed in local gods and goddesses. They believed that an individual who worshiped a god was, in a certain sense, localizing that god. And where gods were worshiped. they might have some power: but if you get to some place where a god was not worshiped. that god probably did not have much power in that location. But the Israelites needed to know that the one true God, the God who had rescued them and made them a people, in fact, was sovereign over the entire world. <>

III. Third Sermon (Dt 27:1-34:12).

A. Curses and Blessings.

Yet another theme of the book is God's grace in abundance toward His people. He gives them more than they deserve: He gives them a lot. It is not just sustenance: it is not just the minimal. Deuteronomy emphasizes that, with its long lists of blessings that God provides for His people. On the other hand, He

demands obedience as proof of faith and love. There are also plenty of curses listed in the book, covenant curses as part of the sanctions of the covenant. And Deuteronomy 28-32 is replete with these-descriptions of all the miseries the people can get themselves into if they do not obey God and keep His law.

B. Succession.

Another concern of the book is succession. This, after all, is a new group of people to whom Moses is preaching. Most of them had not been in Egypt. They have been born, instead, in the wilderness and were a new generation ready to enter the Promised Land. They were oriented forward to that experience: they were the successors to those who had lived in Egypt, and they need to have a sense of proper succession, the idea of the generations coming and going, the idea that every new generation must renew the covenant with God. Every new generation must for itself be faithful. A generation could not count upon the benefits that had been passed down to it by a prior faithful generation. It had to make its own commitment of faith and obedience to God. <>

C. A Successor to Moses.

The succession from Moses is also an issue at the very end of the book. What will happen when Moses dies? Well, the answer is that God will be faithful. He will have a successor. In the very last chapter of the book, chapter 34, we read about Moses' death, about the care with which God buried him. He had led the people faithfully. Yet for all the strong and wonderful things he had done, He was actually a very meek and humble person. Not that he did not have vigor and force in what he did, but that he put others ahead of himself. In other words, he knew how to love neighbor as self and how to love God with all his heart.

IV. Preparations for Entering the Promised Land (Jos 1:1-5:15).

There is a transition from Deuteronomy to Joshua, and in a way it is embodied, in part, in the transition from Moses to Joshua because, of course, the book of Joshua bears the name of Joshua, who is one of its main characters. I'd like to emphasize for you, since this is the first book of the Bible that is named after a single individual, that Joshua is not actually the hero of the book. Joshua is not the most important figure in the book that bears his name. The hero in the book of Joshua is God. God is the one who makes things happen. God is the one who leads His people.

God is the one who protects them. God is the one who gives them victory. Joshua is an important player, but the real emphasis is on God as the supreme leader. God as the sovereign, God as even the warrior, for His people. <>

V. Conquest of the Land (Jos 6:1-12:24).

A. Central Campaign.

When we look at the book of Joshua we observe that the Israelites entered the Promised Land and then after a central campaign went to the south, and after a campaign in the south went to the north. One of the things you observe in following that process is that quite a number of chapters are given to the campaign which we call the central campaign, the entry campaign. The Israelites crossed the Jordan River in a kind of reenactment of the experience they had had at the Red Sea. They went on dry land across a riverbed. God dams up the waters for them and allowed them to experience again, as a new generation, the same kind of miracle that their fathers had experienced forty years prior.

In addition, He brings them into the Promised Land, part of that land opposite Jericho, a great ancient city with huge walls. Now how were the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land if it had so many cities with high walls? Sure, they could start elaborate siege works, but besieging a city takes years. If they would have to siege every single city, since most of them were defended with very high impenetrable walls that an army of infantry men could not breach, except after long, slow, patient effort, they would never mop up the Promised Land in their lifetimes.

So, God gives them, in the situation of Jericho, a real encouragement. They actually do not fight for the city at all. They march around the city. They march around one day: they march around another. After six days, they march around on the seventh day, seven times, and then God causes the walls of that city to crumble down flat so the Israelites can just walk in over the rubble, come in and take captive the citizenry, and begin the conquest of the Promised Land. <>

B. Holy War.

It is an incredible kind of war. God did the fighting for them: they did not do it themselves. In this connection, we observe that there are a number of ways in which the Israelites are entering into a battle, a series of battles, a war, or a series of wars, always from a different angle from which we might think soldiers would approach a battle from. That is, they are fighting what scholars call a "holy war." This holy war is characterized by quite a number of special features. The Israelites actually do not get paid. They are all volunteer soldiers. This is different from what happens in most of the ancient world. In most warfare in the ancient world, people were allowed to take whatever they could gain. As they were successful in battle, they were able to get rich. Whatever they could carry off after they defeated their enemies, they could keep.

But the Israelites could not do that. They were allowed no pay: they were allowed no plunder. They could not take the spoils of war, that was all dedicated to God. They fight with only a volunteer army, no professional soldiers. They fight only for the taking and holding of the Promised Land, not for personal gain in any way. They fight as the Lord's soldiers, as Yahweh's soldiers, as God's army. And accordingly, they cannot just decide when to go into battle. We see this in the book of Joshua. God tells them where to go and where to fight and what to do. It is at His behest that they fight: and furthermore, no particular political leader can tell them when to fight. Only one of God's prophets can do that. In the case of Joshua, he is both a general and a [prophet, so](#) he is one to whom God can speak. But this is a special type of warfare, not the normal sort.

It is especially important to note that it cannot be a warfare that they fight just anywhere or any time. They only fight at God's call, only because they hear God's voice through a prophet, and only for the taking and holding of the Promised Land. Finally, if they go into this kind of war and somebody violates these provisions, violates the provisions that they are not in it for themselves but are fighting as God's army for Him, not for reward of any sort-then the violator becomes the enemy. <>

C. Ai.

This leads to the story that takes place in chapter 7 of Joshua, right after the terrific success they had at Jericho-a wonderful miraculous delivery of a city into their hands. They then proceed to a little town called Ai. Ai in Hebrew means "ruin." We expect that this is not much of a place. And yet, after they start to attack little "ruin," they are driven back, a number of them are killed, and we find Joshua on his face on the ground, saying, "Lord. what have you done? Have you brought us over the Jordan to kill us?"-because Joshua, of course, cannot figure out what is going on. It is supposed to be a holy war. It is supposed to be a special kind of process in which God does the fighting for His [people, so](#) that they always win: and here they have lost a battle against an inferior force, against a little ruined town. The

answer is that some of the Israelites had been taking plunder during the attack on Jericho.

One of them is singled out as an example. In fact this story, sadly, is presumably intended by the writer of Joshua-whoever it was, we do not know-to be an indication of the kinds of things in general that the Israelites did that would keep them from a completely successful campaign in the Promised Land. Though Joshua did lead the troops at God's behest through the central part of the country (and then headed further south and mopped up territories in the south, and then went on to defeat a coalition of Canaanite kings in the north), the fact is that the Israelite conquest was only partial.

D. Incomplete Taking of the Land.

The book of Joshua and the following book of Judges give lists of places that they did not capture and mention large numbers of groups who stayed with them right in the Promised Land, though they were not native Israelites. In other words, the lack of faithfulness as sampled in chapter 7 was widespread enough that in spite of all the warnings, the Israelites really did not do as thorough a job of the conquest as God had wanted them to do.

VI. Allocation of Territories (Joshua 13:1-24:33).

A. Assignment of Land.

However, God is faithful even when His people are not. After the campaigns winds up, then there is the assignment of the land. This starts with chapter '13, and it is a very long section of the book, and it goes until the end of chapter 21. It is not very exciting reading: lots and lots of lists of towns and cities, long descriptions of borders of tribal territories. But it is very important information. Here after all that time, after centuries of time, since God had originally promised this land to the descendants of Abraham, the descendants of Abraham were being handed that land. They may have imperfectly occupied it, and they may have made some serious flaws in their conquest as they were not as faithful to God as they should have been, but He is giving them the land. <>

B. Intertribal Rivalry.

As the lot falls to this tribe or that family or clan, the land is distributed. And after that wonderful, though somewhat tedious, description of a fulfillment of a great promise, then we read about the fact the people themselves were falling into disunity. Chapter 22 describes intertribal rivals, tribes almost going to war against one another. Fortunately, that does end in proper negotiation under the covenant and a restoration of unity, but it does bode ill for the future. If these tribes, after all the good that has been done for them, cannot stay together, live together, or work together, maybe there is in their future a dissolution-and we will see that when we come to 1 and 2 Kings. <>

C. Joshua's Final Message.

In chapter 23, there is a wonderful story of Joshua's appeal to the people to remain faithful. It is great reading. He had to make it, because that generation needed to renew the covenant, too. Just as the first generation of Israelites had made their covenant at Sinai, the second generation under Moses, toward the end of Joshua's life, there was yet another generation. They needed to be faithful, and so he brings before them again God's covenant, and urges them to keep the law, to be obedient, to put away their idols and to stay with the Lord, who alone could bless them and protect them.

The final chapter of the book is an account of the renewal of that covenant, along with Joshua's death. Joshua stresses for the people that they have got to serve the Lord. "Serve" can mean "worship": it can mean "work for": it can mean "be obedient to": it can mean "belong to": it covers a lot of territory. Joshua says, "I have done it. My family has done it. Will you do it too? Will you serve the Lord?" And the people say they [will, so](#) he swears them to it, to serve Him fully, to really obey Him. So Joshua dies,

having led that generation, having been faithful to God. At the end of the book of Judges, we will see what happens to transition from there. And in the end of Joshua, we will see what happens as it transitions into the book of Judges. Once Joshua is gone, things will not be as good. <>

Deuteronomy

What does it say?

Deuteronomy means "second law: This is the second giving, or repetition, of the law. A new generation stands poised across the Jordan river from Jericho, ready to take possession of the land of promise. This book records a series of messages given by Moses to establish them in God's design and desire for their lives. In these farewell talks, Moses urges the people to remember God's dealings with Israel (both blessing and judgment), to underscore in their minds the importance of obedience, and to look ahead with the fear of the Lord.

Deuteronomy is the renewing of the covenant between God and Israel. The covenant had previously been established at Mount Sinai but had been violated through distrust and disobedience. The result was God's judgment on the nation. Moses wants the people to enter the land re-committed to walking with God and receiving God's richest blessings.

Faces & Places

Moses plays the dominant human role in this book. Deuteronomy records, his farewell messages, and at the end, records his death. The focus of the book, however, is the audience, the people of Israel. They are reminded and challenged as they prepare to enter into the land God is giving to them.

The stage for Deuteronomy is the desert east of the Jordan." As such, the Jordan river serves as the conspicuous marker between the old era and the new. It is on the doorstep of the land that Moses' messages are delivered. Within those messages Moses looks back to significant places, such as the Red Sea, Kadesh Barnes, the desert, and the land of the Amorites. Notably, Moses also looks ahead to two mountains, Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, where all the blessings and the curses of the covenant would be recited. Deuteronomy closes on Mount Nebo, where Moses was allowed to see the Promised Land before dying.

Key Verses & Themes

Obedience:

Deuteronomy 8:6 "Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and revering him."

Love:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear. O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Remember:

Deuteronomy 32:7 "Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you."

Covenant:

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the his ways and revering him."

Love:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Remember:

Deuteronomy 32:7 "Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you."

Covenant:

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands."

So What?

A pair of grand old hymns, "Trust and Obey" and "More Love to Thee", embody the essence of Deuteronomy. Above all, this book stresses the importance of obedience to what God has commanded. In what area of my life is it most difficult for me to obey God? What is God asking me to do today?

However, Deuteronomy also makes it clear that God is not interested in mere rote obedience. He desires obedience that springs from a heart of love. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4-5 when asked to name the greatest commandment of all (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Do I love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength?

Deuteronomy also emphasizes the parents' role in teaching their children to love God and walk with him (for example, see 6:4-9). If God has blessed you with children (or grandchildren!), what might be a creative way you can capture their imaginations with God's Word?

Geography: Major Areas Overview

The geography of the Old Testament is centered in the region of the world known as the Near East. In ancient times it was composed of five major areas surrounded or intersected by different bodies of water. The focal point of the Ancient Near East was the Tigris and Euphrates river valley. It was in the area known as Mesopotamia and later to be called Babylonia, that civilization first developed. The city of Ur, where Abraham was born before moving to Haran (Genesis 11:27-31), was located in Mesopotamia not far from the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Upriver to the north was the area known as Assyria, later to become home to a vast empire during the 8th and 7th centuries before Christ. And to the west, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, lay Canaan, the land promised to Abraham and his descendants by God (Genesis 12:1-7).

