INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION – THE STUDY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE BIBLE

The study of the Bible is to set sail towards an ocean of mysteries with increasing depths and discoveries. We are not invited to learn something but to meet someone and from this encounter flows the spiritual life of every believer.

Many images in the text speak of the Bible as a life-giving word. It is compared to rain, “Which descends from Heaven and does not return to Heaven without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish…” (Isaiah 55:10). The Word of God is like a seed which emerges from the hard earth through its own inner force (Luke 8: 11-15). The Word of God is sharper than a double-edged sword which “penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit…it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The Word is a hammer which smashes the hardness of the rocky heart (Jeremiah 23:29, Ezekiel 36:26). It is also a burning fire in the bones (Jeremiah 20:9). It is a light which describes the decisive inbreak of God upon the human mind and shows us the living God (John 8:12; Ps 27:1).

As we said, in the Scriptures we encounter the one and true God and this encounter carries with it some characteristics:

• An urgency to respond and be faithful
• The radical way of life for those who respond
• Decisions that must be made in our lives
• Having total trust and confidence in Him
• Poverty of spirit leading to desire
• Finding the God who is first searching for me
• Participants in a unique covenant
• Community vs. Individuality
• God’s constant activity in history and in my life
• The reality and destructive nature of sin
• The spirituality of hope and joy

FINDING SCRIPTURE’S STORY

“Toward the end of his gospel, St. Luke recounts the greatest Bible study ever held. Jesus joins two disciples as they travel the road to Emmaus. In
response to their despair over the events of Good Friday, Jesus says, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:25-26). In the midst of the tragic events and details of the previous days, these disciples had lost sight of all that God was doing in his story of Scripture, and, as a result, they also lost sight of the narrative thread to their own lives and were filled with sorrow and despair.

In response, Jesus takes the disciples back through Scripture’s story, showing them God’s wonderful design and purpose. When Jesus wanted to teach these disciples the very meaning of who he was and make sense of the events of life, he opened up for them Scripture’s plot, the “big picture” that weaves together all the individual events and details. The disciples saw the whole breathtaking view of Scripture’s story and how it led to Christ. It set their hearts on fire and changed their lives; their sorrow was turned to joy, and they raced back to Jerusalem!” (Walking with God)

One of the difficulties most people find in reading and studying the Old Testament is that by reading certain books or passages, one often misses the “big picture”, or rather the “big story,” of God’s self-revelation in human history which is fully and perfectly manifest-ed with the Incarnation of God the Word. From the opening verses of Genesis to the end of the Book of Revelation, the interconnection between history and the covenant relationship between God and Man is a constant and crucial theme. Understanding this will allow us to grasp a deeper appreciation for the unity of the Old and New Testaments. However, in reading Scriptures we should never lose sight of the fact that we each of us is personally a participant in this story. We are not mere observers from the outside but invited into the story to have our own meeting with the Lord:

“Our Father invites each of us to become immersed in the story of his Word, which includes great deeds, adventure, love, betrayal, sacrifice, miracles, and much more. In the Scriptures, we learn about faith in the Lord by seeing it lived out by Abraham. We learn about obedience when Joshua follows God’s directions for defeating Jericho instead of rushing in with his army. We learn about courage when David goes up against the giant warrior Goliath. We learn about trust in the Lord when Mary gives her “yes” to God’s plan. We learn about self-sacrificial love when Jesus gives his life on the cross for our salvation. Most importantly, though, the Scriptures give us a story in which we can meet God himself, come to know his infinite love for each of us, and respond to his invitation to enter into this epic tale.” (Walking with God)

**THE NARRATIVE METHOD**

A great way to do this and which makes the complex simple is by teaching the story (the narrative) of the Bible. More specifically, we can focus on fourteen narrative books of the Old and New Testaments and twelve periods of history that provide a chronological view of Salvation History and the widening of the covenant between God and Man. The following table summarizes:

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<th>Period</th>
<th>Approx. Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Early World</td>
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<td>Genesis 1-11</td>
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The genius in this approach is that it helps one see the “big picture” of the Old Testament in a chronological way by focusing on a straight reading of the fourteen narrative books. All the other Old Testament books are then seen as related to the narrative at one stage of salvation history. Good examples of this are the periods of the Divided Kingdom, Exile and Return. Properly understood in their historical context, the message of the Prophets makes much more sense and can more easily be appreciated.
The following table portrays the progression of the covenant relationship between God and His people:

**COVENANT HISTORY**

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“The key to every good story is its plot, which brings together the many details, events, and characters to give the story its meaning and power. Without a good plot, we just close the book or turn off the movie. The story of Scripture also has a plot, but it is precisely this plot that many people have difficulty finding and making sense of. And if we cannot understand the plot of Scripture, we get lost in endless genealogies, names, and battles; we close the book and leave the Bible on the shelf, never learning God's story and our place in it.” (*Walking with God*)

A reviewer wrote the following regarding *Walking with God*:

“In *Walking with God*, though, I found a study that took me deeper into the Bible in a way that made the history come alive. I didn't realize how much of the drama I've missed… I didn't know just how interesting the Bible could be! And who knew there was an underlying theme to the whole thing??”
Study Questions

1. What have been your struggles in reading the Scriptures? How would you like to see this series help you develop a deeper relationship with the word of God?

2. What does it mean to you when you hear that the word of God is “living”? Can you give some examples?

3. How do you understand the concept of “covenant”? How can you apply that to other relationships you have in your life? What makes a covenant different than a contract?

4. How do you see the relationship between the Bible and the Church?

5. As Christians, what is the “key” that unlocks the meaning of the Old Testament?

6. What are some practical ways you can increase your study of the Scriptures?

7. What is the relationship between the Scriptures and Prayer?

8. How does being immersed in the Scriptures help us to hear God’s voice in our daily life even when we are not reading the Bible?
Chapter 2

THE EARLY WORLD AND THE PATRIARCHS

THE EARLY WORLD period follows the story of Scripture in the first eleven chapters of the opening book of the Bible, the book of Genesis. We could outline this “early world” period by the following significant events which are told in the first eleven chapters of Genesis:

- The Creation and the Fall
- Cain and Abel
- Noah and the Flood
- The Tower of Babel

It is not our goal in these weekly studies to cover an in-depth bible study of these events and stories (which is certainly important to do) but rather to gain an understanding of the “big picture” of Salvation History by looking primarily at the unfolding story in terms of God's covenant with His people culminating with the manifestation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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“The concept of covenant and oath is foundational for our understanding God's relationship with his people. A covenant was made by swearing an oath of fidelity, which often included an animal sacrifice as a witness to the fidelity sworn. Faithfulness to this oath brought blessings while infidelity brought curses upon the one who was unfaithful. Additionally, making a covenant could include the sharing of a covenant meal and a sign marking the covenant. To enter into a covenant is to enter into a family relationship; to enter into a covenant with God is to enter into the Divine family of the Most Holy Trinity. Throughout Scripture, by means of a series of covenants,
God expands His family until He establishes the ‘new and everlasting covenant’ in his Son Jesus Christ and pours out His Holy Spirit in baptism.” (Walking With God)

We can understand, then, that the significance of the early chapters of Genesis is not in providing a scientific or even historical view of Creation but the beginning and nature of the Covenant.

**CREATION**

God creates man in His image and likeness and crowns him as the king and pinnacle of creation. The number seven in ancient times was related to swearing an oath and this the seven days of creation (with the Sabbath being the seventh day) is in itself also pointing the covenant. Man is to enjoy the creation and through it to have communion and a life of thanksgiving with his Creator.

“…the creation story is a wonderful prose poem; its purpose is not to report scientific data but to communicate a profound theological meditation on the act of creation. The creation account and Psalm 104 both envision the heavens as a dome and the earth upheld by pillars because the poet is communicating the meaning of creation, showing that creation is a temple and pointing us to our end, which is praise and worship of the Creator. Compared to modern prose, Hebrew writing is much more subtle and filled with rich, metaphorical language that seeks to convey the resplendent theological meaning of the events and things it describes. We must be careful not to flatten out the rich contours of such language.”

“Every man and woman is made in the Father’s image and likeness and thus shares in the dominion and dignity of the one God and King. This is one of the most astonishing elements of the story: God desires to relate to his creatures, not as a master to a slave but as a Father to his sons and daughter.”

“For man to be made in the image of the Trinitarian God, he too must be set in a communion of love. Thus, God creates man and woman, equal in dignity, complementary in relation, and each called to make a gift of themselves for the other, in imitation of God himself. In their relationship, man and woman reflect the very life of God, a full understanding of which will be manifested only when Christ comes and reveals the Trinity. The Garden of Eden turns out to be a honeymoon suite; marriage marks the high point of creation.” (Walking With God)

**THE FALL**

Man turns from his end of the Covenant. He turns his attention away from God as the goal to the creation. Man’s desire becomes for the created rather than the creator. Man loses his dignity as king and priest and becomes subject to death and corruption.

“Eve did not have to eat the fruit to be like God; it wasn’t something that needed to be grasped at. But the serpent suggests that they are missing out, that God is holding something back. Eve looks at the tree and thinks: “That’s good fruit; very desirable. Why won’t God let us have it?” With that question, the serpent sows doubt into their hearts, and the resulting harvest will be bitter indeed.”

“Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood … placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only with a sense of the master-slave relationship.”
“If God is out to enslave and limit us, what do we do? We run away, like the Prodigal Son. The problem is that we are running away from the best father there is, our heavenly Father who loves us deeply. At the center of the first temptation, and at the heart of all rebellion against God, is a disordered vision of God that distorts him into a master who seeks to oppress us. Is God a loving Father who can be trusted or a jealous tyrant who is to be feared and rebelled against? This is the first and most lasting question posed in the Garden of Eden about God.”

“The serpent repeatedly tries to tempt us to believe that God is looking out for Number One and that we have to look out for ourselves! The devil hasn’t changed his playbook; he hasn’t needed to because this old temptation continues to work.”

“To grasp this mystery that obedience to God actually sets us free, we must come to terms with the role of law in God’s fatherly plan. God’s law is not given for his good; it is given for our good. When parents tell their young children that they cannot play in the street, they are not limiting them or trying to be tyrants. Rather, such rules express the love of a father and mother seeking to protect their children.”

“Have you ever noticed that more complicated items come with thicker instruction manuals? ... we too come with an instruction manual: the divine law, as revealed in the word of God and the teachings of the Church. God’s laws are not there to limit or oppress us. The God who made us loves us; he doesn’t want us to “break”... when we sin, we often refer to it as “breaking” God’s law. But when we sin, it isn’t God’s law that breaks; it is our heart that breaks, and the hearts of others.” (Walking with God)

**THE FIRST PROMISE OF GOD**

From the moment man falls, God is ready to proclaim His salvation. In what is called the “Protoevangelium” (or “First Gospel”), the Lord declares: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) This from this moment, God’s plan for a Savior is already set in motion.