The majority of events recorded for us in the Bible occurred in or near the land of Canaan. The Jordan river, a body of water that played a significant role in both the Old and New Testaments, runs from north to south through the center of the promised land. The Dead Sea, located on the southern end of the Jordan river, is another significant geographical feature of Canaan. Some scholars believe that the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by God for their wickedness (Genesis 19:24-29), lie somewhere at the bottom of the Dead Sea.

To the south and west of Canaan lay the center of another great civilization -- Egypt. Built on the plains and along the banks of the fertile Nile river valley, Egypt developed one of the most fascinating and mysterious cultures of the ancient world. More importantly, it became the home for Jacob's family during a severe famine in Canaan sometime near the beginning of the second millennia before Christ (c. 1900 - 1800 B.C.; see Genesis 48-50). Yet not long after the death of Jacob's son, Joseph, the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians and held in captivity for four-hundred years. Eventually, God raised up Moses to lead his children out of slavery in Egypt and back towards the promised land (Exodus 12-14). After they escaped from Egypt across the Red Sea, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness of Sinai for forty years. Then, led by Moses' successor Joshua, the Israelites crossed the Jordan river from the east and conquered the promised land of Canaan (Joshua 1-3).

GEOGRAPHY OVERVIEW: Adam to Joseph

Many scholars suggest that the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3) was located in the fertile crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. After the Fall, Adam was cast out of the Garden but most likely remained in the area with his family (Genesis 3:21-24). Cain may have traveled much farther away (Genesis 4:1-16) but it is very difficult to determine in what direction. Following the re-creation of civilization after the Flood (Genesis 7-11), the story of redemption focuses on the patriarch Abram, later to become Abraham (Genesis 11:26-32).

Abraham was from the city of Ur in Mesopotamia. It was there that God instructed him to leave for a land which would be revealed to him later (Genesis 12:1). Abraham gathered his family, including his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, and made his first major stop in Haran (Genesis 12:4). From there he entered the land of Canaan and arrived in Shechem where he received God's promise that his descendants would inherit the whole land (Genesis 12:6-7). He then set up a tent at Bethel, where he

worshipped (Genesis 12:8) before moving farther south to Canaan. Because of a famine in the land of Canaan, Abraham moved his family to Egypt (Genesis 12:10-14). In an attempt to save his own life, he lied to Pharaoh about his relationship with Sarah, claiming that she was his sister. When Pharaoh discovered the truth, he sent Abraham back to Canaan (Genesis 12:13-20).

Abraham and his family prospered greatly in Canaan. He gave his nephew Lot an opportunity to choose which portion of the land in which to settle. Lot chose to go to the east, settling in the cities known as Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 13). Later, due to the horrific sins of the people there, both cities were destroyed by God (Genesis 19). Scholars believe that the cities were located somewhere in the area now covered over by the Dead Sea.

The remainder of Abraham's life was spent wandering in the Promised Land. Eventually, God fulfilled his promise to Abraham that he and Sarah would have a child (Genesis 15, 18). The child, named Isaac, ultimately became the source of Abraham's greatest test of faith. In Genesis 22 God commanded Abraham to take his son to Mt. Moriah and sacrifice him there. Abraham obeyed, believing that God could raise him from the dead. Yet, God provided a ram in place of Isaac and the boy's life was spared. Mt. Moriah is believed to be the site of this event in modern day Jerusalem.

Isaac spent the majority of his life in the land of Canaan (Genesis 21-35). His two sons by his wife Rebecca, Jacob and Esau, stayed with their father until Jacob took the birthright from his brother, Esau. Jacob then fled from Esau to Haran where his uncle, Laban, lived (Genesis 27-29).

It was in Haran that Jacob married both Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29). In Genesis 31 Jacob fled from his uncle, Laban, and headed back towards Canaan. Along the way, he wrestled with God and proceeded to resolve his conflict with Esau (Genesis 31-32). He then settled in Bethel where he raised his family (Genesis 35).

In Genesis 37 we read the sordid story when Jacob's second youngest son, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his older brothers. Joseph was taken to Egypt and suffered years of imprisonment and hardship. However, by the providence of God, he eventually rose to the second highest position of power in the nation.

Years later, Joseph's brothers were forced to come to Egypt to buy food because of a severe famine in Canaan. Joseph, under God's direction, knew of the coming famine and stored enough food to help Egypt endure it. Through a series of emotional encounters, Joseph ultimately revealed his identity to his brothers. After their reconciliation, he moved the entire family of Jacob to Egypt where they flourished. Joseph settled them in the land of Goshen, a fertile place in which to raise their livestock.

GEOGRAPHY OVERVIEW: Moses to Samuel

The book of Exodus opens with the Israelites in Egypt. Over the years, their numbers grew substantially and the influence of Joseph, now long dead, subsided. Concerned that the growth of the Israelites was becoming a risk to the security of his kingdom, the current Pharaoh of Egypt forced the Israelites into slavery (Exodus 1). In Exodus 2 Moses was born as a Hebrew, but through the providence of God, was raised in the house of Pharaoh. When he was forty years old, Moses killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. In order to escape punishment, he fled to the wilderness where he spent the next forty years of his life.

In Exodus 3, Moses received instructions from God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. In Exodus 4, he returned to Egypt and engaged the Pharaoh in a series of confrontations designed to win freedom for his people. The eventual exodus of the Jews from Egypt (chapter 12) is complete when they miraculously crossed over the Red Sea. In the process, Pharaoh and his army were engulfed by the waters.

For the next forty years the children of Israel wandered in the Sinai Peninsula as judgment for the first generation's disobedience to God (Exodus 32-33). It was during the beginning of the 40 years that Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19-20).

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Jews were led by God into the promised land of Canaan. Unfortunately, Moses was not permitted to enter the land because of his own disobedience to God. God raised up Joshua to lead the people of Israel through the Jordan River and into Canaan (Joshua 1-3).

Joshua led the Israelites into a series of successful battles whereby they conquered the land promised to them by God. Two of the key cities which they conquered were Jericho and Ai. The land of Canaan was then divided up among the twelve tribes of Israel.

After the time of Joshua, judges rose up to lead the people in God's ways. Eventually, God raised up the last judge, the prophet Samuel to lead his people but they asked instead to be ruled by a king or monarch like the surrounding nations (1 Samuel 3-8). God granted this request and the era of the monarchy began with Israel's first king, Saul. During this era, one of the most prominent enemies of the Israelites were the Philistines. They lived in the land of Philistia to the west of Canaan just off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

GEOGRAPHY OVERVIEW: United Kingdom

During the reign of King David, the land boundaries were spectacularly expanded (2 Samuel 5-12). First, David conquered Jerusalem, making it his royal city. He then decisively defeated the Philistines so that their hold on Israelite territory was broken and their threat to Israel eliminated. Next, he defeated the Moabites who lived to the east of the Dead Sea, imposing his authority over them. In the northeast, David crushed the Aramean kingdoms and forced them to pay tribute. To the south, he subdued Edom and incorporated it into his growing empire. Then, in an effort to secure his eastern border, he defeated the Ammonites, bringing them into subjection. Finally, in a "mopping up" operation, David subjugated the remaining strongholds of Canaanite resistance in the northern region of Israel.

David's military actions completed the conquest begun by Joshua. These victories secured Israel's borders and inaugurated its golden age. By the time of David's death and Solomon's ascension (c. 971 B.C.), Israel's empire stretched from the eastern arm of the Red Sea in the south to shores of the Euphrates river in the north. Never again would Israel be such a prominent geopolitical power in the ancient Near East than during the reigns of David and Solomon.

GEOGRAPHY OVERVIEW: Divided Kingdom to the Return

Following the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split into two parts (1 Kings 12). The northern kingdom was called Israel. The southern kingdom was called Judah. After numerous warnings about

God's judgment from prophets such as Hosea, Assyria rose to power and in 722 B.C. conquered the whole of the northern kingdom.

Although the Assyrians were a wicked and barbarous people, God called Jonah, one of his prophets in the northern kingdom, to go to the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. While Jonah stubbornly resisted, eventually he went and preached to the Ninevites with surprising results.

In the last years of the seventh century B.C. the Assyrian empire was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians (c. 612 B.C.). A few years later, the southern kingdom of Judah also fell under his control (605 B.C.). Over the course of the next nineteen years, two different groups of Hebrews were deported to Babylon. Ultimately, due to a revolt by the Jews in Jerusalem and the surrounding region, the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. and the majority of the population was exiled in what became known as the "Babylonian captivity."

In 539-538 B.C., the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians, who ruled their new empire from the royal city of Susa in the east. Because they had a liberal policy of "empire-management," the Persians allowed subject peoples, such as the Jews, to return to their homelands. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra, different groups of Israelites returned to the city of Jerusalem at different times in order to rebuild it and the temple (c. 538-430 B.C.). Others, however, such as Esther, chose to stay in Babylon under Persian rule (see the book of Esther).

Following their return to the Promised Land from captivity, the Jews were ruled by a variety of groups until they were conquered by the Romans in the century before Christ. This era is often referred to as the "inter-testamental period."

GEOGRAPHY: REVIEW

Name the four major rivers which were influential in Old Testament history.

Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan, and Nile rivers

List the three major areas that Abraham traveled from and to during his lifetime.

Mesopotamia (later called Babylonia), Canaan, and Egypt

List the two major cities that Abraham traveled from during his early journeys and the two key sites in Canaan where he worshipped the Lord.

The cities were Ur and Haran; the key sites were Shechem and Bethel.

What are the names of the cities now believed to be covered over by the Dead Sea? Sodom and Gomorrah

What was the name of the mountain where God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? Mt. Moriah

What's the name of the region and the mountain where the children of Israel wandered and where Moses received the Law?

The region is known as the Sinai Peninsula and the mountain is called Mt. Sinai.

List the five regions surrounding Israel which David conquered during his reign (2 Samuel 5-12).

Edom, Ammon, Aramean kingdoms, Philistia, and Moab

In what major empire was the city of Nineveh located? Assyrian Empire

Name the major empire which would conquer Judah and destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Babylonian Empire

What major empire eventually allowed the Jews to return to the Promised Land? Persian Empire

II. What was the key royal city of the great fifth century Persian Empire? !Ena

12. Click on each item in the geography menu and become familiar with its location.

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OLD TESTAMENT FOUNDATION ; LESSON SIX SCRIPT JUDGES AND RUTH: HOLDING ON FOR DEAR LIFE

I. Deterioration (Judges 1:1-3:4).

With the book of Judges comes a desperate struggle, The Israelites had the Promised Land. They were in it. It had been distributed to them to the extent that they were faithful. They had conquered it. The judges period is a period of decline, not of success, The Israelites show themselves increasingly unfaithful. Enemy after enemy attacks them, trying to take away this part of the Promised Land or that part of the Promised Land. The people, as a result of their sin, are not really up to holding on to it. <>

A. Military Decline.

The writer of the book of Judges, whoever it is, we do not know, has taken the trouble at the beginning of the book to say, at several points: -After Joshua died, such and such happened? You can look for that as you read through it. Then toward the end of the book the writer says in several places. 'There was no king in Israel in those days. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes? The writer is emphasizing that after Joshua died there was trouble-things declined. Before the kingship, before the monarchy. the people really got into more and more trouble and desperately needed some kind of firmer leadership, more even leadership, than they experienced.

This book brings us from the death of Joshua all the way to the life of Samuel, who appears in the very next book that gives us substantial historical coverage; that is, 1 Samuel. It includes the descriptions of about a dozen judges. Now. we do need to appreciate the fact that these judges are described in different ways and not everything in the book is devoted to the judges. As a matter of fact. the judges are described only from the middle of chapter 3 to the end of chapter 16, and there is more to the book than that. But. they are central to the story. What we find is that there are a dozen judges listed. but only six of them are described in any detail. Six of the judges, therefore, we call "minor judges" from the Latin word menor, which means shorter or smaller. The descriptions of them are much smaller: some of them are just mentioned in a verse or two.

There are the major judges, of whom we have six. Those six major judges Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah. and Samson. tell quite a story. The story that they tell, the story that their acts and activities bring to our attention, is a story of decline. We see the decline, first of all, militarily. The Israelites under Joshua were conquerors, but the Israelites during the days of the judges progressively were less able, not merely to conquer, but even hold on to the territories they had conquered. So there is military decline.

B. Spiritual Decline.

There is also spiritual decline: the people are heading off in the wrong direction religiously. What they are doing is worshiping various gods and goddesses, the ones that the local inhabitants have been worshiping for years and that are attractive to the Israelites, or the ones they brought with them from Egypt-like the golden calf, and so on. Worshiping these gods and goddesses. of course, is a direct violation of the Ten Commandments and is going to get them into trouble. So. there is military decline, and there is also spiritual decline. These people are not acting like God's people: they are not following

the covenant, and they are not obeying God's Law. <>

C. Religious Decline.

In addition, there is also religious decline. Now, we mean by religious decline the formal things that surround spirituality are also going downhill: people are not worshiping like they should. They are not faithfully coming to the central sanctuary where the tabernacle is at Shiloh, or any other location. They are not showing up there as a nation three times a year as they should. They are not teaching the Law to their children. They are not offering sacrifices in the measure that they should. There is military decline, spiritual decline, religious decline, and then there is also moral decline. <>

D. Moral Decline.

Morality is related closely to spirituality and religion, but we mean by moral decline just that their actual behavior as human beings is declining, and these instances of moral decline are described for us in the story we will talk about shortly. It is so easy it seems for a generation to abandon the values of a prior generation. We are told that as long as the Israelites were under Joshua they had done a fairly good job of keeping away from idolatry and all the other trappings of paganism. But once Joshua died, they turned to the things that they found natural to do in the culture of that day. Here are people who came out of the wilderness and have been busy occupying the Promised Land and busy with battles of conquest. They are settled at least to one degree or another. They begin to plant and to harvest: they begin to raise their herds and their flocks: they begin to plant the trees and tend the vineyards. and so on, that living in the land represents.

The Canaanites, the people who were still there in large measure because the conquest was so imperfect as the early chapters of Judges reminds us, were offering sacrifices. were worshiping various gods and goddesses. and were seeming to have success thereby. So the Israelites fell into the same thing and began worshiping this god or that goddess and leaving aside their confidence in the Lord to supply all their needs. It is what typically people do. They have a lack of confidence that their needs will be met by God alone. and so they begin to have faith in some other direction. other gods. other things-whatever it is. they did that. <>

E. Deuteronomistic Cycle (Jdg 2:7-19).

Something develops that chapter 2 describes for us that we see carried out throughout the book of Judges: it has been labeled the Deuteronomistic Cycle. We see the people of Israel at first in this cycle, which relates to the warnings and descriptions and predictions of the book of Deuteronomy safe, well and faithful to God. Then, we see in their complacency, they begin to worship other gods and turn away from the Lord. What does He do? He does exactly what the book of Deuteronomy promises and guarantees He will do, He gives them over into the hands of their enemies. Their enemies then have success against them militarily, capture parts or large parts of their land, subdue them, put them under harsh treatment, take many things from them, not the least taxes-and then they are oppressed by their enemies. When things are not going so well, then they turn to the Lord and plead for deliverance. They call to Him. He is [merciful, so](#) He responds. They turn back to Him and get rid of their idols.

He has sent, in these cases, a judge to be His representative. He raised up somebody to lead them and protect them and deliver them. Usually, as long as the judge lives, in whatever part of the country of Israel the judge had come from, the people there, at least. will be pretty faithful. But. then the judge will die and the people will fall right back into sin again and will turn according to their natural inclinations (to pagan practices), and the cycle will go around again. They will once more be subject to their enemies. This cycle of safety, then disobedience. then subjugation to enemies, then calling out to God for help. and His rescuing them by a judge is called the Deuteronomistic Cycle. It is a pattern that we see

again and again in the book of Judges and, indeed, it carries on into Samuel and Kings. We will see more of it in these books as well.

II. Deliverance (Judges 3:5-16:31).

A. Government.

One of the things that we observe is that the leadership in these days is a leadership that is "charismatic," not charismatic with regard to certain gifts of the Spirit as we sometimes hear the term in our day, but charismatic in terms that it is God's Spirit who is at work. It is the Spirit of God making things happen in these days. There is not otherwise a formal government. It is somewhat along the lines of anarchy, not anarchy in the sense of people rioting in the streets all day long, but anarchy in the sense that there is not much unity among the tribes.

There is not much government and response to government among the people. They are breaking up into small groups. There are rivalries between the tribes beginning to emerge. They are not getting along together, they are not seeing eye-to-eye, and they are going their own way. As we observe what happens with the various judges, we understand that almost all the judges are so local that they are really only rescuing a part of the people. So a judge leads this tribe against that foe, another judge leads another tribe or maybe a group of tribes against yet another foe. But we do not see much of a picture of the nation as a whole functioning together, working together, and serving God together.

This brings out the need for a true and good king over God's people, not just any king but a true and good king. So the book leads in that direction. There is even the story of an attempt at kingship in chapter 9 by a son of Gideon named Abimelech. That attempt failed, but the book ends with a strong emphasis on the fact that the Israelites really do need a true and good king. <>

B. Five Major Judges.

The judges start with Othniel, and then there is Ehud. Othniel led the people against a foe that we do not know much about called Cushan, Rishathaim, or doubly-evil Cushan. Then Ehud, in chapter 3, against Moab under the king at that time, named Eglon, Ehud succeeds by assassination, not a very pretty picture. It is important to remember that these judges are not necessarily exemplary. God raises them up and He uses them, but they are far from sinless and they certainly are not models for us to follow in much of what they do.

One of the persons who comes closest to being a model is, however, Deborah. She is a terrific judge and she works with her general. Barak, to defeat a coalition of Canaanite kings in the northern part of Israel (that is described for us in chapters 4-5). Then comes Gideon, whose faith is weak but who finally after testing God, something that is not model behavior, does have the confidence to lead the Israelites into battle against the Midianites.

The next major judge is Jephthah in chapters 10-12. Jephthah, as part of the culture of his day, actually ends up sacrificing his daughter as a token of appreciation to the Lord for success in battle. <>

C. Samson, the Sixth Major Judge.

The final major judge is Samson in chapters 13-16. By this time, no one will even go with the judge. All the other judges had at least somebody with them: they gathered some troops, maybe only the troops of a single tribe, but at least they had people that they could lead into battle. Samson is alone. Things have gotten so bad that, by the time he has to fight the Philistines, he does all his fighting by himself. He is also not a very moral person even though he has taken a vow to be a Nazirite, which is a specially

dedicated person. He breaks those vows, and he gets involved with various women when he should not. He spends lots of time fooling around with the Philistines, who are supposed to be those whom he is fighting. In his tragic story, he is eventually taken prisoner and ends up killing as many people at his death as he did all the rest of his life fighting Philistines. He is in a temple: he is blinded: he is chained to columns: and as he pulls those columns down that supports the roof, a lot of people in the temple get killed. But the story does not end there: it does not end just with that tragedy. with one last judge fighting all by himself using the great powers that God had mercifully given him. It goes on from there downhill. even more of a tragedy. <>

III. Depravity (Jdg 17:1-21:25).

A. Religious Disorder.

We read in chapters 17-18 about the religious disorder in which the Israelites are now led. even by a Levite: making idols and worshiping idols and departing almost completely from faithfulness to God's covenant. <>

B. Moral Disorder.

The last three chapters of the book tell a sad tale, Chapters 19-21 tell the story of another Levite whose concubine (that is, a non-inheriting wife) is raped and murdered at an Israelite town in the tribe of Benjamin called Gibeah. Representatives of the tribe come to the Benjamites and say to them. -Deliver to us for judgment these men from the town of Gibeah in your territory that did this horrible crime? The Benjamites say. 'We will not. These are Benjamites. These are our people. Who are you to tell us to do that'? In other words. their loyalty to themselves within their own tribe is far more important to them than justice and righteousness and cooperation within God's covenant.

So what happens? The eleven tribes go to war against the one, and you know they are so inept for a long time, they cannot win. Finally, they succeed. and then after having decimated the population of the Benjamites, they come up with a somewhat ridiculous solution to it all. They allow the Benjamites, the men that are left, to capture as their wives women who come to a national festival. The women gather at the festival. and the men have not told them a thing. The Benjamites come out of the bushes, grab women, drag them off, and make them their wives. That is the level of brilliant thinking: that is the level of obedience; that is the level of spirituality to which things had declined in the days of the judges. <>

IV. Love Demonstrated (Ru 1:1-2:23).

A. Grief. Loyalty. and Conversion.

But you know what? There was an exception. That exception centers around the town of Bethlehem, the little town of Bethlehem. It is the exception that is chronicled for us in the book of Ruth. A man from Bethlehem and his wife and their two sons, during a time when there was not much rainfall and there was famine, moved to Moab. The two sons died there and the father died as well. Those left were a woman named Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Naomi heard that things were going better back in Bethlehem where she and her husband and sons had come from, and so determined to return.

The one daughter-in-law, Orpah, kissed her good-bye but the other daughter-in-law, Ruth, stayed with her. Ruth said these words, to not urge me to leave you or turn back from you. Where you go I will go: where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. That is the language of conversion. This woman, Naomi, who had suffered so much, had been such a witness to her daughter-

in-law that her daughter-in-law wanted to return with her and worship the God that she worshiped. Ruth grew up in Moab where they worshiped their national god, Chemosh, that god and many other gods and goddesses as well. But so wonderful and effective was the witness of Naomi that Ruth wants to go back with her and say to her 'Your God will be my God. She is going to convert to the worship of the Lord, the true God of Israel.

Naomi at the end of chapter 1 says to the people of Bethlehem as they return, to not use my given name, the name Naomi (in Hebrew means, swoon? She says, tell me Mara, because Mara means bitter? But even in that bitterness she says, 'The Lord has caused it? Naomi understands that God will not give us more than we can bear. Well. it is a wonderful story because it is such an exception to the prevailing situation in the book of Judges.

The general picture in Judges is people being unfaithful and falling into the hands of their enemies and getting themselves into all kinds of trouble. and leaving God only turning to Him on occasions when they were in terrible difficulty, and then only temporarily. In this story, there is an exception that occurs during the same time period in the days when the judges ruled. We see faithfulness and its outworking.

◇

B. Surprising Kindness.

After Ruth and Naomi get to Naomi's ancestral home, the home that Naomi had left some years earlier. Ruth goes out to take advantage of the gleaning laws. Good Israelites, as there were many in Bethlehem, allowed foreigners-aliens-to go among them and to pick up whatever the harvesters dropped or the things at the edges of the field that could be eaten. Ruth is noticed by a man named Boaz. She is in his field and he notices her. He learns that she is that woman who came from Moab and has converted to faith in the Lord. This impresses him and so he not only instructs his workers to let her have a free hand in gleaning, but he even tells them to leave some good stuff for her to pick up.

He invites her to lunch when all the workers are eating lunch and strikes up a conversation with her. He wants to encourage this woman who has converted to his precious Lord. Once this is known, we see Naomi and Ruth making some very important decisions. ◇

V. Love Rewarded.

A. Ruth's Marriage Proposal.

Actually, in the book the women really know how to operate: they know that a righteous man like Boaz can be trusted. They know the things to initiate, and they make a lot of the key decisions. Trusting in God, they know they can initiate certain kinds of actions that will come to good fruition under God's hand. As time goes by, Ruth, knowing that Boaz is interested in her, is very positive-actually proposes marriage to him. She does this in a non-normal way: she goes and lies down at his feet, showing that she wants to belong to him.

One night when he is sleeping at a threshing floor, staying out and watching the grain to be sure no one comes and steals it during those days when so many raiders did attack the Israelites, he accepts that proposal of marriage. But there is a hitch. Numbers 26 and 31 say when women without husbands marry, they have got to be very careful whom they marry, and the land has to go to the next of kin. There is someone closer to Naomi's family even than Boaz. Fortunately, he does not want to get the land that could come with marrying Ruth, the land that was in Naomi's ancestral family, because he says it would endanger his own inheritance. Presumably, he has already promised a certain amount of land to his sons, and if he married Ruth and had other children it might dilute the amount of land his sons could have. ◇

B. Consolation: New Family.

Things work out in such a way, as Boaz faithfully superintends them in the city gate at Bethlehem, that he and Ruth are able to get married. They have a child, and the child is taken by Naomi and nursed. Naomi has the wonderful, deep fulfillment of caring for a child again. She who had been bereft now has a little boy named Obed.