“The theme of “seed,” which is often translated “descendants,” is repeated throughout the rest of the story, for a descendant of the woman will enter the story and bring about the healing of this original wound, defeating the devil and reversing the curse brought about by sin. This “New Adam” and long-awaited savior will enter a garden and sweat blood, taking on himself the curse and sin of the first Adam, and his suffering and death on the wood of a tree will transform that wood into the new Tree of Life. Jesus’ faithfulness to God his Father and his rejection of Satan’s lies, even to death, show the way that the first Adam, and all the sons of Adam, were and are to walk.” (Walking with God)

**THE SPREAD OF SIN**

With the stories of Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, and the Tower of Babel, we get insight to the power of sin and how human nature seems to be on the decline, coming under the sway of sin, death and corruption. The flood and its recession is a story of recreation and a new covenant with Noah and his offspring. But alas, in the story of the Tower of Babel we see again (as we shall see over and over) the inability of man on his own to be faithful to the covenant with God. These stories are also important in that they begin to unveil the “bloodline” of the Messiah.
A closer look at the text reveals that the narrative does not simply say that Cain's offering is not accepted, but that Cain and his offering are not accepted. The text implies that there is something wrong with the one making the offering, not simply with the offering itself. Indeed, this is the point made by God who tries to encourage a despondent Cain: "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" (Gn 4:7). The focus of God's admonition is not Cain's offering, but rather Cain himself. The lesson is unmistakable: it is the moral disposition of the one making the offering—that of which the offering is but a gift and sign—that decides the worth of the sacrifice. The God of the Hebrews is not appeased by offerings, no matter how valuable, but rather he seeks an upright heart in those who offer sacrifice. This lesson, at the beginning of humanity's story, will be vital for correctly understanding the nature of worship and the God who is worshiped.

The flood and its recession is a story of re-creation, echoing back to the opening chapters of Genesis. Just like in the first creation, a wind blows and dry land and plants soon appear. Noah builds an altar and offers burnt offerings to God in thanksgiving for his family's salvation. God then blesses Noah and his sons and commands them, as he did Adam and Eve, to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gn 9:1). God reiterates the dignity of humanity, despite its poor history, reminding Noah and his family that "God made man in his own image" (Gn 9:6). God then establishes a covenant with Noah and his descendants, the sign of which is the rainbow. Everything that happens after the water abates is reminiscent of the first creation: blessing, image and likeness, the command to be fruitful and multiply, and, finally, covenant...God not only wants to save humanity but also desires to bring humanity into an interpersonal relationship with himself, and he does this via a covenant.

The main building project in Babel is a tower that will reach "with its top in the heavens" (Gn 11:4). The term Babel, in its original language, means "gate of God." The building of the tower was an attempt to force entry into heaven, a proud claim of access into the world of the divine. It may also have been an attempt at an insurance policy against another flood. In the Tower of Babel, we see sin taking on a new dimension. Until now, sin had only created division. Now it creates unity; but it is a false, prideful, worldly unity that is hostile to God. At the Tower of Babel, the human race bands together to attempt the creation of a sort of artificial heaven-on-earth based on its own strength, power, and wealth...The fresh start made with Noah has once again gone astray. But the genealogy of Shem, which follows the confusion of Babel, points to another new beginning. While much of the world rebelled, one family line was faithful: Shem's line, the line that will result in Abram (Gn 11:27). God will call Abram (later Abraham) and his descendants to undo the mess made by Adam, Noah, and much of their families. The question is whether Abram will be faithful." (Walking with God)

We now turn to the Patriarchs. In the table above, we see that with Abraham the covenant expands from a married couple (Adam and Eve) to a family (Noah and his sons) to a tribal chieftain (Abraham) and his entire clan.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM AND A THREEFOLD PROMISE

From the line of Shem, God calls Abraham to leave his homeland and come to a new land that God has yet to make known. His call includes a promise of a nation, a name and a universal blessing (Gen. 12:1-3). The three promises are raised to the status of covenant in Genesis 15, 17 and 22.
Further revelations of the future fulfillment of the covenants are manifested (though not fully until later) in the stories of Melchizedek, the promise and birth of Isaac, the sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob's Ladder, the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel), and the story of Joseph.

Throughout the book of Genesis, God's blessing on mankind is passed on – from God to Adam and Eve, to Noah, from Noah's son Shem to Abraham, then to Isaac and Jacob. Jacob passes it to his twelve sons who will become the twelve tribes of Israel.

“The Early World ended in Babel with rebellion. The period of the Patriarchs, however, begins with the obedience of one man, Abraham. In act one of this period, the Lord of the cosmos calls Abraham to journey to a new homeland. Abraham obeys, making the journey to the land of Canaan, but questions, “What good is family land without an heir?” In act two, Abraham, the father of faith, learns through trial and error how to trust God in all things, in particular for the gift of a son and heir, Isaac, and for the sustaining of Isaac's life. The focus of act three is Isaac's son Jacob, who wrestles with both God and man, and who receives a new name that reveals the future of the nation of God's people. Act four focuses on Jacob's beloved son Joseph and a remarkable tale of family feuds, favoritism, and forgiveness.” (Walking with God)

**ABRAHAM**

“God’s call for Abram to leave his homeland (“your country, your kindred, and your father's house”) is matched by a promise of nation, name, and universal blessing. God promises Abram, “I will make of you a great nation,” and he also promises the land, without which a national identity is difficult to sustain. This Promised Land, the land of Canaan, a land Moses will later describe as “flowing with milk and honey,” will be located at the crossroads of civilization, with Babylon to its north and Egypt to its south. This tangible expanse of land is a reminder that Judaism and Christianity take shape in concrete places and periods in history. God then promises to make great the name of Abram, the heir of Shem. This promise means more than receiving passing fame; to “make one's name great” is a Hebraic idiom connoting the establishment of a royal dynasty and kingdom. Finally, God promises that all the families of the earth will bless themselves by Abram's name. Abram is called and blessed to be a channel of blessing to all the peoples of the earth!”

“Abram then sharpens the point: “Thou hast given me no offspring” (Gn 15:3; emphasis added). How will God answer such a bold complaint? God's response is to take the discussion outside. God tells Abram, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them” (Gn 15:5). Our first impulse is to picture this conversation happening as Abram sits alone in front of a dying campfire under a clear night sky spangled with a myriad of stars. We imagine Abram gazing up, overwhelmed by the innumerable points of light before his eyes. But, as we read
on, we discover something unexpected: the sun is high overhead, not going down for another seven verses (Gn 15:12). God’s command is given in broad daylight! Abram, staring up at the blue midday sky, could no more see the stars than he could see his countless descendants. God’s message here is profound: while your sight is too weak to see the stars, I, the Lord, can see them; and I, the Lord, can also see your many descendants, even though you cannot. God’s lesson isn’t simply that Abram’s descendants will be as numerous as the stars, but that Abram must have faith and trust the Lord that these countless descendants will be given, even if he has yet to see the very first one. Abram gets the point, and “he believed the Lord; and [the Lord] reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gn 15:6). Faith provides the vision that enables one to navigate life in a way pleasing to God, in times of daylight and in times of darkness.”

“The story now comes full circle. After coming to the land with limited faith, Abram has learned to let Lot go and put more trust in God. Abram now believes God will give him descendants that will number the stars, and he has a promise and covenant oath that his seed will have this very land, upon which God himself will plant them. Abraham will die without seeing the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises, but he does receive “down payments” as these promises are strengthened with oaths and his faith increases. The ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham will be seen only as the rest of Scripture’s story unfolds.” (Walking with God)

**SACRIFICING THE BELOVED SON**

The command cuts to the heart, demanding sacrifice and referring to Isaac not simply as Abraham’s son but even more tenderly as the son “whom you love.” The anguish of the command is driven home as the word “son” is repeated more than a dozen times in the short narrative of Genesis 22. Abraham, who haggled with God for the sparing of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 18:16-33), responds to God’s command with silent obedience. He rises early in the morning to set out for the journey to the mountain God will show him where he is to sacrifice Isaac, the son on whom the fulfillment of all God’s promises hinges. Abraham puts the wood for the burnt offering upon Isaac, who carries the wood up the mountain while Abraham carries the fire and the knife. As they make their ascent, Isaac calls to his father, “Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Gn 22:7). Abraham’s response, although intentionally vague, will prove to be prophetic: “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (Gn 22:8).

There are other striking parallels between Genesis 21 and Genesis 22. Each story begins with Abraham rising early in the morning to prepare for the journey (Gn 21:14, 22:3.) In both stories a parent believes that the death of a beloved son is imminent. In both an angel of the Lord comes with deliverance: God opens the eyes of Hagar, and she sees a well that will bring saving water, while Abraham lifts up his eyes and sees a ram that will replace Isaac as the burnt offering. In both stories Ishmael and Isaac are called “lad,” in Hebrew na’ar, which means a “young man.” We know Ishmael was sixteen or seventeen, given that he was expelled after Isaac is three, but how old is Isaac in Genesis 22? Western art typically depicts Isaac as a very young boy, but the narrative suggests that a significant number of years have passed since the end of Genesis 21. What is more, Isaac carries the wood up the mountain, indicating he must have been a strong young man. These parallels point vigorously to the plot line of the larger story. God is making Abraham experience what Hagar experienced. God himself will spare both beloved sons, bringing home the point that although Isaac is the son of promise and Abraham is specially chosen, God is the God of all. Justice is universal, and no one is to be abandoned or
treated with less than justice requires. God hears the cry of Ishmael and acts, and he sends his angel to stay the knife from Isaac. God will see Hagar and reveal himself as the defender of the alien, the orphan, and the widow, just as he will hear the cry of Sarah and give her a child of promise. The pattern that emerges is that God is universal in both his justice and his mercy: justice, in that one reaps what one sows; mercy, in that God cares both for the child of the slave woman and the child of the promise.

But if God universally cares for all people, why does he choose Abraham and his descendants to be the chosen people? How can Israel be the elect, if God is the God of all? Why does God call only one nation out of all the nations of the world? The answer is found in the conclusion of the story of Abraham’s offering of Isaac...This climactic story of the sacrifice of Isaac, which prefigures and finds its fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ, brings the story of Abraham back full circle to Abraham's call in Genesis 12. God promised to bless Abraham and, what is more, to bless all the families of the world through Abraham (Gen 12:3). Now that Abraham has trusted God completely with the life of his beloved son, God elevates that promise to a solemn covenant oath (Gen 22:16-18), which he will fulfill by sacrificing his own son, Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews, reading Genesis 22 in light of Christ, states that Abraham willingly obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac because he trusted that if Isaac died, God could raise him up from the dead (Heb 11:17-19). That is the faith that made Abraham the father of Israel and the father of faith. What frames the story of Abraham from beginning to end is the call of Abraham and his descendants to be a channel of blessing to all the nations. The choosing of Abraham and the election of Israel are not in spite of the other nations but for their sake. The Early World ended with an entire race scattered and divided because of their rebellion against God. Now, in the time of the Patriarchs, God chooses Abraham and blesses his family to reunite and bring blessing to all the nations, even those who have rebelled against him. The story of Abraham and Israel makes sense only if we see it in this light: they have a mission to undo the mess of Adam and Babel. (Walking with God)

**Jacob**

“God’s plan was to bless Jacob; this is clear from the Lord’s word to Rebekah at his birth: “The elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:23). Jacob’s life of theft, scheming, and deceit was not what blessed him. The love of God is what blessed him. He did not need to wrestle and deceive to obtain the blessing, rather he needed to trust and call upon his God, the God of his fathers. And when he finally did so, it led him back to the very man he had wronged—in order to give him a blessing. Indeed, in the next verse (Gen 33:11), the term for the “gift” that Jacob offers his brother is literally “blessing.” Jacob returns the blessing to Esau; that is, the portion of the blessing that relates to material prosperity is now shared with Esau as an act of restoration, “because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough” (Gen 33:11). While the blessing as it relates to headship in the family, both spiritual (priestly) and political (royal), remains with Jacob, he graciously offers what he can to his brother. This lesson of brotherly love foreshadows the New Testament teaching that love of God and love of neighbor are intimately intertwined.” (Walking with God)

**Joseph**

“When Joseph finds his brothers, they throw him in a pit and plan to kill him (Gen 37:20). One brother, Judah, intervenes. “Why kill him? Let’s sell him and get some
money for him, and not have his blood on our hands." In the end, Joseph is taken by traders to Egypt, where he is sold as a slave. To cover up their sin, Joseph's brothers dip Joseph's coat in goat's blood, telling Jacob that Joseph has been slain by a wild beast. Once again, Jacob reaps what he has sown. Just as Jacob had deceived his father, Isaac, to steal the blessing from a favored son, so now Jacob experiences the grief and betrayal of having his own sons lie and deceive him about his favored son.