As the book ends, we realize this. in fact, was a story about David's great-great-grandmother. That is what it was about, because the lineage of the genealogy at the end takes us right down to King David. God was at work in the midst of a tough time, in the midst of a corrupt time, in the midst of a decline-morally, spiritually, militarily, and religiously. With good people faithful to Him, He was able to do things that countered the trends, and that in fact a wonderful part of His overall plan, through David and also down to Christ-the Son of David-of whom Ruth and Naomi are also ancestors.

Joshua

What does it say?

The book of Joshua takes the story of Israel's history on from the death of Moses, through the seven year long conquest of the Promised Land, to the death of Joshua. It tells us about the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the God-empowered conquest of the land, and the sin that crippled the forward movement of the people. It goes on to describe the division of Israel's new home into allotments for each tribe.

Many years after the division of the land, Joshua comes to the end of his long life. He does not pass on leadership to a single person, as Moses had passed the torch to Joshua. As his last official act, Joshua calls the new nation, and especially its many leaders, to renew their commitment to the covenant with God. God will be faithful to the covenant. Will they be likewise?

Faces & Places

The key human character is Joshua. the author of the book and principle leader of Israel during this period of history. As a younger man, Joshua had been Moses' chief aide. He had climbed with Moses up Mount Sinai when Moses received the Law from God and he was one of the 12 spies who did surveillance on the Promised Land before the first aborted attempt to enter. Joshua was Moses' hand picked successor to lead Israel.

Other notable characters include Achan, whose sin after the raid on Jericho brought defeat for Israel in their next battle. Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho who helped Israel take the city. She trusted the power of Israel's God and became a faithful follower.

Significant places include the Jordan River, which the people crossed to enter the land. Jericho and Ai were the first and second cities conquered in the land. Another important site is Shechem, the city where Joshua gathered the people for his final address.

Key Verses & Theme.;

Conquest and Fulfillment:

Joshua 21:43-45 "So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord handed all their enemies to them. Not one of the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled."

Faithfulness to the Covenant:

Joshua 23:15 "But just as every good promise of the Lord has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

So what?

Joshua is a dramatic real-life illustration of the faithfulness of God and the consequences of sin, as we read, for instance, about the dramatic victory at Jericho followed by the shocking defeat at Ai. What was

the difference between Jericho and Ai? Um/as sin. When we stand with God, we can confidently do all that he directs us to do. When we stand alone, in unconfessed sin and disobedience, we have only our own strength to lean on.

Never Forget - Deuteronomy 4:7-38

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. (Deut. 4:9)

Four decades later the Israelites stood at the edge of the Promised Land, spiritually and physically seasoned by their wilderness wanderings. With the older generation of doubters and grumblers now dead and buried; a new generation chafed to march in and claim the land-Egypt was a faint memory from childhood.

There at the border, the old man Moses delivered three speeches that, for their length and emotional power, have no equal in the Bible. It was his last chance to advise and inspire the people he had led for forty tumultuous years. Passionately, deliberately, tearfully, he reviewed their history step by step, occasionally flaring up at a painful memory but more of ten pouring out the anguished love of a doting parent. An undercurrent of sadness runs through the speeches, for Moses had learned he would not join in the triumph of entering Canaan.

Moses' longest speech reiterates all the laws that the Israelites had agreed to keep as their part of the covenant. Moses also recalls the hallmark day when God delivered the covenant on Mount Sinai. He remembers aloud the black clouds and deep darkness and blazing fire. You saw no shape or form of God on that day, he reminds them. God's Presence cannot be reduced to any mere image. Moses' central message: Never forget the lessons you learned in the desert.

Besides all the warnings, Moses was giving a kind of pep talk, a final challenge for the Israelites to recognize their unique calling as a nation. If they followed God's laws, all the lavish benefits of the covenant would be theirs. Fiore, every other nation would look to them and want to know their God. Moses seemed incurably astonished at all God had done for him and the other Israelites, and this speech represented his last chance to communicate that sense of wonder and thanksgiving.

Life Question: If you reviewed your own history with God, what lessons would you learn? For what are you most grateful?

Perils of Success - Deuteronomy 8

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees. (Deut. 8:10-11)

Alexander Solzhenitsyn says that he had first learned to pray in a Siberian concentration camp. He turned to prayer because he had no other hope. Before his arrest, when things were going well, he had seldom given God a thought.

Similarly, Moses felt the Israelites had learned the habit of depending on God in the Sinai wilderness, where they had no choice; they needed his intervention each day just to eat and drink. But now, on the banks of the Jordan River, they were about to face a more difficult test of faith. After they entered the land of plenty, would they soon forget the God who had given it to them?

Desert-bred, the Israelites knew little about the seductions of other cultures: the alluring sensuality, the exotic religions, the glittering wealth. Now they were preparing to march into a region known for these enticements, and Moses seemed to fear the coming prosperity far more than the rigors of the desert. In the beautiful land, the Promised Land, the Israelites might put God behind them and credit themselves for their success.

"Remember!" Moses kept urging. Remember the days of slavery in Egypt, and God's acts of liberation. Remember the trials of the vast and desolate desert, and God's faithfulness there. Remember your special calling as God's peculiar treasures.

Moses had good reason for concern, for God, who could see the future, had told him plainly what would happen: -When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant" (31:20). As the books following Deuteronomy relate, all of Moses' fears came true.

Ironically, as Deuteronomy shows, success may make it harder to depend on God. The Israelites proved less faithful to God after they moved into the Promised Land. There is a grave danger in finally getting what you want.

Life Question: Do you think most about God when things are going well or when you are in trouble?

Loud and Clear - Deuteronomy 28:1-29

If you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees . . . all these curses will come upon you. (Deut. 28:15)

For once, nearly everyone in the Israelite camp was jubilant. They stood, eager as children, at the edge of the long-awaited land. Moses, however, held back, unable to share the spirit of optimism. For forty years he had led this cranky tribe, and he knew them too well to think that a change in scenery would alter their old ways. A doleful sense of fatalism hangs over these last chapters of Deuteronomy. The Israelites had failed far too often; they were doomed to fail again.

Aware of the significance of this, his last chance to impress upon the Israelites the seriousness of their covenant with God, Moses pulled out all the stops. He began with the speech recorded here. The benefits of keeping the covenant Moses defined in simple and elegant terms, but as he related the consequences of breaking it, his language changed in pitch. His descriptions of those consequences are unmatched for their horror.

As if acknowledging that words were not strong enough to communicate to the Israelites, Moses also orchestrated a dramatic sequence of object lessons that would live in their memories forever. First he had the words of the law painted on some large plaster-coated stones, so that the tribes would pass by visual reminders of the covenant as they entered Canaan. Then, pre-selected shouters climbed two mountains with a narrow valley in between to yell out the rules governing the covenant. As the tribes entered the new land, their ears rang with the loud dissonance of wonderful blessings from one side clashing with horrific curses from the other.

Finally, just in case the Israelites didn't get the message, Moses taught them a song given him by God (chapter 32) and everyone memorized it. Thus at the birth of their nation, euphoric over the crossing of the Jordan River, the Israelites premiered a kind of national anthem, the strangest national anthem that has ever been sung. It had virtually no words of hope, only doom.

Life Question: Do the principles set forth in this chapter—"Do good, get blessed; do evil, get punished"—still apply today?

This Time with Courage - Joshua 2

They said to Joshua, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." (Josh. 2:24)

Often, as we have seen in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, the Israelites offer examples of what not to do. But the Old Testament does contain a few bright spots of hope, with the book of Joshua representing one of the brightest.

Joshua's opening scene replays an earlier scene. After listening to Moses' swan song speeches, the refugees amassed again beside the Jordan River for a test of courage and faith. Were they ready to cross into the Promised Land? Forty years before, their forebears had panicked in fear. Now, without their legendary leader, Moses, would the Israelites panic again? They had no chariots or even horses, only primitive arms, an untested new leader, and the promise of God's protection.

But an entirely new spirit characterized this group, and the spy story in Joshua 2 expresses the difference clearly. Forty years ago, sparking a revolt among the Israelites, only two of the twelve spies had held out any optimism. But the older generation with its fearful slave mentality had died off, and the new generation was now led by one of the original optimistic spies, Joshua.

This time, Joshua handpicked his own scouts, and the report they brought back makes a sharp contrast with the spy report in Numbers (13:31-33). The new scouts concluded that God had given the land of Canaan into the Israelites hands; that all the people were fearful of the Israelites. Thus Joshua begins as a good-news book, a welcome relief from the discouragement of Numbers and the fatalism of Deuteronomy. What a difference forty years had made!

The heroine of this chapter, Rehab the pagan prostitute, became a favorite figure in Jewish stories and was esteemed by Bible writers as well (see Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25). She proves that God honors true faith from anyone, regardless of race or religious background. In fact, Rahab, survivor of Jericho, became a direct ancestress of Jesus.

Life Question: When you confront obstacles, are you more likely to see them as problems or as opportunities?

Strange Tactics - Joshua 5:13-6:27

The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!" (Josh. 6:16)

The Israelites' abysmal failures in the Sinai Desert can be traced back to a simple matter of disobedience. Despite unmistakable divine guidance, they insisted on choosing their own way over God's. Would the new generation respond any differently? Once they had crossed into Canaan, God tested the Israelites' new resolve to follow him, and it must have strained their faith to new limits.

As for the residents of Canaan, who had long heard about the Israelites' plan to conquer the Promised Land, they braced for the worst. Citizens of Jericho, the first city in the invaders' path, barricaded themselves behind stone walls and awaited the feared onslaught. But how did the vaunted Israelites spend their first week in Canaan? They built a stone monument to God, performed circumcision rituals, and held a Passover celebration-not the sort of behavior you'd expect from a conquering army.

The incidents recorded in Joshua seem specially selected to strike home the point that God, no one else, was in charge. Just before the battle of Jericho, a supernatural visitor appeared to Joshua to remind him of the true commander of this military campaign. And the bizarre tactics of the Israelites in besieging Jericho left no doubt who was really in charge. An army could hardly take credit for victory when all it did was march around in circles and shout.

Jericho was probably a center for the worship of the moon god in Canaan, and so the destruction of that city-like the Ten Plagues on Egypt-symbolically announced an open warfare between the God of the Israelites and the region's pagan gods. Although measures against the Canaanites may seem harsh, the Bible makes clear that they had forfeited their right to the land. As Moses told the Israelites, -It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you" (Deuteronomy 9:5). And, as the story of Rahab shows, Canaanites who turned to God were spared.

Life Question: Do you ever feel foolish or strange when following what you are convinced is God's plan for you?

Slow Learners - Joshua 7

Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. . . . That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. (Josh. 7: 1 1 - 1 2)

The Bible does not record history for its own sake. Rather, it selects and highlights certain events that yield practical and spiritual lessons. For example, the book of Joshua, which spans a period of approximately seven years, devotes only a few sentences to some extensive military campaigns. But other key events, such as the fall of Jericho, get detailed coverage. That battle established an important pattern: The Israelites would succeed only if they relied on God, not military might.

Perhaps inevitably, the Israelites got cocky after Jericho. Since they had conquered a fortified city without firing an arrow, the next target, the puny town of Ai, should pose no threat at all. A few thousand soldiers strolled toward Ai. A short time later those same soldiers-minus their dead and wounded-were scrambling for home, thoroughly routed.

Clearly, the juxtaposition of these two stories, Jericho and Ai, is meant to convey a lesson. If the Israelites obeyed God and placed their trust in him, no challenge was too great to overcome. On the other hand, if they insisted on their own way, no obstacle was too small to trip them up.

Significantly, Ai stood near the original site where God had appeared to Abraham and revealed the covenant centuries before. A humiliating defeat in that place shook Joshua to the core. He dissolved in fright, earning God's stern rebuke, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?"

Without God's protection, Joshua realized, the Israelites were hopelessly vulnerable. After the painful lesson of Ai, he went back to the basics. The public exposure of Achan's sin underscored the need to follow God's orders scrupulously, even in the earthy matter of warfare. God would not tolerate any of the lying or looting typical of invading armies.

Life Question: Why would such a seemingly "little" sin, Achan's deceit, have such major consequences?

Home at Last - Joshua 24

"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him." (Josh. 24:23-24)

At the end of his life, Joshua, like Moses before him, stood before the Israelites to deliver a farewell address. Things had gone well under his leadership. The Bible gives the remarkable assessment: "Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua." And now Joshua used his final speech to review all that God had done and to remind his people of their obligations under the covenant with God.

"I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build"-at every point, Joshua emphasized that God was the sole source of their success. He had called out Abraham and blessed him with children, had delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, had carried them across the desert. And in Joshua's own lifetime he had fulfilled one more promise of the covenant: He had given them the Promised Land. It was theirs to live in.

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve," Joshua challenged his listeners in the stirring climax to his speech. All the people present swore their allegiance to God, the God who had kept his covenant with them. Joshua solemnly ratified the covenant and sent the people away, then quietly prepared to die.

The book of Joshua ends with an act of deep symbolism: The Israelites finally buried the remains of Joseph. For well over four centuries those remains had been preserved in Egypt in anticipation of the Israelites' return to their homeland. And during the forty years of wilderness wanderings, the tribes had carried Joseph's bones as a treasured reminder of their past. Now, at last, Abraham's descendants had come home, and even the dead could rest in peace.

Life Question: When you experience success, whom do you tend to credit, yourself or God?

10 REASONS TO BELIEVE IN A GOD WHO ALLOWS SUFFERING

1. Suffering comes with the freedom to choose.

Loving parents long to protect their children from unnecessary pain. But wise parents know the danger of over-protection. They know that the freedom to choose is at the heart of what it means to be human, and that a world without choice would be worse than a world without pain. Worse yet would be a world populated by people who could make wrong choices without feeling any pain. No one is more dangerous than the liar, thief, or killer who doesn't feel the harm he is doing to himself and to others (Gen. 2:15-17).

2. Pain can warn us of danger.

We hate pain, especially in those we love. Yet without discomfort, the sick wouldn't go to a doctor. Worn-out bodies would get no rest. Criminals wouldn't fear the law. Children would laugh at correction. Without pangs of conscience, the daily dissatisfaction of boredom, or the empty longing for significance, people who are made to find satisfaction in an eternal Father would settle for far less. The example of Solomon, lured by pleasure and taught by his pain, shows us that even the wisest among us tend to drift from good and from God until arrested by the resulting pain of their own shortsighted choices (Eccl. 1-12; Ps. 78:34-35; Rom. 3:10-18).

3. Suffering reveals what is in our hearts.

Suffering often occurs at the hand of others. But it has a way of revealing what is in our own hearts. Capacities for love, mercy, anger, envy, and pride can lie dormant until awakened by circumstances. Strength and weakness of heart is found not when everything is going our way but when flames of suffering and temptation test the mettle of our character. As gold and silver are refined by fire, and as coal needs time and pressure to become a diamond, the human heart is revealed and developed by enduring the pressure and heat of time and circumstance. Strength of character is shown not when all is well with our world but in the presence of human pain and suffering (Job 42:1-17; Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-5; 1 Pet. 1:6-8).

4. Suffering takes us to the edge of eternity.

If death is the end of everything, then a life filled with suffering isn't fair. But if the end of this life brings us to the threshold of eternity, then the most fortunate people in the universe are those who discover, through suffering, that this life is not all we have to live for. Those who find themselves and their eternal God through suffering have not wasted their pain. They have let their poverty, grief, and hunger drive them to the Lord of eternity. They are the ones who will discover to their own unending joy why Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:1-12; Rom. 8:18-19).

5. Pain loosens our grip on this life.

In time, our work and our opinions are sought less and less. Our bodies become increasingly worse for the wear. Gradually they succumb to inevitable obsolescence.

Joints stiffen and ache. Eyes grow dim. Digestion slows. Sleep becomes difficult. Problems loom larger and larger while options narrow. Yet, if death is not the end but the threshold of a new day, then the curse of old age is also a blessing. Each new pain makes this world less

inviting and the next life more appealing. In its own way, pain paves the way for a graceful departure (Eccl. 12:1-14).

6. Suffering gives opportunity to trust God.

The most famous sufferer of all time was a man named Job. According to the Bible, Job lost his family to "a mighty wind," his wealth to war and fire, and his health to painful boils. Through it all, God never told Job why it was happening. As Job endured the accusations of his friends, heaven remained silent. When God finally did speak, He did not reveal that His archenemy Satan had challenged Job's motives for serving God. Neither did the Lord apologize for allowing Satan to test Job's devotion to God. Instead, God talked about mountain goats giving birth, young lions on the hunt, and ravens in the nest. He cited the behavior of the ostrich, the strength of the ox, and the stride of the horse. He cited the wonders of the heavens, the marvels of the sea, and the cycle of the seasons. Job was left to conclude that if God had the power and wisdom to create this physical universe, there was reason to trust that same God in times of suffering (Job 1-42).

7. God suffers with us in our suffering.

No one has suffered more than our Father in heaven. No one has paid more dearly for the allowance of sin into the world. No one has so continuously grieved over the pain of a race gone bad. No one has suffered like the One who paid for our sin in the crucified body of His own Son. No one has suffered more than the One who, when He stretched out His arms and died, showed us how much He loved us. It is this God who, in drawing us to Himself, asks us to trust Him when we are suffering and when our own loved ones cry out in our presence (1 Peter. 2:21; 3:18; 4:1).

8. God's comfort is greater than our suffering.

The apostle Paul pleaded with the Lord to take away an unidentified source of suffering. But the Lord declined saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "Therefore," said Paul, "most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Paul learned that he would rather be with Christ in suffering than without Christ in good health and pleasant circumstances.

9. In times of crisis, we find one another.

No one would choose pain and suffering. But when there is no choice, there remains some consolation. Natural disasters and times of crisis have a way of bringing us together. Hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, riots, illnesses, and accidents all have a way of bringing us to our senses. Suddenly we remember our own mortality and that people are more important than things. We remember that we do need one another and that, above all, we need God.

Each time we discover God's comfort in our own suffering, our capacity to help others is increased. This is what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

10. God can turn suffering around for our good.

This truth is best seen in the many examples of the Bible. Through Job's suffering we see a man who not only came to a deeper understanding of God but who also became a source of encouragement for people in every generation to follow. Through the rejection, betrayal, enslavement, and wrongful imprisonment of a man named Joseph, we see someone who eventually was able to say to those who had hurt him, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). When everything in us screams at the heavens for allowing suffering, we have reason to look at the eternal outcome and joy of Jesus who in His own suffering on an executioner's cross cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

You're not alone if the unfairness and suffering of life leaves you unconvinced that a God in heaven cares for you. But consider again the suffering of the One called by the prophet Isaiah, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3). Think about His slashed back, His bloodied forehead, His nail-ripped hands and feet, His pierced side, His agony in the Garden, and His pathetic cry of abandonment. Consider Christ's claim that He was suffering not for His sins but for ours. To give us the freedom to choose, He lets us suffer. But He Himself bore the ultimate penalty and pain for all of our sins (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24).

When you do see the reason for His suffering, keep in mind that the Bible says Christ died to pay the price for our sins, and that those who believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead will be saved (Rom. 10:9-10). The forgiveness and eternal life Christ offers is not a reward for effort but a gift to all who, in light of the evidence, put their trust in Him.

KNOWING GOD THROUGH EXODUS

Exodus is history for today! It is the story of God's ability to save us from circumstances that seem to be impossible and hopeless. It opens with a people of promise feeling as if they had been forgotten and left for dead. By the time the book ends, they are breathing fresh air, camped at the foot of "miracle mountain," and ready for their next test of faith.

Tracking that kind of storyline, author David Egner will attempt to lead you beyond the "frogs, flies, and furious storms" of the plagues, to the God who, in His own timeless way, wants to be your rescue as well.

Martin R. De Haan II

CONTENTS

The Chains That Bind Mankind

Exodus: Journey to Freedom

Book Chart of Exodus Knowing God Through Exodus

The God Who Delivered Israel

Bondage

Rescue

Provision

Instruction

Jesus Christ in Exodus The God of Exodus Bondage and Freedom

THE CHAINS THAT BIND MANKIND

Julianna is a political and spiritual refugee. She had suffered oppression in her homeland because of her faith in Jesus Christ. When she began speaking about Christ to her students, government officials first cut her pay. When she persisted, she was publicly ridiculed. Finally, her job was taken away from her. She applied for permission to emigrate, but it was 5 years before she was permitted to leave her country.

Today she has a new life. No more oppression. No more ridicule. No more starvation conditions. No more being denied the opportunity to support herself. The morning after she arrived in the United States, Julianna was asked what her feelings were. Because she could speak very little English, communication was difficult. But when she understood the question, she threw her hands in the air and said, "Feel wonderful!"

This woman experienced the meaning of one kind of bondage. She had been a prisoner in her own country. The chains that had bound her were not literal, but political and religious. People in many parts of the world know this kind of suffering by hard personal experience. For some, it has meant imprisonment and torture.

Yet human misery is not limited to the fenced yards of political tyranny. People who live in free countries experience their own kind of bondage. Consider, for example, the millions of alcoholics who live in the United States. They are bound by chains of their own forging. Think of battered wives who feel trapped. Or of children who come home from school every day to beatings, drunkenness, or neglect.

Then there are the shaking bodies and vacant eyes of those who are addicted to cocaine or heroin. So harsh are their bonds that they will rob or kill for one more fix.

Others in society are enslaved by less detectable but equally binding forces: their quest for power, their love of money, sex, compulsive spending, work, their own huge egos, the need to dominate their mates or children. They are hopelessly enslaved by their inability to control their own thoughts or appetites.

Yes, we need deliverance. We need someone to set us free - not just from the physical, external things that enslave us, not just from our own inability to say no, not just from our insatiable greed or terrible temper or our need to control others. We need deliverance from the consequences of our own choices. That's what enslaves us. We need to break the bonds of our own guilt. Like the children of Israel we cry, "Who can deliver us?"

Exodus gives the answer. The same God who set Israel free from the slavedrivers of Egypt can deliver us from our sin. In that sense the rescue from Egypt can be our story. We can find ourselves in Israel's journey from bondage to freedom, from oppression to release. When personalized in this way, it's a pilgrimage that starts in the depths of our own minds and hearts, and ends in the vast and glorious spiritual freedom of Christ made possible because of the love of God, our Deliverer.

EXODUS: JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament, is the written account of Israel's journey from bondage in Egypt to freedom in the Sinai Peninsula. Let's consider a brief overview of its events, when they took place, and what they tell us about God.

An Overview of Events. As Exodus opens, we find God doing something He often does. For His own wise reasons, He is letting His people experience painful circumstances that are going from bad to worse. Enslaved in Egypt, they experience increasing oppression, and their cries for rescue are growing louder. Yet, unknown to His struggling people, God has been slowly, quietly, and faithfully preparing a reluctant messenger named Moses to lead them to freedom.

When God was ready to answer His people's cries for help, Moses began dragging his feet. Forty years earlier he had tried to help a fellow Israelite, but he got burned in the process. His efforts had turned sour, as our efforts often do. For his mistake he paid dearly, spending four decades hiding on the far side of the desert. What he had learned through it all was not to trust himself.

Now, however, it was time to trust God. The test was a big one. God presented Moses first to a skeptical Israel, then to an obstinate Egyptian head of state. The king defied Moses and refused to respond to the appeal, "Let My people go." Egypt paid for that resistance. Through a series of 10 plagues, God gradually broke the Pharaoh's will and loosened his iron grip. Israel was free. Free at last!

However, God once again did what He often does with us. To expose the nature of His people's hearts, and to show them their need for trusting Him, the Lord orchestrated a series of impossible circumstances. Time after time, they failed the test. Repeatedly, the Lord showed His faithfulness and power by miraculously providing for their every need. Slowly, very slowly, Israel learned. The God who saved them could take care of them in ways they could never provide for themselves.

The Background of the Exodus. Most all conservative Bible scholars date the exodus at about 1446 BC. Four hundred thirty years earlier, Israel's ancestors had migrated from Palestine to Egypt to escape a

terrible drought. There they found a home as a result of an ironic and merciful provision of the Lord. They settled in Goshen, and over a period of more than four centuries they multiplied to a nation of several million people.