“One of the important themes of the Joseph narrative is that “the Lord was with Joseph.” The narrative repeats this truth twice as Joseph is sold into slavery in Egypt (Gn 39:2, 39:3) and twice again as Joseph is falsely thrown into prison (Gn 39:21, 39:23). Even in the midst of Joseph's trials and sufferings, God is with Joseph, directing Joseph's path for good. Joseph himself seems fully aware of this. Despite all the hardships that have fallen upon him, Joseph remains loyal to God and just to men. Even after more than two years in prison, Joseph's faith allows him to humbly proclaim God, not himself, as the one who can reveal the meaning of Pharaoh's dream (Gn 41:16, 41:25). As St. Paul does much later, Joseph learns how to be content in whatever state he finds himself, in abundance and in want, because he is able to do “all things in him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).” (Walking with God)

**CONCLUSION**

“Throughout the book of Genesis, God's blessing on mankind is passed on. In creation, God blesses Adam and Eve. After the flood, Noah receives the blessing. Noah's son Shem passes on the blessing to Abraham, and Abraham passes it to Isaac. Then Jacob steals the blessing. Genesis ends with Jacob passing the blessing to his sons, who will become the twelve tribes of Israel (Gn 49). In the various blessings Jacob bestows upon his twelve sons, two stand out. The first is the blessing to the repentant Judah, to whose future line the kingship is given: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Gn 49:10). The second is that rather than giving a blessing directly to Joseph, Jacob gives a blessing to Joseph's two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh)—which elevates them to the level of Jacob's other sons. Thus, in a sense, Jacob adopts Joseph's sons, and so for a short time the tribes of Jacob/Israel will number thirteen. The story of Genesis ends with Jacob bestowing his blessings upon his sons. The story of Genesis that began with the blessing of creation now finds the man named Jacob and his family richly blessed.” (Walking with God)
STUDY QUESTIONS


10. Review the command God gave to Adam in Genesis 2: 16-17 then read the exchange between the serpent and the woman in Genesis 3:1-4. What was the serpent trying to accomplish?

11. How do we today hide from the presence of God? How does sin drive us further from His presence?

12. What are some of the ways the Devil tries to make us doubt God's love?

13. The Early World period. What kind of a world is it? How does it compare to our own? What conclusions do you reach from that comparison?

14. Abraham is called our “Father in Faith.” What evidence of Abraham's faith do you see in chapters 12 and 15? How does his example relate to your own struggles with faith and trust in God? What is the relationship between faith and obedience?

15. Thinking about Abraham's sacrificing his son, Isaac, have there been things that God has asked you to sacrifice?

16. Read Genesis 32. What did Jacob learn about God in his midnight wrestling match?

17. Would you have responded like Joseph to his brothers when they showed up in Egypt?

18. By the end of Genesis, what progress has been made toward the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham?
Chapter 3
THE EXODUS AND DESERT WANDERINGS

With the Exodus narrative, God’s covenant family will continue to increase from a couple (Adam and Eve), to a family (Noah), to a tribe (Abraham) and now to a nation (Moses and Israel).

Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins identify four main acts in the Exodus story: the call of Moses, the signs and wonders God displays, the covenant on Mt. Sinai, and the apostasy with the story of the golden calf. We will look now at each of these in turn.

The Call of Moses

After almost four hundred years (about ten generations) have gone by since Jacob’s family settled in Egypt. The beginning of Exodus tells us there was a new king who doesn’t “know” Joseph, a subtle way of saying that Pharaoh refused to acknowledge the previous relationship with Joseph’s family.

“Nearly four hundred years, or ten generations, have gone by since Jacob’s family settled in Egypt’s best land, the land of Goshen. Given that so many generations had spent their entire lives in Egypt, it is not surprising that Israel has become accustomed to the culture, practices, and even religion of Egypt. This “familiarity” will need to be overcome for God’s people to receive the freedom he desires for them.” (Walking with God)

Pharaoh’s repressive policies set the scene for Moses. The story of Moses can be outlined as follows:

- Moses Drawn out of the Water
- The Story of the Burning Bush
- The Name of God
- The Call of Moses to Free the Israelites

“Pharaoh fears the Israelites’ growing numbers and responds with slavery; the Egyptians “made their lives bitter with hard service” (Ex 1:14). When Israel continues to multiply, Pharaoh enacts a policy of population control—a direct contradiction to Scripture’s command to “be fruitful and multiply.” Pharaoh commands the midwives to kill any newborn Hebrew male child. The midwives, however, fear God and refuse to obey the tyrant’s unjust orders…When the midwives disobey, Pharaoh commands that every newborn Hebrew boy be thrown into the Nile. The command
is strategic: without any Hebrew boys, Hebrew girls would have only Egyptians to marry. Since land inheritance did not pass through the woman, the Hebrew land would return to Egypt. Not only would the Egyptians regain the prized land of Goshen, but Israel, having lost a generation of Hebrew men, would no longer pose a significant military threat. Eventually, all of Israel and its belongings would be assimilated into Egypt. Pharaoh’s murderous command was a powerful political move.”

“Pharaoh’s attempt to kill all the male children of Israel leads to the rescue of a Hebrew child by none other than his own daughter, who raises the boy with an education and training that could be offered only in the palace of the king of Egypt. As with Joseph, what men intended for evil, God uses for good. Pharaoh’s daughter names the boy Moses, which in Hebrew means to “draw out of water.” This name not only signifies how Moses is taken out of the waters of the Nile, but also foreshadows how Moses will lead Israel to salvation through the waters of the Red Sea.” (Walking with God)

These events are significant in terms of both God’s self-revelation and the prophetic character of Moses. God identifies Himself to Moses as the “I AM,” (Ex. 3:14) the personal God who is to be known in relationship. He has a name and He is Holy. Christ will later identify Himself as saying: “Before Abraham was I AM.”

“Here, at the burning bush, Moses is the first of God’s people to learn God’s inmost, secret name. The patriarchs, who did not know God’s true name, never performed any miracles. Now, however, the Lord reveals his name, and Moses will work signs and wonders in God’s name! In the New Testament, Jesus will say, “Whenever two or more are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst” (emphasis added); invoking Jesus’ name invokes his presence (Catechism No. 2666). The Acts of the Apostles repeatedly speaks of “wonders and signs” being done in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ name is a sacrament; it makes present what it signifies. So, too, in Exodus, for Moses to say the name of Yahweh is to invoke his presence and his power. With the gift of God’s name, Moses now has access to God’s presence, and mighty deeds of power are soon to follow.” (Walking with God)

Likewise, Moses is a “savior” figure who goes in power to save God’s people from the tyranny of evil and death. He is a type of Christ. All the events of the Exodus are powerfully typological in their pointing to the Mystery of Christ. The following table summarizes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moses</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An evil king/Pharaoh tried to kill him as a baby: Exodus 1:22</td>
<td>King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus: Matthew 2:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was hidden from the evil king/Pharaoh: Exodus 2:2</td>
<td>An angel said to hide the child from the evil King Herod: Matthew 2:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses was sent into Egypt to preserve his life: Exodus 2:3-4</td>
<td>Jesus was taken into Egypt to preserve His life: Matthew 2:13-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was saved by women: his mother: Exodus 2:3; Miriam 2:4; Pharaoh’s</td>
<td>Saved and helped by His mother, Mary: Matthew 2:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter 2:5-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses: Exodus 2:10</td>
<td>Joseph adopted Jesus: Matthew 1:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses became a prince of Egypt: Exodus 2:10</td>
<td>Jesus is the Prince of Peace: Isaiah 9:5; Matthew 28:18; Luke 2:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long period of silence from childhood to adulthood</td>
<td>Long period of silence from childhood to adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses had a secret identity</td>
<td>Messianic secret = Jesus the Son of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He tried to save a Hebrew kinsman: Exodus 2:11-12</td>
<td>Jesus came to save His Hebrew kinsman first: Mark 7:26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went from being a prince to a pauper: Exodus 2:15-19</td>
<td>Went from being God to being man: John 1:1-3; Mark 6:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saved women at a well: Exodus 2:15-19</td>
<td>Saved a woman at a well: John chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became a shepherd: Exodus 3:1</td>
<td>He is the Good Shepherd: John 10:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses’ mission was to redeem Israel from slavery to Egypt</td>
<td>Jesus’ mission is to redeem mankind from slavery to sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses was loved and supported in his ministry by his sister Miriam [in Hebrew, Miryam]</td>
<td>Jesus was loved and supported in his ministry by His mother Mary [in Hebrew, Miryam]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was often rejected by his own people</td>
<td>Jesus was often rejected by His own people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses will give God’s law on the mountain of Sinai: Exodus 20:1-31:18; 34:1-35</td>
<td>Jesus will give the new law from the Mt. of Beatitudes: Matthew chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses spent 40 days fasting on the mountain: 24:18;34:28</td>
<td>Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert wilderness: Matthew 4:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses performs signs/ miracles</td>
<td>Jesus performs signs/miracles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses offered his life for the salvation of his people after the sin of the Golden Calf: Exodus 32:33-33</td>
<td>Jesus offered His life for the salvation of the world: Isaiah 53:12; Romans 5:12; 6:10; 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Colossians 1:19-20; 2:14-15; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses is the prophet of the Old Covenant Church</td>
<td>Jesus is the prophet, priest, and King of a New and everlasting Covenant = the universal Catholic Church [note catholic means universal]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/charts/Typology%20of%20Moses%20and%20Jesus.htm)
Signs and Wonders

“At God’s command, Moses requests of Pharaoh, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness” (Ex 5:1). Moses reiterates, “Let us go, we beg, a three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God” (Ex 5:3). Moses does not ask Pharaoh to release the captives and let them leave Egypt forever, but only for a three-day retreat! This often overlooked detail underscores what is the heart of God’s deliverance of his people. God wanted to take the Israelites out of Egypt, to which they had assimilated in culture and belief, to get Egypt out of his people. Israel wasn’t simply physically enslaved; they were spiritually enslaved. Mere political liberation would not overcome this problem. Recognizing the intent of this original request redirects the whole focus of the Exodus from simply political freedom from Egypt, to freedom’s goal: freedom for a relationship with the one true God. Pharaoh’s response to this request is revealing: “I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

“The God of the Hebrews challenges Pharaoh, “Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son” (Ex 4:22-23). God’s challenge strikes us as harsh, but it must be read in light of the narrative. Exodus opened with Pharaoh killing God’s firstborn son, throwing Israel’s male children into the Nile. Now God is telling Pharaoh, “Let my people go or you will reap in your own family what you have sown in my family.” (Walking with God)

Each plague follows a similar formula: Moses tells Pharaoh that a plague will occur in order that he and the Egyptians may know that the Lord is God and then the plague takes place which strikes down one of the gods of Egypt.

“Their wickedness misled them into silly ideas, so that they worshiped snakes and other disgusting animals, creatures without any powers of reason. Because of this, you punished them with millions of such animals, and taught them that punishment for sin takes the same form as the sin itself.” (Wis. 11:15-16)

With each plague, God punishes little by little so that His mercy may induce them to repentance. Pharaoh though hardens his heart and brings about the final plague, the death of the first-born (in exchange for Pharaoh not letting God’s first-born son out to serve Him).

Exodus 8:26-27 provides an important key to understanding the nature of the sacrifices the Israelites would have to make in order to remove the Egyptian’s religion from their own lives...