During this time, however, the size of their nation became a problem. A new ruler, who was either the first king of the invading Hyksos people (1730 BC) or the first Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1584 BC), began a planned program of tyranny designed both to exploit the Hebrews and to keep them from threatening his rule.

The relationship between the first five books of the Old Testament could be outlined this way:

Genesis: Beginning of all things

Exodus: Israel's deliverance

Leviticus: Regulations for worship and life Numbers: Record of the 40-year sojourn

Deuteronomy: Covenant renewal before Canaan

Exodus was written as a continuation of Genesis. In Genesis, God is seen as the Creator; in Exodus, we see Him as the Deliverer. As we trace the events of Exodus, we will be following a true account of the dramatic rescue of an entire nation.

The rescue God brought to His people led them out of slavery and into a new relationship with Him. He gave them laws to tell them what He expected of them and a system of worship and sacrifice to bring them forgiveness when they failed. In many ways, Exodus portrays the deliverance we receive today, over 3,000 years later, when we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior and Deliverer.

1. BONDAGE (1:1; 7:7)

In the darkest night of bondage, we cry for a deliverer. Captive, we cannot escape the isolation, the pain, the overwhelming feeling that we are struggling against the whole world alone. But God hears the cry of the captive, and He responds with the gift of His grace.

As is often the case for the people of God, Israel's stay in Egypt began as a wonderful and undeserved provision of the Lord. About 400 years before the events described in Exodus, God had turned a terrible evil around to the good of Jacob's family. An envied little brother named Joseph had been sold into slavery. Many years later, he ended up being the surprise Egyptian protector and provider for his family. God had in His own unpredictable way sent Joseph on ahead. When a terrible drought swept over all of the Middle East (Gen. 41:56), the family of Jacob was reunited in Egypt and invited to settle there. In this rich land they prospered. Helped by the Lord, they multiplied rapidly and became a great people (Ex. 1:7).

As time passed, a new regime rose to power in Egypt. A man became Pharaoh who didn't know that Joseph had saved Egypt from the drought and that the Israelites were Joseph's people (1:8). All he knew was that these people, by their very numbers, posed a threat to his rule (1:9, 10). Afraid they would join with an enemy in an attempt to overthrow him, Pharaoh ordered the taskmasters to oppress them. He forced the Hebrews to work extremely hard, transporting water for irrigation and making and carrying bricks for his ambitious building program. Any Israelites who stumbled from weakness or who rebelled were beaten mercilessly. In spite of the harsh treatment, however, God caused the Hebrew population to continue to grow.

Frustrated, Pharaoh gave orders to the Hebrew midwives that all male babies were to be killed as soon

as they were born (1:16). But the midwives, fearing God, disobeyed Pharaoh's command, and the Israelites multiplied in number (1:17, 20).

A Leader Provided. While Israel suffered under cruel bondage, God was silently and faithfully preparing to deliver them. His plan made a mockery of the Pharaoh. Even as the king had demanded the death of all Hebrew male babies, the Lord arranged to have the eventual deliverer of Israel, and number one enemy of Pharaoh, raised in Pharaoh's own house! What an example of how the Lord of heaven must laugh at the empty threats of human rulers! (Ps. 2:1-4).

Born in the midst of Pharaoh's terrible oppression was a baby boy named Moses. He was safely hidden by his mother until he was 3 months old (Ex. 2:1, 2). When she could no longer conceal him, his mother made a little basket and placed him in the reeds at the edge of the river. He was found by Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him into the royal family and protected him. The boy was allowed to live in childhood with his own family (2:3-10) before being taken into Pharaoh's household and reared as a child of royalty. He became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).

When Moses was 40 years old, having chosen to identify with the people of God and their sufferings rather than to accept the prestige, power, and pleasures that were his as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24, 25), he went to visit his people. There he saw an Israelite receiving a terrible beating by an Egyptian taskmaster, so he decided to defend and avenge him. In a moment of anger, the eventual deliverer of Israel became a murderer! Moses believed that God was going to use him to deliver the Israelites from their bondage (Acts 7:25), but he soon found out that taking things into his own hands was not what God wanted.

The next day, Moses tried to stop a fight between two Israelites. He probably thought they would respect his position and be thankful that he was interested in them. He wanted them to see him as their deliverer. But instead, the Israelite who was at fault in the dispute said to Moses, "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?" (Acts 7:27, 28; cp. Ex. 2:14). When Moses realized that his secret of the murdered Egyptian was known, he fled to Midian (see map, p.19).

A Marked Man. After an act of courage and kindness, Moses was welcomed into the household of Jethro, the priest of Midian. He married Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, and settled down to life as a shepherd (2:16; 3:1).

Meanwhile, conditions were worsening in Egypt. The king of Egypt died, and the new ruler increased the oppression (2:23). The cries of the suffering Hebrews were lifted up to God, and we are told that "God acknowledged them" (2:24, 25). The time had come for Jehovah to deliver His people.

While Moses was tending his flocks in the desert, he noticed a bush that was burning without being consumed. Mystified, he stopped to investigate and he heard the voice of God. "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt," the Lord said, "and have heard their cry So I have come down to deliver them" (3:7, 8).

Then the Lord issued this call to Moses: "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (3:10).

Moses was not a ready servant. In fact, before the conversation was over, he had given the Lord five

excuses for not going. But God rejected them all.

MOSES' EXCUSES

No Ability (3:11)

No Authority (3:13)

No Believability (4:1)

No Eloquence (4:10)

No Inclination (4:13)

GOD'S PROMISES

His Instruction (4:14-16) His Presence (3:12)

His Name (3:14)

His Power (4:2-9)

His Enablement (4:11, 12)

Moses' question of the Lord "When . . . they say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" led to one of the most important revelations of God in the Old Testament. The Lord told Moses to tell the children of Israel that "I AM WHO I AM" was the name of his sender (3:14). By using this name, God was revealing Himself to be the eternal, self-existent God - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Significantly, the Lord Jesus applied this name to Himself and was nearly stoned as a blasphemer (John 8:58-59).

When Moses still protested, the Lord gave him three signs he could use to convince the people and Pharaoh that the one true God had sent him (4:1, 21). First, the Lord turned Moses' rod into a living serpent (4:1-5), then He made his hand leprous and healed it (4:6, 7). Finally, God told Moses that if the first two signs didn't convince them, He would give him the power to turn water from the Nile River into blood (4:9).

Moses' Return. At 80 years of age (he had been in exile 40 years [Acts 7:30]), Moses went back to Egypt (4:18), taking his family with him. He presented himself to the elders of Israel, who gave him their support when they saw the miraculous signs God had given him. Then Moses went before Pharaoh (5:1). The king of Egypt was furious at Moses' request for Israel to leave. So he greatly increased the workload of the Israelites, who were already at the breaking point (5:6-14). When the elders of Israel blamed Moses for the suffering, he became discouraged and cried out to the Lord. God gave him a wonderful promise, considered by many to be the key verse of Exodus:

Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments" (6:6).

Accompanied by his brother Aaron, Moses approached the throne of Pharaoh to do the task God had called him to do.

SEEING GOD

* Exodus shows us a God who can turn blessing into difficulty, and difficulty into great blessing.

* Exodus shows us a God who can silently prepare to rescue His people even while allowing it to appear that He no longer sees or cares.

* Exodus shows us a God who often takes many years to carry out His perfectly timed rescue.

SEEING OURSELVES

- * In Israel's Egyptian nightmare, we can see our own fears and intolerable circumstances.
- * In Moses, we can see our own reluctance to trust the God who is so able to be our strength.
- * In Moses, we can see our own ability to do whatever God wants us to do.
- * In Moses' killing of the Egyptian, we see the terrible results of our own efforts to take things into our own hands.

2. RESCUE (7:8-12:36)

The car had spun out of control near midnight in a remote area and plunged down a steep bank. It came to rest in a watery ravine. The driver was trapped in the wreckage, unable to move. Fully conscious, she waited for someone to help her. But no one appeared. Dawn came, then daylight. Now she realized that her car was hidden from view. She pushed the horn button, but no sound came. She screamed as loudly as her injuries would allow, but there was no one to hear. As the afternoon passed, she began to panic. She knew she would not last another cold night. Why doesn't someone come? Aren't they looking for me? Finally, as darkness fell, she saw a pinpoint of light. Someone was searching! But the light passed right over the bridge without discovering her. She finally broke down, weeping in despair. Deliverance was so close, but so far away. Then the light reappeared, right beside the car! Something had told the young searcher to check the ravine, and he had spotted her car. She was rescued!

Exodus 7-12 tells an even more dramatic story of rescue. Moses had come to declare himself Israel's deliverer. He had approached Pharaoh, but he had been rejected. The situation seemed hopeless to the suffering Israelites. Would they be rescued?

Yes, they would - but not without an intense struggle between Moses and Pharaoh on the human level; between Jehovah and the pagan deities of Egypt on the supernatural level. In an initial encounter (7:8-13), Aaron threw his rod to the floor and it became a serpent. The magicians of Egypt duplicated the feat. Then Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods to show the reality and superiority of the God of Israel. Pharaoh would have saved himself and his people a lot of grief if he had let the Hebrews leave at this point, but he hardened his heart (7:13).

God directed Moses to go to Pharaoh again and ask permission to leave (7:14-18), warning him that if he refused, the Nile would be turned to blood. When the king would not grant Moses' request, the sacred Nile was turned to blood as God had said (vv. 20,21). This was the first of 10 plagues that would fall on Egypt. Each exposed the weakness of one of the Egyptian gods.

PLAGUE / EGYPTIAN GOD DEFEATED

1. Water to blood (7:14-25) / Nilus or Orisis
2. Frogs (8:1-15) / Hekt, reproduction goddess
3. Lice (8:16-19) / Seb, god of earth
4. Flies (8:20-32) / Khephera, sacred scarab
5. Cattle disease (9:1-7) / Apis and Hathor, sacred bull & cow
6. Boils (9:8-12) / Typhon, evil-eye god
7. Hail (9:13-35) / Shu, god of atmosphere
8. Locusts (10:1-20) / Serapis, protector
9. Darkness (10:21-29) / Ra, sun god
10. Firstborn die (12:29,30) / Ptah, god of life

Plague after plague fell on Egypt over a period of several months. The Egyptians cried out in anguish,

but the hardened Pharaoh refused to budge. At the end of the ninth plague, a 3-day darkness, he cried out to Moses, "Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!" (10:28). Moses, knowing what would happen, assured Pharaoh that he would never see him again. Egypt had been defeated in the battle between their gods and Jehovah. But Pharaoh's heart did not change. The terrible tenth plague, the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, would cause him to weaken, but only briefly.

The Passover. Then came a final, chilling announcement from God: "About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn of the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the beasts. Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again" (11:4-6).

A "destroyer" (12:23) would pass through Egypt at midnight of the 14th of Nissan. All the firstborn in the land of Egypt would die. But God made provision for Israel to escape the tenth plague. He gave detailed instructions for each family (smaller families could go together) to slay a lamb and apply the blood to the doorposts and lintels of their houses. Then they were to roast and eat the lamb, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They were to consume all of the meat "in haste" (12:11), already dressed for travel.

Midnight came. The Israelites were ready. "The Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt" (12:29). A great cry of anguish went up in the land. Pharaoh sent word for Moses and Aaron to leave with all their people, and with all their flocks and herds.

After 430 years, the Israelites left Egypt. They scurried out of their homes, assembled under Moses' leadership, and began their journey. A sad chapter of Israel's history had drawn to a close, and a bright new one was opening before them. God had delivered His people from the destroyer and from the cruel oppression of Pharaoh.

SEEING GOD

- * God's manner of breaking Pharaoh's will shows that He sometimes chooses a path of deliverance that can make things worse before they get better.
- * The defeat of the Egyptian gods through the plagues shows the power of the living God over the limited strength of Satan.
- * In the Passover rescue, the Lord showed His plan to rescue through the blood of a substitute - a carefully designed object lesson that foreshadowed the eventual substitutionary death of God's own Son.

SEEING OURSELVES

- * Pharaoh's resistance to God reminds us of the potential stubbornness of our own hearts.
- * In Moses and Aaron we can see that it's possible to confront the forces of darkness by God's strength.
- * The blood of the Passover lamb was the only way for Israel to escape the destroyer; likewise, our only way of salvation is through the blood of Jesus Christ.