“Israel must worship the Lord by sacrificing animals that the Egyptians themselves worship. Such sacrifices would be seen as an act of deicide and would be punishable by death. For this reason, Moses requests a journey at three days’ distance from Egypt. Worship is at the heart of the conflict between Pharaoh and Moses. Israelite worship turns Egyptian idolatry on its head, proving that what Egyptians consider gods are really not gods at all.” (Walking with God)

The Passover event focuses on the Lamb that was sacrificed and its blood which was the means of being saved from death.

“In each of the earlier nine plagues, God himself had brought judgment upon the false gods of Egypt while Israel had watched in silent amazement. Now with the tenth plague, the people of Israel themselves are required to take an active role and
The Egyptian polytheistic religion included the worship of lambs, sheep, and goats; thus, sacrificing a lamb was a crime and a capital crime resulting in death. To save their firstborn sons, the Israelites would have to publicly denounce Egyptian idolatry (killing the lamb by their own hand and smearing the blood on the doorposts for all Egypt to see), an act of renunciation for the sake of liberation. The Israelites are forced to choose whether they will serve (avad) the false gods of Egypt or worship (avad) the God of their fathers. With this sacrifice, God forces Israel to burn its bridges with Egypt; there could be no going back now. (Walking with God)

By celebrating the Passover each year, the people of God would be preparing themselves to understand the death of the Lamb of God:

- The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)
- And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36)
- For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. (1 Cor. 5:7)

**Sinai Covenant**

Perhaps the climax is seen in the Sinai event. Israel escapes from Egypt through the Red Sea. Like Noah’s ark in the waters of the flood, this salvation through the waters of the Red Sea prefigures the New Covenant’s salvation through the waters of baptism. They will eventually spend forty years struggling in the wilderness murmuring against God. Moses later explains why God allowed these struggles:

“God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart … he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna … that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.” (Dt 8:2-3)

“Moses’ sermon gives us insight into what God was doing with Israel in the desert. The goal of the Exodus was not simply freedom from slavery, but freedom for the Israelites to know and serve the Lord with all their heart. The murmuring of Israel, so quick after the signs and wonders worked in Egypt, shows that Israel is far from knowing and trusting God. God knows his children are weak, and in his mercy he provides good things, water from the rock and manna from heaven. These new signs and wonders are given to help strengthen Israel’s faith and trust, that they may know the Lord, not only his mighty power but also his fatherly love (Ex 16:12).” (Walking with God)

After six weeks of travelling they arrive at Mt. Sinai. There at Mt. Sinai, God reveals the Ten Commandments, a continuation of His saving work with the Israelites. The commandments are given in the context of this relationship and thus deal with man’s relationship with God and neighbor.

The covenant of St. Sinai is sealed with blood. There also Moses receives the liturgical ordinances and the mission for the people of Israel to be a priestly people. Thus, leaving the mountain, they are not leaving the presence of God but through the worship and the Tabernacle, God’s presence will be perpetuated in their midst.
“I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. 46 And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.” (Ex. 29:45-46)

It is here at Sinai that God reveals that through both LITURGY and LAW He will draw Israel into an intimate relationship.

“Just as God gave Moses his vocation at the burning bush, now God gives Israel their vocation on this same mountain: Israel is to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). During the Exodus, the firstborns were consecrated to God in priestly service (Nm 3:11-13). Similarly, as God’s firstborn (Ex 4:22), Israel is consecrated for God’s service, which is precisely what the phrase “kingdom of priests” signifies. If Israel is a kingdom of priests, to whom are they called to minister? All the other nations! Abraham was told by God that his descendants (Israel) would be a channel of blessing for all the families of the world (Gn 12:3). Blessing is a priestly prerogative. Israel’s call to be a kingdom of priests means that they are, according to God’s purpose, intended to bring blessing to all nations. Thus, far from calling Israel “in spite of” all the other nations, God is blessing and raising up Israel in order to bring about universal blessing upon all nations. The challenge, however, is in the word “if,” for God promises that Israel will be a kingdom of priests “if” they obey his voice.”

“This liturgical legislation comes at a key point in the story. Now that Israel has received the Torah (law) and the mission to be a priestly people, they will soon leave Mount Sinai to sojourn back to the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the land that God promised Abraham he would give to his descendants once he freed them from the land of slavery (Gn 15). The question thus arises, “In leaving the holy mountain, will Israel be leaving God’s presence?” The liturgical legislation revealed to Moses on the mountaintop answers this question by making clear that the tabernacle—where God will be perpetually present—and the liturgy surrounding it perpetuates God’s presence in the midst of Israel, functioning as the portable mountain of God based on the heavenly “pattern” shown to Moses on the mountain (Ex 25:9, 25:40).” (Walking with God)

**APOSTASY: THE GOLDEN CALF**

While Moses is on the mountain receiving the ordinances, the people’s hearts turn to the false gods they left behind in Egypt. The incident of the Golden Calf becomes a reminder that death is the consequence of covenant infidelity. However, Moses intercedes for his people before God’s wrath is totally unleashed on them. Through this process, Moses discovers a fuller revelation of who God is:

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. (Ex 34:6-7)

“In the face of Israel’s shameful apostasy and betrayal, Moses discovers the depths of God’s merciful love. This verse is one of the most quoted lines in all the writings of the prophets, a line treasured throughout Israel’s history and one that will give hope to a rebellious Israel when she later finds itself under judgment and exile.” (Walking with God)

Only the Levites responded to Moses’ call to rally to the Lord’s side and thus they win a blessing of ordination to be the servants of the Lord in the priestly ministry of the liturgy.
With the tabernacle built, Aaron and his sons consecrated as priests, the cloud covering the tent and the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle, God is now present with His people wherever they go.

“The tabernacle is a portable Garden of Eden where God dwells with his people. After creation, God gave Adam and Eve a law, but they rebelled against him and fell by taking the forbidden fruit. Israel follows in Adam’s footsteps; after receiving the law, Israel transgresses it by worshiping the golden calf. But this is not the end of the story. God is merciful and forgiving, a program of restoration and hope is given, and God promises to dwell in the midst of his sinful people. Thus, the story takes a familiar pattern: creation, fall, and restoration. This is the storyline that will be repeated again and again in Israel’s history.” (Walking with God)

THE DESERT WANDERINGS

The Desert Wanderings picks up the story in the Book of Numbers. As Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins note, “On the surface, Numbers is the dramatic story of runaway slaves crossing a hostile wilderness, but the deeper drama is found in Israel’s struggle to keep from reverting to their former Egyptian way of life and to accept their new identity as the Lord’s holy people.” They describe three acts to the drama:

- Camping at Sinai
- The Travel Narrative
- Torah (Law)

CAMPING AT SINAI

“If Sinai is only a temporary nest, then the time soon comes for the Israelites to leave the nest and journey to their permanent home. First, however, they must learn how to live as God’s people. Israel spends a little over a year at Sinai, hearing God’s further instructions regarding the tabernacle, liturgy, and priesthood, and learning the way of life expected from the people God calls to be holy as he is holy. These instructions are given to Moses on Mount Sinai, after the golden calf incident (Ex 32) but before the departure into the wilderness (Nm 10:11-12) and are recorded in the book of Leviticus. The purpose of Leviticus is to teach Israel the principles of holiness. God’s holy presence amidst a sinful people requires rules governing worship and the sanctuary where God abides. The people receive laws governing their holiness, from kosher foods to sexual purity. The priests and Levites, who administer the liturgy and serve in the sanctuary, are directed to live by a standard of holiness and ritual purity commensurate with their holy station. The point of all these laws is to deal with the difficult situation of a holy God living amidst a less-than-holy people.”

“While the cultic laws, ranging from animal sacrifice to prohibitions against pork, are all focused on the question of holiness, Christian readers are often incapable of appreciating Leviticus and its many regulations because we stand on the other side of the cross. Therefore, an analogy is helpful. One thing in our own day that involves numerous regulations is nuclear waste. Because of the danger posed by nuclear waste, there are reams of rules governing how it is to be stored and moved, and where it can be placed. For those who work with nuclear waste, there are a
multitude of rituals that govern behavior around these unstable substances. Communities located near proposed nuclear disposal sites vehemently oppose them due to the fear of radioactive contamination. But if a new process were invented that could immediately detoxify nuclear waste, it would revolutionize the attitudes and practices surrounding nuclear energy and its byproducts. All the old rules and regulations would no longer be necessary. After a generation or two, people would become so accustomed to the freedom that such a solution would bring that they would not be able to appreciate all the uproar and fear that had surrounded nuclear waste in previous generations. Similarly, before the coming of Christ, who alone can conquer sin, the toxic nature of sin required drastic action to contain it. The law given to Moses spells out the dangers and gives provisional measures to deal with ravages caused by sin. Egregious lawbreakers, those seriously “contaminated” by sin, were to be expelled from the camp of Israel lest they spread the contagion to others. Those with minor “contamination” were to follow regulations for their “purification.” Strict laws guarding the behavior of Israel within the camp were monitored as closely as the heat index within a nuclear plant. And, most of all, the tabernacle was treated with the protective awe and anxiety surrounding a nuclear reactor core; a power with great potential good could prove deadly if those accessing it forgot the rules of engagement. The story of Israel in the wilderness, it must be remembered, takes place before any remedy for sin exists.” *(Walking with God)*

**THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE**

The people soon begin to complain of their misfortunes…they complain of hunger and are fed manna, they complain against the manna and God gives them quails to eat. But with it came plagues. Further complaints are railed against Moses regarding his authority…all within three days distance from Sinai.

“Recall that one year earlier, just three days out from Egypt, Israel also had begun to complain about the food and water and had questioned Moses’ authority, yet their rebellion and murmurings were met with mercy. On the way from Sinai to the Promised Land, however, Israel’s complaining is met with plagues and judgment. Why the change? The difference is found in what happened at Sinai. There, Israel had willingly entered into a covenant with Yahweh, swearing that “all that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Ex 19:8). Having experienced the revelation at Sinai, and having bound themselves in covenant, Israel is held to a higher standard. Faithfulness to this covenant brings abundant blessings, but unfaithfulness also has consequences.” *(Walking with God)*

**TORAH**

“For the generations that follow the apostasies of the golden calf and the Baal of Peor, the book of the Torah par excellence is Deuteronomy. When Moses went up Mount Sinai the first time, God gave Israel the Ten Commandments and made a covenant with Israel. But since then, Israel sinned grievously, not only through their apostasy with the golden calf, but by their repeated rebellion in the desert, and their failure to enter the land. With each failure, God gives additional law (parts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers) to direct Israel’s path. Now forty years later, on the edge of the Promised Land, and after the worship of the Baal of Peor, God reiterates the Ten Commandments (Dt 5), and gives even further laws (Dt 6-26) through Moses because of Israel’s sin. An important characteristic of the instructions from Deuteronomy 6-26 is that they are all given by Moses, and not directly by God. This is why these laws are often called the Law of Moses, or the Book of the
Law. This distinction will be important for St. Paul and the early Christians, when in the New Covenant, the Ten Commandments (which are given by God on Mount Sinai) are retained but other ordinances from Deuteronomy will no longer be binding (such as divorce, animal sacrifice, and kosher laws, for example).

The Jewish understanding of the relationship between law and covenant is important to understand; otherwise, the prominent role of the Torah may be misunderstood as a kind of legalism. As we saw in the Egypt and Exodus period, the Ten Commandments were given in the context of the covenant relationship with God. Likewise, the instructions of Deuteronomy, far from being a book full of legalism, focus on the heart and on love, recalling God’s steadfast love for Israel, and calling Israel to love the Lord in return. It is in Deuteronomy that the most important and popular Jewish prayer is taught, the Shema: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Dt 6:4-5) There is no better summary of the law than this prayer. The word shema, “to hear or listen” (meaning “obey,” which is the putting into action of what one hears) will be a key word that will evoke the covenant and Israel’s call to obey the law given in the covenant.”

“God sets apart his people, giving them the Torah, the Levitical priesthood, and the tabernacle with his very presence. These three things are of tremendous importance for the remaining story of Israel, and they will find their ultimate fulfillment when Christ comes to dwell among us, not in a tabernacle or temple of gold and stone but in our very souls. Jesus Christ will be the new high priest, being the faithful firstborn Son of God, and he will inaugurate the New Covenant and empower his followers with the gift of the Holy Spirit to imitate him in living the law and the beatitudes” (Walking with God)

**Study Questions**

19. What might Moses have learned about God in his encounter, particularly the revelation of God’s name? What does the name of God as revealed to Moses mean for you personally?

20. What are some of the I AMs of Jesus and what does it tell us about Him and our Christian faith? Again, how does that impact your personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ?

21. Read John 6 and describe the relationship between the manna of Exodus and the “bread from heaven” in John. What does it also say about other aspects of Israel’s journey (the tabernacle, the light, the water that came from the rock, etc.)?

22. What symbolism do you find in the exodus and the promised land? What does it mean for you personally? Have you had times where you didn’t want to heed God’s call to you?

23. How is Moses’ intercession for his people prefigure the roles of the saints in our lives?

24. You might not be tempted to erect a golden calf in your living room, but are there other things or ideas or people you give credit for God’s work in your life? Are there other things you put before Him? How can the lessons Israel learned in these early years help you today?

25. How does Moses as leader prefigure the leadership of the Church and the people’s response?
Chapter 4

CONQUEST, JUDGES, AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

In this period, we follow the continuing story of Salvation History by seeing how the Israelites begin to form a nation through the books of Joshua and Judges, culminating with the a covenant renewal and the building of the Temple under David and Solomon in the books of 1 & 2 Samuel and into 1 Kings.

“The Conquest and Judges period follows the continuing story of Scripture in the books of Joshua and Judges. In addition to these narrative books, the supplemental book of Ruth will also be discussed briefly. The period of the Conquest and Judges opens with Israel on the threshold of the Promised Land. A mixture of excitement and fear fills the people: excitement at entering this land flowing with milk and honey, fear at what will be the cost to take possession of the land from its current inhabitants. This story of new beginnings and new ordeals can be divided into two acts, the first covering the book of Joshua, and the second covering the book of Judges.” (Walking with God)

JOSHUA

“What are we to make of the command for the utter destruction of the Canaanite tribes in Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land (Dt 20:16-17)? How can such a mandate, located at the heart of Israel’s Scriptures, be the will of God? Can the God of the Old Testament who commanded “thou shalt not kill”—the God made manifest in Jesus in the New Testament—mandate genocide? If one is to sort out these difficult questions, it is instructive to recall how Jesus himself interpreted other difficult instructions of the Deuteronomic law. For example, although Moses permits divorce, Jesus condemns it in no uncertain terms. When questioned why Moses allowed for it (Dt 24), Jesus responds, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce, but from the beginning it was not so” (Mt 19:8). Notice that Jesus equates the “law of Deuteronomy” (or the “law”) with the “law of Moses” (what Moses allowed) and not with the “law of God.” What is more, Jesus states that at least some of these laws were custom-made for hard hearts. Jesus’ critique of divorce illustrates that the later laws of Deuteronomy 6-26 were not God’s original plan but were concessionary and thus temporary in nature and authority...The Church Fathers saw Deuteronomy as a secondary law code given after the golden calf and therefore representing a “Plan B,” so to speak, for God’s people...Jesus’ critique, however, should not be simplistically reduced to the notion that the New Testament overturns the Old Testament, for Jesus bases his teaching about the indissolubility of marriage on the Old Testament book of Genesis. But,
like the prophet Malachi, who quotes God as saying, “I hate divorce” (Mal 2:16), Jesus recognizes that in Deuteronomy God allowed “laws that are not good” (Ez 20:25) because of Israel’s hardness of heart and attachment to pagan custom and worship. Such laws radically depart from God’s will manifest from the beginning of creation.” (Walking with God)

The important events of the book of Joshua include: a) the crossing of the Jordan, b) Rahab and the battle of Jericho, c) the sin of Achan, and the d) the covenant with Gibeon.

“The book of Joshua closes with two important speeches given by Joshua at the end of his life. Here, Joshua imparts the wisdom of his life and warns Israel of the road ahead. He encourages Israel to be steadfast and loyal to “all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you” (Jos 23:6), i.e., lest Israel call upon the pagan gods of these nations and intermarry with the pagans. Joshua warns them that although Israel now dwells in the land, they dwell there with the remnant of the nations they defeated (Jos 23:12). Their fidelity to God is key to their security, for if they abandon God, he will in turn no longer protect them, and they will fall into the hands of their enemies. Then their enemies will be “a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eye till you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you” (Jos 23:13). Israel, like Adam, is warned that “thorns” await rebellion against God and his law. Adam found his dominion of the land hindered by thorn and thistle; so, too, Israel finds its dominion challenged by the thorn of the pagan nations, a fitting chastisement for disobedience. Joshua concludes his warnings with a reminder of the covenant promises of Deuteronomy (Dt 28). Joshua observes that God has been faithful to all his promises and blessed their covenant obedience. But God’s covenant curses will likewise come true if Israel abandons God and serves false gods.” (Walking with God)

The book of Joshua and Judges are also (like all the Old Testament books) replete with typological references to the Mystery of Christ:

“Jesus [=Joshua] son of Nave, in many ways offers us a figure (typos) of Christ. It was from the time of the crossing of the Jordan that he began to exercise his command of the people: this is why Christ also, having first been baptized, began His public life. The son of Nave established twelve (men) to divide the inheritance: Jesus sent twelve apostles into the whole world as heralds of the truth. He who is the figure saved Rahab the courtesan because she believed; He who is the reality said: ‘The publicans and courtesans will go before you in the kingdom of God.’ The walls of Jericho fell at the mere sound of the trumpets at the time of the type; and because of the word of Jesus: ‘there shall not remain one stone upon a stone,’ – the temple of Jerusalem is fallen before our eyes.” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

JUDGES

With the conquest into Canaan, the Israelites, having been armed with the Law and the Liturgy, learn to rely on God in fulfilling His promises to bring them into the land overflowing with milk and honey. Again, though, will they learn to fully trust and be faithful to God? The period of Judges shows a succession of cycles of victory, sin, enslavement, repentance and deliverance:
“Following Joshua’s generation, “there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel” (Jgs 2:10). Just as Pharaoh did not know Joseph or the Lord, this new generation did not know the Lord and his works. Joshua’s generation, even though they often fell short, fought the war and established a new life in the land, striving to be faithful to the Lord. But they failed at one vital thing: catechizing their children. And the results were devastating… Without faith, the next generation had no identity as the people of God, and so they adopted the identity of the pagan world around them: they “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt” (Jgs 2:11). Instead of “serving” the Lord, Israel serves false idols. The Lord, in return, “sold them into the power of their enemies round about” (Jgs 2:14)" (Walking with God)

The Interlude of the Book of Ruth

“The book of Ruth appears as a supplemental book during the period of the Conquest and Judges, and it is located between Judges and 1 Samuel in the Christian canon of Scripture. The opening line of Ruth sets its story in the time of the judges: “In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land” (Ru 1:1). Famine is listed in Deuteronomy as one of the curses for violating the covenant law, and so Ruth gives us a picture of Israel suffering covenant chastisement for its sin, sins familiar to any reader of Judges. In response to the famine, a man from Bethlehem, Elimelech, moves his wife and two sons east to the land of Moab. Elimelech’s two sons marry Moabite women, a flagrant violation of the Torah’s injunctions against mixed marriages. Not surprisingly, Elimelech and his two sons die, suggesting divine disfavor. This leaves Elimelech’s widowed wife, Naomi, and her two daughters-in-law.

At length, the famine ends, and Naomi heads for home. Ruth, one of her daughters-in-law, refuses to leave Naomi and wants to adopt her people, her land, and, most importantly, Naomi’s God. As they return to Bethlehem in poverty, Ruth gleans in the fields of a rich relative of Naomi’s, a man named Boaz. Ruth proves her worth by her humility and hard work, and catches Boaz’s attention. He ensures that she is treated well as she gleans the barley harvest behind the reapers. Boaz blesses her for her fidelity to Naomi and to God, asking that she be rewarded by the Lord “under whose wings [she has] come to take refuge!” (Ru 2:12). The image of an eagle’s wings, of course, goes back to God’s promise at Sinai. This echo of the Sinai covenant is poignant, because Ruth, a foreigner, shows more fidelity to the covenant
than many native Israelites. Boaz marries Ruth, proclaiming that all the people of Bethlehem know she is “a woman of worth” (Ru 3:11). This same phrase is found in only one other place in Scripture, Proverbs 31:10, describing the ideal wife. In the Jewish canon of Scripture, Ruth follows not Judges but Proverbs, thus highlighting Ruth as the embodiment of the “noble woman.” Ruth and Boaz are blessed with a son whom they name Obed, who will later have a son named Jesse, who will be the father of David. Ruth, a foreigner, will be grafted into the line of David, the line of the future messiah.

Thus the story of the Conquest and Judges, which recounts Israel’s increasing cycle of disobedience, is bookended with the stories of Rahab and Ruth, two foreign women who are faithful to God. While Israel is going after foreign gods, two foreign women forsake the gods of their nations and put their trust in the Lord. Ruth, like Rahab, illustrates that anyone can come to the Lord as long as they put their trust and faith in him alone. The problem posed by Judges—that there is no king—will find its answer in the lineage of these two foreign women. Their virtue and faith leads not simply to King David, but ultimately to the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the Son of David.” (Walking with God)

Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins summarize the significance of the books of Joshua and Judges in this way:

“The story of the Conquest and Judges, recounts Israel’s increasing cycle of disobedience, is bookended with the stories of Rahab and Ruth, two foreign women who are faithful to God. While Israel is going after foreign gods, two foreign women forsake the gods of their nations and put their trust in the Lord... The problem posed by the Judges—that there is no king—will find its answer in the lineage of these two foreign women. Their virtue and faith leads not simply to King David, but ultimately to the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the Son of David.” (Walking with God)

**THE ROYAL KINGDOM**

Let’s remind ourselves of the covenant progression and see now with David the expansion of the covenant from a nation to a kingdom:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Noah</th>
<th>Abraham</th>
<th>Moses</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Tribal Chief</td>
<td>Judge</td>
<td>King</td>
<td>Royal High Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Tribe</td>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>National Kingdom</td>
<td>Universal Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign</td>
<td>Sabbath</td>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>Circumcision</td>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>Throne</td>
<td>Eucharist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The books of Judges ended with the reality that “in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.” With that, the story turns to a more hopeful period, a “golden age,” with the Royal and United Kingdom. The focus in this period is on four key people: Samuel, Saul, David and Solomon.
With Samuel we have a prophet and the last judge over Israel, a prayer answered from his barren mother, a dedicated servant who anoints the first kings of Israel. Saul, promising at first turns to be a tragedy due to his disobedience. David is called a man after God's own heart and is anointed after Saul. He proves to be a model of trust in God, though he also has to deal with the consequences of his own sins. The final figure, Solomon, David's son, is known for his wisdom, riches and honor. But his heart turns away from God and the result is disastrous, for him personally and for the Kingdom of Israel.