3. PROVISION (12:37; 18:27)

Remember Julianna, the refugee we mentioned at the beginning of the book? She waited 5 long years for her freedom before the day finally came. Once she received her passport and visa, she was ordered to leave her country immediately. So she left the bondage of oppressive atheism and headed for freedom.

Julianna's departure was not only an ending, but it was also a beginning. First were the rigors of travel. Then came the meeting of new people in a totally different land. Language barriers had to be crossed. Forms needed to be filled out. She had to have a job and a permanent place of her own to live. And transportation problems had to be resolved. No, it was not all over for her just because she had left the land of bondage. She needed help on the journey to freedom.

The same was true of Israel. God had displayed His power, and Pharaoh was ready for the Hebrews to leave his land. They had escaped the destroyer and were prepared to go. But as soon as they left their homes, they were in desperate need of the care and provision of God. And He provided for them. So, as we journey with the Israelites in Exodus, let's watch for ways in which God made provision for His people.

God Guides His People. It had finally happened! The exodus had begun! Moses stood before his assembled nation and they began to walk. But which way? Ahead of them was the unknown. There were trade routes that led to Palestine (see map on next page), but which one should they choose? Was the most direct route the best? God does not leave His people to wonder where they are to go. We are told:

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night (13:21).

At any time of the day or night, the Lord could direct His people to move. When the pillar moved, they followed. They were miraculously guided by God.

The Lord directed His people along the southern route out of Egypt. They could have gone along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This route, called the Way of the Philistines, was the closest and most direct, but it was also a heavily traveled military road. God knew that if the Israelites saw hoards of armies, they would become fearful and go back to Egypt (13:17). They also could have followed a caravan route across the wilderness of Shur called the Way of Shur. But instead God sent them south.

The Israelites started their exodus from Egypt at the city of Rameses (Num. 33:3). From there they moved south to Succoth and then to Etham at the edge of the wilderness (Ex. 13:20). God then led them north to Baal Zephon to make Pharaoh think they were lost and confused (14:2,3).

God Protects His People. God doesn't get His people started on the journey of faith and then abandon them. The Hebrews hadn't been on the journey very long before Pharaoh began to count his losses (14:5), so he ordered his charioteers to bring them back. In a short time the speedy chariots caught up with the slow-moving Israelites. When the people saw Pharaoh's armies, they were terrified. With the Red Sea before them, they were trapped.

Without knowing how God was going to intervene and deliver the people, Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. . . . The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (14:13-14).

Then God told Moses to raise his staff over the waters of the Red Sea. When he did, an incredible thing happened - a strong east wind arose and divided the waters. Imagine the thoughts that went through the minds of all who witnessed this event!

All that night, the Israelites crossed over between the walls of water while God held the Egyptian forces at bay by engulfing them in darkness. When the Hebrews reached the other side, God allowed Pharaoh's

forces to pursue them, and his chariots drove out between the walls of water. But as suddenly as the wind had arisen, it died down. The seas came crashing together, and the Egyptian army was drowned. When the Israelites saw this mighty display of God's power, they declared their trust in Him and in His chosen leader Moses (14:31).

God Provides for His People's Needs. After a pause to celebrate their deliverance, the people of Israel marched out into the desert and headed south. After a few days they became thirsty, and the water they found at Marah was so bitter that it was undrinkable (15:23). The people began to grumble, so the Lord showed Moses a tree and told him to throw it into the water. When he did this, the water became sweet and the people's need was met. A little later, at Rephidim, the people were again without water (17:1). Again they grumbled. This time the Lord told Moses to strike a rock with his staff. When he did, water gushed from the rock and the people drank their fill.

But how do you feed more than 2 million people in a desert? They had brought a large supply of food, but it was fully depleted within a month (16:1-3). The people began to get hungry, and they wished they were back in Egypt. Once again the Lord provided - this time with a supernatural supply of quail and bread (16:11-15). The bread was an unusual white substance the people called "manna", which in Hebrew meant "What is it?" (16:15,31).

Six days a week the manna would appear in the morning, "a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground" (16:14). It would then be gathered up by the people and consumed. Wherever they went during their long sojourn, it was there (16:35). God provided for the people's need of food and water.

God Gives His People Victory. The Lord had shown Himself to be strong in His defeat of Pharaoh's army. But now, in the desert, the Israelites faced a new enemy. While they were camped at Rephidim, they were attacked by the armies of the Amalekites.

What did this slave nation know about fighting? Where would they get battle-trained troops? Even so, Moses sent out Joshua with an army to confront the enemy while he climbed a high hill to watch. Whenever Moses held his hands up, Israel would win. But when he grew tired and lowered his hands, Amalek would prevail. So Aaron and Hur held Moses' hands up for him, and by the time the sun went down, the Amalekites were defeated. The Lord had given His people victory (17:8-16).

Moses built an altar at Rephidim and named it, "Jehovah Nissi," which means, "God is my Banner." God is also our Banner, the flag under which we fight our spiritual battles. And, just as He helped Israel on their journey, so He supplies our needs as we continue in the journey of faith.

SEEING GOD

- * In God's parting of the Red Sea, we see His power to make a way of escape where no natural path of escape exists.
- * Through the pillar of cloud and fire, we see God's willingness to lead those whom He has rescued.
- * In His provision of manna and water, we see a God who can use His supernatural power to meet our daily needs.
- * God often answers our prayers in ways we least expect it - like providing bread from heaven and water from a rock.

SEEING OURSELVES

- * Israel's need for guidance in the wilderness reflects our own need for direction from the Lord.
- * Israel's need for water and manna reflects mankind's need for Christ, the living water and bread of life.

- * Israel's grumbling about not having food and water sounds like our own complaints against the goodness of God.
- * When we raise the banner of God, He fights for us as He did for His people in the desert.

4. INSTRUCTION (19-40)

When the people of Israel camped at Mount Sinai, they had traveled about 200 miles from their homes in Egypt. This was a major accomplishment for a nation of more than 2 million people! But they were free. Pharaoh, after his armies had been destroyed in the Red Sea, had given up on them. This nation of slaves, who had known only oppression, was on its own in the wilderness. They were dependent on the God who had delivered them and on Moses, His designated leader.

But freedom brought with it new responsibilities. How would they live? Who would govern them? What laws would they establish? How were they to worship the God who had set them free?

These questions were answered during a period of a little over 11 months that Israel was camped at Mount Sinai (cp. Ex. 19:1 with Num. 10:11). Through the prophet Moses, God gave the Law. He also gave detailed instructions for building a "tent of meeting" and its furnishings where the people were to worship Him. And sadly, while Israel was at Sinai, they experienced a terrible lapse into pagan idolatry.

The Law (19:1; 24:8). Moses climbed to the top of Mount Sinai seven times to receive revelation from God (19:3, 8, 20; 20:21; 24:18; 32:31; 34:4). The laws Moses gave Israel, as well as the prescription for worship, did not originate in his imagination but in the mind of God Himself.

Israel had not been there very long before God called Moses to the top of the mountain. The Lord's promise to the people, delivered by Moses, was this: "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me" (19:5). When Moses carried this preparatory message back to the Israelites, they responded with this pledge: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (v.8).

Then Moses ascended the mountain a second time. This time he returned to instruct the people to wash their clothes and prepare their hearts for God's revelation (vv. 10,11,14). The people complied, and after 3 days God spoke through thunder and lightning and dark clouds to give Israel the Ten Commandments (20:1-17). These commandments are at the heart of God's moral law for all mankind.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make any carved image.
3. You shall not take the name of God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not bear false witness.
10. Do not covet.

The first four commandments tell man's duty to God; the last six his responsibilities to his fellowman. The Lord Jesus summarized these two divisions of the Law 1,500 years later when He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37,39).

The Ten Commandments were supplemented with a series of specific regulations sometimes called "The Book of the Covenant" (24:7). Included were regulations concerning the altar (20:22-26), servants (21:1-11), violence (21:12-27), animal control (21:28-36), property (22:1-15), morality (22:16-31), justice (23:1-9), and the sabbaths (22:10-13). Three annual feasts were also commanded: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (23:15), the Feast of Harvest (23:16), and the Feast of Ingathering (23:16).

The revelation of God's Law to Israel was concluded with the promise: "Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way" (23:20). God would accompany and direct His people as they left Sinai and continued on their journey to the Land of Promise.

Having received the Law of God, Moses returned to the people of Israel. He told them all that God had revealed to him. And the people solemnly affirmed the covenant by saying, "All the words which the Lord has said we will do" (24:3,7).

The Tabernacle (24:9; 40:38). Then came grace! After revealing a moral law that Israel would never fully keep, God then revealed a way in which a sinful people could approach Him in worship.

To receive this plan of grace, Moses once again ascended the mountain. This time he stayed 40 days and the Lord gave him detailed instructions for a carefully designed "house of symbols" called the tabernacle. One thing came through very clear. God was to be worshiped on His terms, not man's. Yet God's terms allowed for man's terrible moral and spiritual failure.

The tabernacle symbolized the rescue of grace that would be provided in Christ. The seven pieces of furniture represented timeless principles that are still as applicable today as they were in Moses' day.

PIECE OF FURNITURE / SYMBOLIC MEANING

Altar of Sacrifice / Salvation through sacrifice Basin / Spiritual cleansing

Table of Showbread / Spiritual provision

Lampstand / Spiritual illumination

Altar of Incense / Acceptable worship

Ark of the Testimony / Access through relationship

Mercy Seat / God's merciful presence

God also gave very specific regulations for the priests and dictated exactly what they would wear (Ex. 28). God was to be approached only on His terms! The garments of the high priest were as follows:

- * Linen trousers - worn to cover the priest's nakedness (28:42).
- * A tunic - a long linen garment worn next to the body (28:39,40).
- * A robe - a long, blue, seamless garment worn over the tunic. Its hem was embroidered with bells and pomegranates (28:31-35).
- * An ephod - an apronlike garment woven of blue, purple, and scarlet. It was fastened together at the shoulders with two golden clasps, each containing an onyx stone engraved with the names of six of the tribes of Israel (28:5-14).
- * A sash - a girdle that secured the ephod to the body (28:39,40).
- * A breastplate - a square piece of cloth, doubled up to form a pocket, made of the same material as the ephod. It contained four rows of three precious stones, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel (28:15-30).
- * A turban - a priest's cap with a dark blue covering (28:37-40).

* A crown - a thin, gold plate fastened to the front of the turban and engraved with the words holiness to the lord (28:36,37; 29:6).

Apostasy (32-34). While Moses was on the mountain receiving the instructions for the tabernacle and the priests, things were not going well back at the camp. The people of Israel became impatient waiting for Moses to return. Afraid that something had happened to him and that he might not come back to lead them, the people rebelled. They went to Aaron and demanded, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us" (32:1).

Tragically, Aaron complied. He took the people's gold earrings, melted them down, and made a golden calf for the people to worship. They began to dance before the idol in a lewd, drunken orgy (32:2-6).

While Moses was in the presence of Jehovah receiving the Law, the people were at the foot of the mountain breaking the first commandment! When God told Moses what the Israelites were doing, he went down the mountain. Approaching the camp, he saw the idol and the people dancing before it. Furious, he smashed the tables of stone he had received from God. Then he ground the idol into powder, mixed it into the drinking water, and forced the people to drink it. Moses called for allegiance, and all men of the tribe of Levi stepped forward. He then had them kill the guilty Israelites, which numbered about 3,000.

The next day, Moses approached God on behalf of the people to intercede for them (32:30,31). The Lord told Moses that because of their obstinacy, His presence would not be with them on their journey to the Promised Land (33:2,3). When the Israelites heard this, they went into mourning and repented of their evil. Responding to the people's repentance and to Moses' pleading, God relented and promised that His presence would go with them (33:14).

The final chapters of Exodus complete the regulations for the tabernacle and the priests. Over a period of about 6 months (cp. Ex. 19:1 with 40:17), the tabernacle was built as God directed. When it was completed, a great celebration was held. The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, signifying the presence of Jehovah with His chosen people. He would be with them to lead, protect, help, and bless them as they walked according to the commandments He had given them. The Law had been given and the tabernacle had been constructed. Israel was now ready to resume its journey to the Promised Land.