**ISRAEL ASKS FOR A “ANOTHER” KING**

“In Samuel’s old age, his sons Joel and Abijah succeed him as judges over Israel. These corrupt men, however, are nothing like their father. The people, perhaps still mindful of the corruption of Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas, gather at Samuel’s hometown of Ramah to make a request that will change the course of Israel’s history forever. They ask for a king to govern them “like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5). This request forces to the surface the question: Does Israel have a king?

Israel does already possess a divine King, “enthroned on the cherubim,” who has bestowed his protection and benefaction upon her. Even the tithes that Israel was called to pay to God were a sign of God’s kingship, since, in Ancient Near Eastern practice, a tithe was the people’s tribute to the king. The people’s request betrays a fundamental problem: God’s people are blind to the fact that God is the King of kings. In asking for a human ruler, Israel rejects God’s Kingship over them (1 Sam 8:7), wanting instead to be “like all the nations.”

God instructs Samuel to warn the people about the consequences of their request, which are emphasized by the fourfold use of the word laqach (“take”) (1 Sam 8:11, 8:13, 8:14, 8:16). An earthly king will require their sons and daughters to support the needs of the monarchy for such things as a fortified army, harvesters, and household servants for the royal court. An earthly sovereign will require tithes in addition to the tithes commanded in the Torah.

Samuel’s warnings are vindicated when the future kings of Israel impose burdens on the people heretofore unknown, and eventually enslave them (like Pharaoh reborn). Only this time, God will not come to their rescue. Even with these warnings, the people God called to be his “special possession among all peoples” and a nation set apart (Ex 19:5-6) wish to exchange that vocation to become “like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5, 20). God gives Israel what they ask for, and although Israel’s monarchy comes from the people’s misguided desires, God will eventually transform the earthly monarchy into an icon of his own kingship, a kingship that will one day issue in the unending reign of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. Ultimately, in Jesus Christ, God will once again be Israel’s King.” (*Walking with God*)

**SAUL’S DOWNFALL**

The tragic end of Saul was largely due to his insecurity, his disobedience and his listening to men rather than God:

“I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed [Hebrew, shema] their voice” (1 Sam 15:24). When we first encountered Saul, he said: “Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin?” (1 Sam 9:21). We might have construed such words to reflect deep
humility. But as we learn more about Saul, a quite different portrait emerges, one of a man plagued by his own insecurity, which he seems to think insurmountable even by God’s grace. The anchor of his identity lies not in his stance before God and the power of God to transform him; rather, it lies in others’ perception of him as a leader. Unlike Moses, who heard the voice of the living God and allowed God to transform him so that he could stand before Pharaoh and lead God’s people, Saul listens to the voice of men. This flaw cost him his future dynasty at Gilgal, now it will cost him the throne in his own lifetime. Samuel announces, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you” (1 Sam 15:28) (Walking with God).

**David**

“Samuel is again called to anoint a future king, and, given the character of the reigning king, he obeys with prudent caution. God sends Samuel to Bethlehem and the house of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, promising to reveal the chosen son. Samuel assumes God has chosen Eliab, Jesse’s eldest son, because of “the height of his stature” (1 Sam 16:7). However, God “rejected” Eliab (1 Sam 16:7), just as he “rejected” Saul as the king of Israel (1 Sam 16:1). This captures a theme that will surface repeatedly in the ensuing narrative: “For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).

After seven of Jesse’s sons are rejected, Jesse’s youngest son, David, is called from the field where he is shepherding the flock. Immediately, God reveals to the aged prophet that this is the chosen one to shepherd God’s people. Samuel anoints David, and the Spirit of the Lord falls mightily on the lad, which is a priestly act in Israelite religion (2 Sam 6:14). When the Ark arrives in Jerusalem, he performs the priestly tasks of making burnt offerings and peace offerings, and even blesses the people “in the name of the Lord of hosts” — a prerogative reserved by the Torah to priests alone (Nm 6:22-26). These actions make it clear that David sees himself as both king and priest—like Melchizedek, the ancient ruler of Salem... in appearing as the new Melchizedek of the new Salem, David points forward to the coming King of kings, another Anointed One descended from Melchizedek’s royal line who will, like him, enter Jerusalem as king and priest—only this King will offer a sacrifice superior to David’s and Melchizedek’s, his body broken for the world and his blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins... With the Ark of the Covenant firmly dwelling in the capital city Jerusalem, “the Lord [gave David] rest from all his enemies round about” (2 Sam 7:1), and David proposes to begin construction of a permanent sanctuary for the Lord. Noble though his desire was, God himself prevents David from building him a “house.” Instead, he promises to build David a “house”—that is, a dynasty—that will endure forever.” (Walking with God)

The new covenant with David is described in 2 Samuel 7:11-16:
“Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. 'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.'"

According to Scott Hahn (Understanding the Scriptures, Didache Series), the main features of the Davidic Covenant can be summarized by seven primary features:

- God gives David a kingdom
- God promises David a dynasty
- The king becomes God's adopted son when he is anointed
- The covenant is unlimited in time and space
- Jerusalem is the spiritual center of the world
- The Temple is the architectural sign of the covenant
- Wisdom literature is the new Torah

Solomon, David's son, ascends to the throne of his father and is characterized by his wisdom and his building of the Temple of Jerusalem. Moses knew that the Tabernacle was temporary and looked towards the future time in which a permanent sanctuary would be built for God:

But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. (Dt. 10:10-11)

The Temple becomes a great symbol of Israel's future redemption in anticipation of the curses that will soon befall them. The exiles will return from captivity in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. and take up the task of rebuilding the Temple. It is the center and primary symbol of their identity in their relationship with God.

“With the Davidic covenant, God's covenant family is expanded from a nation with Moses to a kingdom with David. This is the last major covenant of the Old Testament and extends the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. With the Davidic kingdom, God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of kings is fulfilled. That promise will find its ultimate fulfillment in the New and Everlasting Covenant when Jesus, the son of David and Son of God, is seated at the right hand of the Father in majesty (Mk 16:19)." (Walking with God)

**Solomon**

“As he lies dying, David summons Solomon and gives him a final charge. Mindful that the kingdom depends not on military might or political strategy but on the king's fidelity to God and to his Torah, David solemnly reminds his son to walk in
the ways of God and to keep the commandments given to Israel through Moses: “… Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God … that the Lord may establish his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel’” (1 Kgs 2:2, 4) Here is another reminder that the kingship is a gift and not an absolute right of the sons of David. Should the king fail to obey God, he will be chastised “with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men” (2 Sam 7:14), and his people along with him. This will be key to interpreting the events that will follow in 1 and 2 Kings.”

“With Solomon firmly set upon the Davidic throne, Israel embarks on a brief “golden age” with a king who is remembered for his wisdom and nobility. Perhaps the best snapshot of that nobility appears in 1 Kings 3. God tells Solomon, “Ask what I shall give you” (1 Kgs 3:5), and Solomon requests “an understanding mind” (1 Kgs 3:9) to govern his kingdom well and wisely. Because Solomon asks for wisdom to serve his people, and not riches and honor for himself, God grants Solomon’s request with great pleasure, adding riches and honor besides. The narrator illustrates the fruitfulness of Solomon’s listening heart in the courtroom (1 Kgs 3:16-28), with his choice of officials, in the expansion of his rule, and in his ability to compose proverbs (1 Kgs 4).” (Walking with God)

**THE TEMPLE**

“Moses knew from the outset that the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was a temporary arrangement, and he looked forward to the establishment of a permanent sanctuary in the Promised Land, as Deuteronomy proclaims: “But when you go over the Jordan, and live in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit … then to the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, thither you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present, and all your votive offerings which you vow to the Lord. (Dt 12:10-11)”

“In the Temple of Jerusalem, we find Solomon’s greatest contribution to the history of Israel, the fulfillment of God’s promise to David that his son would build a house for the Lord, and the fulfillment of Moses’ prophetic words uttered so long before. The construction narrative of this massive building project is framed by mention of the assistance given by Hiram, the king of Tyre, at its beginning (1 Kgs 5) and by the visit of the Queen of Sheba at its end (1 Kgs 10:1-13), thus presenting the edifice as a monument to the multinational impact and expansion of the Solomonic years.”

“The Temple becomes an integral, powerful symbol of Israel’s future redemption. Thus, the Jewish exiles, on returning from captivity in Babylon in the sixth century B.C., take up the task of rebuilding it. By the first century A.D., the Temple becomes not only a house of worship but also a rallying point for all Jews concerned about Roman occupation.”

“Shortly after the dedication, Solomon receives a second vision from God (1 Kgs 9:1-9). In it, the Lord assures him that his prayer has been heard and that the Temple has been consecrated as a dwelling place for his Presence. However, should Solomon turn away from the Lord and worship other gods, the people would indeed be cast into exile, and the Temple would be brought down in ruin as a monument to Israel’s disobedience and shame before her pagan neighbors. This solemn message
marks a shift in the story toward the decline of Solomon’s reign and the national chaos that will beset Israel due to her transgression of the covenant.”

“This dark transition was foreshadowed at the very outset of Solomon’s rule by two minor incidents that prove to be growing cancers on Solomon’s reign. First, Solomon enters into a marriage alliance with Egypt. In the Ancient Near East, to forge covenantal bonds—in this case, marriage—required that both parties swear by the names of their gods and invoke them as witnesses. Therefore, Solomon would have been required to call on the names of Egyptian deities. Second, we are told that although Solomon is mindful of the statutes given him by David, he continues to offer sacrifices and burn incense “at the high places” (i.e., Canaanite shrines; 1 Kgs 3:3)... Yet, since God promised that he would not remove his steadfast love from Solomon as he had from Saul (2 Sam 7:15), the sundering of the Davidic kingdom will not take place in his lifetime. His son Rehoboam, however, will be the catalyst for events that plunge Israel into the beginning of a long darkness.” (Walking with God)

**Study Questions**

26. As Israel prepares to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land, Joshua takes over the leadership of God’s people. According to Joshua 1:1-9, what would be the key to his success and theirs?

27. Read Joshua 23-24. What was Joshua’s warning to the leaders? What is the central message of his general address? (Joshua 24)

28. Israel’s conquest and occupation of the Promised Land anticipates the Church’s warfare against the powers of this world and its efforts to establish and spread the Kingdom of God on earth. The apostles Paul and Peter encouraged the early Christians in this battle. Read the following passages from their letters and note what they say about the nature of the battle and of the weapons God gives us to fight it. Relate them to the book of Joshua if you can.

   A. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4
   B. 1 Peter 2:11
   C. 1 Timothy 6:11-12
   D. Ephesians 6:11-18

29. In Judges 6-7 is the story of Gideon. What do these two chapters tell you about the ways of God in the midst of seemingly inevitable defeat?

30. Human nature is no different today than it was then. All too easily we can find ourselves slipping into the same cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, and silence. What do we have available to us in the New Covenant that Israel did not have to help us break the cycle? See John 20:23.

31. Judges paints a dark picture of unfaithfulness and moral and religious decline of this period when, were it not for God’s covenant faithfulness, Israel might have been swallowed up by the pagan nations. All was not dark however. The book of Ruth, written during this time, pro-
vided a welcome counterpoint to the closing chapters of Judges. Read it. How is Ruth’s story the total opposite of the one told in Judges.

32. Are you looking to anyone other than God to be a king in your life? Are you having trouble trusting in Him, and trying to take things into your own hands the way Saul did?

33. Even though God punished David for his sin, He did not withdraw the kingdom. When Saul disobeyed God, the kingdom was taken from him. Why the difference? (see 2 Samuel 12:15-23, Psalm 51)

34. What is the relationship between the Tabernacle, the Temple, Christ, the Church, and individual believers? (see also Matthew 12:6, 26:61 and 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19)

35. How could the wisest man in the world fail so miserably? What turned his heart away from God? What does this say about our own vulnerability to error? How can we avoid Solomon’s error?
Chapter 5

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM AND EXILE

Study Guide – Week 5 Readings and Questions
Walking with God – pp. 163-200 (optional)

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM follows our continuing story of Salvation History in the books of 1 Kings (Ch. 11-22) and 2 Kings. During this period, many of the Prophetic books come onto the scene.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

The three main sections in this period are the division of the kingdom, the resulting northern kingdom and the resulting southern kingdom. The essence of the division can be described as a return to the Golden Calf.

“Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.” (1 Kgs 11:29-33)

And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.” Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!” And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (1 Kgs. 12:28-29)

“It is only here, after Solomon’s death, that the narrative shows clearly just how harsh Solomon’s rule was to the people of Israel; Solomon ended his reign a tyrant. King Solomon, the son of David, ruled by placing a heavy yoke and hard service upon his people. Jesus, in contrast, will call all to come to himself, for his yoke will be easy (Mt 11:29-30).” (Walking with God)
The following table shows the difference between the two kingdoms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Divided Kingdom</th>
<th>North (ten tribes)</th>
<th>South (two tribes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Nations</td>
<td>“Israel”</td>
<td>“Judah”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Kings</td>
<td>Various Lines</td>
<td>David’s Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Capitals</td>
<td>Samaria</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Liturgies</td>
<td>Two Shrines</td>
<td>One Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Priesthoods</td>
<td>Man-made; Priests from any tribe</td>
<td>God-given; Priests from the tribe of Levi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following map is helpful:

“Jeroboam was exalted by God and blessed with kingship. However, he led the ten tribes to forsake worship according to God’s law in the Torah, centered in the Temple in Jerusalem. God allows the separation of the ten tribes from Judah due to the oppression they suffered at the hands of taskmasters of the Davidic king, reminiscent of their ancestors’ oppression at the hands of the taskmasters of Pharaoh. But it is one thing to revolt against the Davidic throne, and it is quite another to revolt against the Temple representing God.

God tells Jeroboam, “… [You] have done evil above all that were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and molten images, provoking me to anger, and have cast me behind your back” (1 Kgs 14:9). The phrase “provoking me to anger” is likely an echo of the song Moses makes Israel memorize as the conclusion of their covenant with God (Dt 32). In this song, God warns the second generation, who were about to enter the Promised Land with Joshua, not to provoke him to anger as their fathers did with their apostasy in worshiping the golden calf. The song warns that such provocation will lead to drastic punishment, and as they
make God jealous by going after the gods of the nations, God in turn will stir them to jealousy by giving the blessing of the land to the nations.

This context fits well with the rest of Ahijah’s message to Jeroboam, as he warns: “The Lord will smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and root up Israel out of this good land which he gave to their fathers, and scatter them beyond the Euphrates because they have made their Asherim, provoking the Lord to anger.” (1 Kgs 14:15)

The covenant warning memorialized in Moses’ song, a song that underscores how Israel should never again provoke the Lord to jealousy by the infidelity of idolatry as they did with the golden calf, is echoed by Ahijah’s message to evoke the root cause of Israel’s impending exile—idolatrous infidelity. Since Jeroboam bears much of the blame, his house will be violently overthrown. Ahijah’s message echoes Deuteronomy in calling Palestine “the good land,” as well as Joshua, who warns that if Israel turns back to pagan idolatry, the Lord will drive Israel off this “good land” (Jos 23:15). For Israel to return in their hearts to Egyptian idolatry means that they will lose the good land that God has given them.” (Walking with God)

**THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF “ISRAEL”**

At this period, the stories of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha are important to read and study. But even with such prophets to call the people back to God, Israel’s heart remained cold and hardened. Meanwhile, a great threat was looming as the Assyrians were quickly expanding their empire. For Israel, the fear of Assyria was their known policy of resettlement whereby they would, as an insurance policy against rebellion, uproot the whole population of a conquered province and send them off to live in a foreign land.

In 722 B.C. the Assyrians captured Samaria and conquered Israel. They removed many Israelites and scattered them in many other areas and brought in five other pagan tribes to live in Israel. These pagans tribes would intermarry with the few remaining Israelites and the people resulting from such marriages would be called Samaritans (2 Kgs 17).

**ELIJAH AND Mt. CARMEl**

“In his prayer, Elijah asks God to answer so that the people will “know” that he is God. This continues the theme of “knowing” from the Exodus. Now Elijah, a new Moses, works mighty signs to bring Israel herself back to faith in Yahweh. Similarly, the theme of the “name,” particularly the name of God, is found throughout the Carmel story, as prophets on both sides call upon the names of their gods. Just as God revealed his name to Moses at the Exodus and in that name Moses performed mighty deeds, now, Elijah performs mighty deeds in the name of the God who revealed himself at the burning bush. This name is still powerful, and those who call on it are still answered.

The rest of the story of Elijah—and of his protégé and successor, Elisha—is full of miraculous deeds of might. The only other time in Israel’s ancient history that contains such an abundance of miraculous stories is the Exodus, when Yahweh competed for Israel’s loyalty with the gods of Egypt, directing Moses’ mighty signs against the Egyptian deities with the pedagogical aim of teaching both Egypt and Israel to “know” the one true God. God manifested his power so that his people would come to know him as true and all other gods as false.
The same is true for the Elijah and Elisha narratives. These prophets perform signs that show Canaanite religion as utterly empty and powerless. The drought Elijah announces is directed against Baal, who is worshiped as the storm god who brings rain. The failure of the prophets of Baal at Carmel is preceded by three years of Baal’s failure to end the drought, forcing Ahab to search for the prophet of Yahweh, the God he has forsaken. Only Elijah’s prayer, answered by the fire of Yahweh, brings rain to Israel. The storm that follows the sacrifice of the prophets of Baal illustrates Yahweh’s majesty and Baal’s impotence. Indeed, Baal, who was known as the god of fire and lightning, cannot generate a single spark for his 450 prophets on Carmel, while Yahweh’s fire consumes the sacrifice and the water surrounding it. All the mighty deeds of Elijah and Elisha are, likewise, aimed at underscoring the failure of Baal and the Canaanite cult, and illustrating that the only one who can provide for Israel is Yahweh.” (Walking with God)

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF “JUDAH”

Sadly, what could be said for the decline of the Northern Kingdom could also be said for the Southern Kingdom. Consisting of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin along with the priestly tribe of Levi, the kings of Judah follow the pattern of those in the North with the exception that in the South there are a handful of kings (e.g. Amaziah, Hezekiah and Josiah) who do “what is right in the eyes of the Lord” and bring about some kind of reform. The reforms are short-lived and the cycle is one of corruption, renewal, followed by even worse corruption, seemingly intensifying as the story unfolds.

Another difference between the two kingdoms is that in the South the dynasty remains from the line of David while in the North there was constant change often a result of bloody battles.

The Babylonians, like the Assyrians, used deportation as a policy with their captives. Major deportations took place in 605, 597, and, finally, in 587 B.C., the year Jerusalem fell. Those who survived the Babylonian conquest will begin to be referred to as “Jews,” derived from “Judah,” the name of the Southern Kingdom – thus including those from the tribes of Benjamin and Levi who made up part of “Judah.”

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

“During Zedekiah’s reign, Judah remains under Babylonian domination and therefore must pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. The people of Judah long to be free, and a spirit of rebellion grows as patriotic Jews chafe under foreign occupation. This is the context within which one must read Jeremiah’s words and deeds during the reign of Zedekiah. For once again, Jeremiah is called upon to give a very unpopular message to God’s people: accept Babylonian rule.

God promises to gather Israel from all the nations where they will be scattered and bring them back to the Promised Land. The restoration oracles of Jeremiah (Jer 30-33), in which the land purchase is the central action, also describe God’s promise to make a new covenant with Israel and restore the fortunes of the land. The image of land is a striking one, for God promises to “plant” the exiles in the land with faithfulness. Planting is one of the key images of Jeremiah’s prophecies, and a reminder of the divine description of his mission: “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth … to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” (Jer 1:9-10)
This is a fitting outline of Jeremiah's career, for while the majority of his message is of woe and doom, a key part speaks of restoration and hope. Jeremiah describes the coming devastation as a sort of reversal of creation: the land will once again be "waste [formless] and void" (Jer 4:23). For Jeremiah, Israel's sins stripped away all the good of the land and made it a desolate wilderness; sin, in other words, brings about a reversal of creation, a kind of "de-creation."

As with the story of the Fall, there is the hint of hope with Jeremiah's words of building and planting. Jeremiah's land purchase shows that beyond the destruction and exile, there will be a time of return and rebuilding. A new Exodus and a new creation will follow exile and de-creation. God will replant the land made desolate by sin when he forgives his people and makes for them a new covenant. When will this planting take place? It will happen when a sower goes out to sow seed, a story that will bring about the restoration of Israel's lost kingdom. (Walking with God)

**Exile**

"The Lord desired to bless his people in this land of milk and honey, but such blessing was to be the full flowering of covenant faithfulness, the life-giving fruit of covenant love. When God's people proved unfaithful, the consequences were just as Moses had warned: many perished in, or were taken from, the sacred soil of the Promised Land.

Exile slowly removed the blindness of God's people to their sin, allowing them to recognize that their unfaithfulness to the covenant law was the cause of their current tragic situation: "O Lord, the great and terrible God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from thy commandments and ordinances ... we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed thy law and turned aside, refusing to obey thy voice. And the curse and oath which are written in the law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. (Dn 9:4-5, 9-12)

With God's people exiled from the Promised Land, and the Temple burned to the ground, covenant sacrificial worship could no longer be offered. As a result, the law and, in particular, the dietary requirements, became the focus of fidelity for God's people. In a sense, the kitchen table became the altar of sacrifice, and many who were striving anew to be faithful were willing to offer their lives rather than transgress God's law and eat what was unclean.

While the captivity and exile of Israel and Judah marked the greatest chastisement for their covenant betrayal, this period is also the backdrop to some of the most hope-filled promises uttered to God's people. Promises for a new covenant written on the hearts of God's people—of dry bones brought back to life and of a restoration of God's people and the land—kept a glimmer of hope alive in the hearts of the faithful remnant" (Walking with God)

**The Northern Kingdom**

"Following the fall of Samaria in 722 B. C. to Sargon II of Assyria, many Israelites were deported and resettled in various locations throughout the Assyrian empire. After defeating a tribe or nation, the Assyrians would divide and relocate the peo-
ples they had conquered, isolating them in strange lands and thereby quelling the chance of any further insurgencies and rebellion. As a result, many Israelites were resettled to such places as Habor along the Gozan River and Halah near the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, as well as the region of Media on the eastern frontiers of the empire, east of the Tigris River (2 Kgs 17:6). Assyrian records show that 27,290 Israelites were displaced by Sargon II to these and other places. (Walking with God)

**The Southern Kingdom**

“A century and a half after the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria, the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians. Like the Assyrians, the Babylonians induced psychological terror and disorientation in their captives through mass deportations. Major deportations took place in 605, 597, and, finally, in 587 B.C., the year Jerusalem fell. Daniel and Ezekiel were victims of this Babylonian practice, and their life and ministry provide valuable insights into the southern experience of exile in Babylon.