SEEING GOD

- * In God's giving of the Law to Israel, we see that He is concerned with the rightness of worship.
- * In God's instructions for the Tabernacle, we see His willingness to provide a merciful plan of grace and salvation for those who could never live up to the perfect standards of the Law.
- * In God's punishment of Israel for bowing before the golden calf, we see that there are serious consequences for worshiping anyone else but Him.

SEEING OURSELVES

- * Just as the Israelites needed the Law to know how to please the Lord, we need God's Word to know and obey His will.
- * In the sacrifices of the tabernacle, we see a picture of the forgiveness and cleansing we have in Christ.
- * In the golden calf incident, we see our own tendency to want to dictate the terms of our acceptance by the Lord.

JESUS CHRIST IN EXODUS

The life and work of Jesus Christ are foreshadowed throughout the book of Exodus. For example:

1. Moses. In many ways, Moses prefigured Jesus Christ. Both Moses and Christ were endangered in infancy (Ex. 2:2-10; Matt. 2:14,15); both gave up power and wealth (2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 11:24-27); and both were prophets (Deut. 18:15; Luke 24:19), priests

(Ps. 99:6; Heb. 2:17), mediators (Ex. 32:11,12; 1 Tim. 2:5), lawgivers (John 1:17; Matt. 5,6), judges (Ex. 18:13; Acts 17:31), and deliverers (Acts 7:35; Gal. 1:4).

2. The Passover. The New Testament teaches that Christ is our Passover Lamb (John 1:29,36; 1 Cor. 5:7). As the lamb in Egypt died so that its blood could ward off the destroyer, so Christ died to rescue us from the guilt and penalty of our sin.

3. The Feasts. The feasts God instituted in Exodus 23 picture different aspects of Christ's ministry. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) looked ahead to the death of Christ, the perfect, unblemished Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7,8). The Feast of Harvest (Pentecost) looked forward to the birth of the church, the body of Christ, with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles) portrayed the millennial reign of Christ on the earth when the King will dwell among men in universal peace (Zech. 14:16; Rev. 20:1-6).

4. The Manna. Jesus compared Himself to the manna by saying that He was the true, living bread from heaven. He declared His superiority over manna by saying that anyone who eats of Him would never hunger and would live forever (John 6:31-58).

6. The Tabernacle. The tent of meeting in the wilderness - in its materials, its furnishings, and its compartments - speaks of Christ and His ministry on our behalf.

PART OF TABERNACLE / CHRIST'S FULFILLMENT

Door / "I am the door" (John 10:9).

Altar of Sacrifice / ". . . and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Basin / ". . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"(1 John 1:7).

Lampstand / "I am the light of the world"(John 8:12).

Showbread / "I am the bread of life"(John 6:48).

Altar of Incense / "I pray for them"(John 17:9).

Veil / ". . . having boldness to enter the Holiest . . . through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Heb.10:19,20; cf. 1 Cor. 11:24).

Mercy Seat / "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2).

7. The High Priest. The high priest of Israel was a foreshadowing of Christ, our Great High Priest.

HIGH PRIEST / CHRIST OUR PRIEST

Entered earthly temple / Entered the heavenly tabernacle. (Heb. 9:24).

Entered once a year. / Entered once for all (Heb. 9:12).

Went behind the veil. / Removed the veil (Heb. 10:20; cf. Matt: 27:51).

Offered many sacrifices. / Offered only one sacrifice (Heb. 10:11,12).

Offered sacrifice for his own sins. / Offered only for our sins (Heb. 7:27).

Offered blood of bulls and goats. / Offered His own blood (Heb. 9:12).

THE GOD OF EXODUS

What have we learned about God in Exodus? How have we come to know Him better by reading and studying this book? We have seen that:

- * God controls history. He caused the oppressed Israelites to multiply, and He prepared Moses to lead His people.
- * God remembers. He remembered His covenant with Abraham. He would also remember the covenant He made with Moses.
- * God knows our bonds. As He heard Israel's cries in Egypt, so He knows about the inescapable circumstances of our lives.
- * God is holy. The very place He revealed Himself to Moses was holy ground. The veil in the tabernacle also shows His holiness.
- * God delivers. In Exodus we see the big picture - the God who set His people free. But we also see Him delivering Israel from thirst, hunger, enemies, and death.
- * God is gracious. The angel of death passed over the houses protected by the blood of a lamb - sparing the lives of Israel's firstborn.
- * God acts in judgment. He hardened the heart of the rebellious Pharaoh, bringing plagues on his people for his stubbornness. He punished Israel for her lapse into idolatry at Sinai.

Yes, it is a complex and fascinating picture of God that we see in Exodus. He is a God to love, a God to believe, a God to follow, and a God to fear. But most of all, Exodus is a portrait of a God we can trust for our deliverance - a God who sets us free.

BONDAGE AND FREEDOM

Exodus is the accurate historical account of events that took place 3,500 years ago. Yet the basics of the book are relevant to today's world. Why? Because people haven't changed - and neither has God.

The bondage of Israel is a picture of the enslavement many people find themselves in today. Israel was oppressed by captors; mankind is chained by sin and its consequences. Israel needed a deliverer; so do we!

Jesus Christ is our Deliverer. Just as the passover lamb died so that when its blood was applied to the doorposts the Israelites could escape the destroyer, so Christ died so that all who believe in Him would experience forgiveness of sins and escape the wrath of God. The same God who must punish sin because He is holy has also provided a way of salvation - Jesus Christ.

God has done His part; now it's up to us to do ours. We must receive by faith what He offers us in Christ - rescue from the bondage of sin. We must take the visa and the passport and leave behind the old way of life. We must embark on the journey to freedom that begins with salvation and culminates in heaven.

If you are seeking deliverance from sin, you must trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Receive Him as your Passover Lamb, the One who died for you.

If you are a Christian in bondage to some sin or attitude or habit, come to God for rescue. Call on Him for the deliverance you need (1 John 1:9). He is the God who sets people free (Rom. 6:17, 18).

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Multimedia Lesson-Outline.

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point I

ACTIVITIES:

Outline Activity

Read - Numbers (60 min.)

Read - Library / Commentary! From Failure to Victory. pp. 95-103 (8 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 00 - Numbers: The Wilderness Years

RAPHIC 01 The Israelites at Mt. Sinai

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point I B

ACTIVITIES:

Outline Activity

I B View - Library ; Study ; Genealogies Aaron (1 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 04 - Organization of the Levites

MIULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point I D

ACTIVITIES:

Outline Activity

I D Read - Library / Study / Discovery Articles / Knowing God Through Exodus (20 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 06 The Tabernacle

GRAPHIC 07 The Ark of the Covenant

MIULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point I E

ACTIVITIES:

Outline Activity

I E View - Library ; Bible Time Line ; Slavery.

Exodus. Wandering and Conquest (1 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 08 Israelites Moving

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point II

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 09 Parts One and Two of Numbers

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point II

ACTIVITIES:

Outline Activity

II B View - Library / Study / Geography / Moses -Samuel / Mt. Sinai (1 min.)

II B Read - Library / Study / Discovery Articles ; 10 Reasons to Believe in a God Who Allows Suffering (5 min.)

II B View - Multimedia / Philip Yancey Lessons ; Mutiny (5 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 13 Scouts Return

GRAPHIC 14 Israelites Fighting

GRAPHIC 15 Joshua and Caleb

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point II C**ACTIVITIES:****Outline Activity**

II C View - Practice! General / Old Testament Content - Interactive Review / Numbers (1 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 16 Korah. Dathan. and Abiram Rebel

GRAPHIC 17 Death of Korah. Dathan. And Abiram

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point II D**ACTIVITIES:****Outline Activity**

II D View - Library ; Study ; Geography ; United Kingdom ; Moab (1 min.)

II D View Chart - "Ancient Near East Deities.' Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament. p. 83 (3 min.)

II D Reflection Question - What does the Lord's interaction with a pagan prophet like Balaam tell us about His intervention in history? (10 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 18 Map of Moab

GRAPHIC 19 Balaam

GRAPHIC 20 Balaam and Barak

GRAPHIC 21 Ritual Prostitution

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point III A**GRAPHICS:**

GRAPHIC 22 The Second Census

GRAPHIC 23 Zelophehad's Daughters

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point III B**GRAPHICS:**

GRAPHIC 24 Jordan River

MULTIMEDIA: Lesson Four ; Outline Point III C

ACTIVITIES:

Outline Activity

III C Read- Library / Bible Books / Key Verses and Themes in Numbers. (2 min.)

III C Reflection Question - Three-part question a) Now that you have examined the highlights of Numbers. what verse would you consider to be the key verse of the book? b) Write a list of key words and phrases. c) In your own words. what is the theme of Numbers? (30 min.)

III C Reflection Question - Two-part question: a) Numbers reveals much about the character of God. Identify and reflect on the Lord's attributes as they appear in this book. b) Analyze and evaluate the presentation made in Hebrews 3 and 4 about the time of Israelite testing found in Numbers and its relationship to the Christian life.' (20 min.)

III C Quiz - Assessment / Lesson Quiz / Lesson 4: Numbers (10 min.)

III C Print & View Chart - Outline of Numbers (1 min.)

GRAPHICS:

GRAPHIC 25 Distribution of the Land

Charts

OLD TESTAMENT CONTENT - INTERACTIVE REVIEW

Click on "HIDE" in each column below to erase the information and test your recall of Old Testament content, people, places and events. Erase one or multiple columns and mentally "fill in" the missing information, or click on "Notes" and type your answers.

	HIDE	HIDE	HIDE	HIDE	HIDE
	BOOK	BOOK HOOKS	PEOPLE	PLACES	MAJOR EVENTS
LAW	Genesis	Beginnings	Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph	Eden, Palestine, Egypt	Creation, Fall, Flood, Call of Abraham
	Exodus	Exit	Moses, Pharaoh, Joshua	Egypt, Sinai, Wilderness	Contest with Pharaoh, Wilderness Wanderings
	Leviticus	Sacrifices	Moses, Priests	Wilderness	Day of Atonement
	Numbers	Wandering	Moses, Joshua, Caleb	Sinai, Wilderness	Census, Spies, Failure
	Deuteronomy	Law Repeated	Moses	Moab	Commands Given

*Partially adapted from Radio Bible Class, Discovery Series, *Knowing God Through the Old Testament*, pp. 24-25, 1990.

	HIDE	HIDE	HIDE	HIDE	HIDE
	BOOK	BOOK HOOKS	PEOPLE	PLACES	MAJOR EVENTS
MAJOR PROPHEETS	Isaiah	Woes and Wonders	Isaiah, Hezekiah, Sennacherib	Jerusalem	Vision of God, Fall of Samaria
	Jeremiah	Coming Judgment	Jeremiah, Baruch	Jerusalem, Egypt	Judah's Fall
	Lamentations	Dirge	Jeremiah	Jerusalem	Desolation Predicted
	Ezekiel	God's Glory	Ezekiel	Babylon	Prophetic Statements
	Daniel	Deliverance	Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar	Babylon	Lion's Den, Fiery Furnace
MINOR PROPHEETS	Hosea	Harlot	Hosea, Gomer	Northern Kingdom	Gomer's Unfaithfulness
	Joel	Locusts	Joel	Judah	Locust Plague
	Amos	Plumbline	Amos	Northern Kingdom	Preaching of Judgment
	Obadiah	"O Bad Edom"	Obadiah	Edom, Petra	Destruction of Edom
	Jonah	Fish	Jonah, King of Nineveh	Nineveh	Jonah Flees, Nineveh's Revival
	Micah	God's Court Case	Micah	Samaria, Judah	Predictions of Fall
	Nahum	Nineveh	Nahum	Nineveh	Predictions of Nineveh's Fall
	Habakkuk	Dialogue with God	Habakkuk	Judah	Judah's Fall
	Zephaniah	Punishment and Mercy	Zephaniah	Judah	Judgment, Restoration
	Haggai	Temple Rubble & Zerubbabel	Haggai, Zerubbabel	Jerusalem	Temple Finished
Zechariah	Build that Temple!	Zechariah	Jerusalem	Prediction of Messiah's Return	
Malachi	Listless Worship	Malachi, "My Messenger"	Jerusalem	Judgment, Christ's Return	

Numbers

1 - 20 Preparing to Take the Promised Land, Part I

21 - 22 40 Years of Wandering

23 - 36 Preparing to Take the Promised Land, Part II