With the Northern Kingdom of Israel assimilated and “lost,” the remnant of God’s people who survived the Babylonian conquest will begin to be referred to as the “Jews,” derived from “Judah,” the name of the Southern Kingdom. Thus, the “Jews” include not only those from the tribe of Judah, but also those of the tribe of Benjamin and the priests of Levi who made up the Southern Kingdom and survived the exile to Babylon. (Walking with God)

**Daniel and the Three Holy Youth**

“As a young man, Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first deportation in 605 B.C. The stories of his time there are well known, particularly his good health despite a diet of only vegetables and water (Dn 1) and his ordeal of being cast into a lions’ den (Dn 6), among other stories. But many who read his story miss the significance of the events of Daniel’s life. Rather than a simple collection of miraculous tales about the prophet’s survival, the narrative can be seen as a microcosm of Judah’s experience in exile. In short, Daniel’s story exemplifies God’s faithfulness to Judah during their time of trial. Judah, like Daniel, was shielded by grace amid her life under pagan rule. Like Daniel, the faithful remnant of Judahites in Babylon refrained from food sacrificed to idols, kept the Torah zealously, and continued to pray and hope for the deliverance of their nation. Like Daniel, they were kept safe by God’s protection, even in the “lions’ den” of Babylon among the pagan “beasts.” (The depiction of pagans as beasts and God’s people as human beings has a venerable history in the Bible and is, in fact, an important key to the symbolism in Daniel.)

The story of the three young men who were thrown into the furnace for refusing to worship the gods of Babylon (Dn 3) works in a similar way. By their lives, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael (whose Babylonian names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) embodied the lives of the faithful of Judah, kept safe in the furnace of trial that was the land of their exile.

The fidelity of the three young men, and that of many Jews during the Exile, would not have been possible except for God’s grace. Daniel makes it clear that the learning, skill, and wisdom of the three young men, as well as Daniel’s gift of understanding visions and the favor and compassion they each received in the sight of the pagan chiefs, were all gifts given by God. Thus, the song of the three young men in the fiery furnace recounts the people’s sinfulness, but blesses God for his mercy.” (Walking with God)
This is a time of purification for the Israelites. But God’s promises will be fulfilled and He will save His people and the kingdom of Babylon will not last forever. The story of the Exile, along with the deep desire to return, is a theme replayed in Salvation History:

“From the Fall, when Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden of Eden, to the experience of exile and return that characterize the lives Abraham, Moses and David, to the great and terrible experience of exile and return suffered during the Babylonian captivity, the story of home lost and regained is a prominent theme chronicled throughout the Old Testament. This theme is reflected in the New Testament as well, from the story of the Prodigal Son, who experiences his own exile and return, even to Jesus Himself, who is exiled beyond the city walls to die on the cross, only to return in glory. With His death, resurrection and ascension, and the sending of His Spirit, Jesus reverses the pattern of exile that began with Adam and Eve, ending humanity’s long exile from the Presence of God.” (Walking with God)

**Study Questions**

36. What was God’s message to Israel through Elijah? (see 1 Kings18:16-39)

37. How did Elijah and the other prophets find strength for their often dangerous missions?

38. Are there ways you are unfaithful to God? Meditate on God’s love for you as expressed in Hosea 11 and 14.

39. Read Jeremiah 34. What reason does Jeremiah give for the impending judgment?

40. What is our personal exile? Hint: Meditate on Psalm 136 in the 12th Hour Agpeya… “By the rivers of Babylon…”

41. What is significant about the faith of the Three Holy Youth in Daniel 3:17-18? How can you apply that to your own life?

42. Have you ever heard anyone condemn the Church because it holds itself up to be true? Tolerance in America has degenerated into condemnation of any religion that doesn’t give others equal weight. How do you handle charges of intolerance? Is there anything in the pressures Israel and Judah faced during the Divided Kingdom, or in the messages of the prophets, that can help you to stand strong?
Chapter 6

THE RETURN AND THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

THE PERIOD OF Return picks up and follows the story of Salvation History with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Though Babylon was a great kingdom and Nebuchadnezzar a mighty conqueror, his successors did not govern very well and eventually would be overtaken by the Persians. Cyrus, the Persian king, inspired loyalty by allowing the conquered people to keep their local customs and worship in their own ways. To the Jews in exile he became a liberator after the first year:

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. (Ezr. 1:2-4)

While he didn’t force anyone to return, he gave permission to all to decide for themselves and even took ownership of rebuilding the Temple. The return doesn’t take place all at once but over a period of several decades. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe three key “waves” which are identified with a key figure and a corresponding rebuilding:

- Zerubabel and the Rebuilding of the Temple
- Ezra and the “Rebuilding” of the People in the way of the Torah
- Nehemiah and the Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem

ZERUBABEL AND THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

“It is only fitting that the arrival of the exiles to their homeland should culminate in the celebration of the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem (Ezr 3:4). This feast was originally given to Israel to commemorate the giving of the law and God’s providence during her forty-year wandering in the desert; the returned exiles now make it their own in an unprecedented way. They, too, have experienced divine redemption from their foreign captors; they, too, have made their own long journey back to the Promised Land.
And yet, something is incomplete about this new Exodus. When the foundation stone of the new Temple is laid in the second year of the return, amidst all the shouts of praise and thanksgiving, there is mourning. Those who once saw the splendor and glory of the first Temple (built by Solomon) mourn the modesty of the second Temple and “[weep] with a loud voice” (Ezr 3:12). So great is their lamentation, that the people cannot distinguish this weeping from the joyful shout of those rejoicing on that day. This is a powerful indication in the narrative of the gap between the current state of affairs and the future that the prophets had foretold. Not only will the second Temple be less resplendent than Solomon’s, it certainly will not be the glorious Temple spoken of by Ezekiel during the exile in Babylon (Ez 40–48). The new Exodus has begun, but it strains toward a further fulfillment.” (Walking with God)

**REDEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE**

“The people celebrate the dedication of the completed Temple with joy. It is noteworthy that among the sacrifices offered for the dedication were sin offerings of twelve he-goats, one for each tribe of Israel (Ezr 6:17). In this manner, the narrator highlights the people’s beginning acknowledgment that the cause of their exile lay in their sin against the covenant. (Although this theme was given great emphasis by the prophets, Israel had the habit of ignoring it.) Furthermore, the people exhibit a renewed commitment to the Mosaic covenant, restoring the organization of priests and Levites that David earlier had established for the service of God.

Having dedicated the Temple, the returned exiles celebrate with joy the feast of the Passover. If the Exile and Return is a new Exodus, then the Passover, the feast of the Exodus par excellence, would have a prominent place in the mind of the exiles (Ezr 6:19–22). Like their ancestors, the exiles have been redeemed from pagan oppression (albeit in an unexpected way) so that, like the Feast of Booths they celebrated earlier, the Passover becomes their own in a new way. What is more, this Passover is kept not only by the returned exiles, but also by “every one who had joined them and separated himself from the pollutions of the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel” (Ezr 6:21), that is to say, those descended from the northern tribes who renounced pagan syncretism and recommitted themselves to the one true God of their ancestors. Here, the narrative presses toward the restoration of all of the twelve tribes (symbolized earlier by the sacrifice of twelve he-goats). Not in vain is the expression “the God of Israel” (not “the God of the Jews”), used twice in this short account (Ezr 6:21, 22). The Lord is in the business of extending his restoration to the whole people of Israel, who have been scattered by their sin.” (Walking with God)

**EZRA AND THE TEACHING OF THE TORAH**

“The man who spearheads the second wave of return is a priest named Ezra, the son of Seraiah, descended from the line of Aaron the High Priest of ancient Israel and “a scribe skilled in the law of Moses” (Ezr 7:6). The narrator is unambiguous about Ezra’s sense of mission: He had “set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezr 7:10). As a priest and an ardent student of the Torah, Ezra was prepared by the Lord to rebuild the lives of God’s people both in worship and in the study of God’s word.” (Walking with God)
Nehemiah and the Rebuilding of the City Walls

“Nehemiah, who in captivity served as cupbearer to the king, leads the third wave of return. Upon hearing of the disrepair of the Holy City, he immediately gives himself to mourning, fasting, and prayer. This deep awareness of the nearness of God and his dependence on him is one of the outstanding features of the man. Before the face of God, Nehemiah readily takes up solidarity with his people and confesses their corporate unfaithfulness to the covenant:

“We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word which you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your dispersed be under the farthest skies, I will gather them thence and bring them to the place which I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.” (Neh 1:7-11)

Nehemiah’s understanding of the phenomena of captivity and exile is shaped by Deuteronomy. Faced with the consequences of Israel’s infidelity toward God, Nehemiah does not seek to absolve himself of personal responsibility but rather identifies himself with the wretchedness of his own people. In “reminding” the Lord that the people belong to him (“your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed”), Nehemiah enters the story as another Moses, who in like fashion interceded for Israel after the great apostasy at Sinai (Ex 33:12-16).

Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem in the year 444 B.C., more than one hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar razed the city. The Temple has been rebuilt and the people, led by Ezra, have begun reforming their lives according to the Torah. Upon his arrival, Nehemiah believes it is his mission to rebuild another crucial dimension of the people’s identity—the city’s walls and gates that have been destroyed and burned by fire. In ancient times, walls protected a city from trespassers and invaders, thus securing peace of mind and stability of life for those who lived within. They also gave definition and identity to the city and its inhabitants. The deteriorated walls and gates meant that, as yet, there was a blur between “Jerusalem” and “not Jerusalem”—an ambiguity that carried over into Jewish identity, for whom the Holy City was the center of history, the home of the kings, and the throne of the Great King.” (Walking with God)

These three phases represent a “new exodus” and carried with it the significance of the first exodus, including the place of the Passover and the movement once again to a restoration of the tribes of Israel scattered abroad. This restoration which the Prophets look to with promise is fully recognized in the age of the Messiah.

“At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,” says the LORD.” (Zeph. 3:19-20)

“Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations— their kings led in triumphal procession.” (Is. 60:11)
“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech. 9:9)

THE REVOLT OF THE MACCABEES

The period of the Maccabean revolt covers the final part of the Old Testament narrative of Salvation History as recounted in 1 and 2 Maccabees.

Alexander “the Great”, son of Philip II, succeeded as king of Macedon in 336 B.C. During his eastern expansion, Alexander defeated the Persian ruler Darius III in 333 B.C. and basically ended Persian rule in Palestine. With this, Judah enters into a new phase in their turbulent history.

Soon, the world was “Hellenized” (the word comes from Hellenes – what the Greeks called themselves). Greek was the new universal and international language of business, along with the string influence of Greek education and art. Alexander died relatively young and without a single successor, his empire was divided three ways:

- Greece
- Egypt
- Old Persian Empire

“When Alexander’s empire was divided among his generals after his death, Palestine was a jewel fought over by the new, smaller, neighboring kingdoms. Initially, the Jews in Palestine found freedom to continue their religious practices under the rule of Ptolemy, who reigned in Egypt over what was the southern portion of Alexander’s empire. However, when the northern Seleucid kingdom conquered the Ptolemies and took control of Palestine, the fate of the Jews changed drastically. The Seleucid king desecrated the Temple and demanded that the Jews forsake their belief in the one true God, worship pagan gods, and eat foods forbidden by the Torah.

With the threat of death hanging over the Jews, the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees recount the different responses of God’s people to the harsh situation in which they found themselves. Some of the Jews gave in to the king’s commands, forsaking the Torah and the covenant, while others, led by the Maccabees, revolted against the oppressive Seleucid ruler, taking back the Temple and rededicating it to God’s service. Still others laid down their lives in martyrdom, a witness to their fidelity and trust in God, offering themselves as a sacrifice that cried out to heaven for God’s mercy.” (Walking with God)

Palestine was first ruled by the Ptolemies of Egypt, then later by the Seleucids of the Old Persian Empire. The Seleucid king Antiochus IV was ambitious in making his whole empire Greek, Greek culture and Greek religion. Therefore, tensions with the Jews were inevitable. Attempts to bring Greek worship to the Temple were met with shock:

“This intensified the evil in an intolerable and utterly disgusting way. The Gentiles filled the temple with debauchery and revelry; they amused themselves with prostitutes and had intercourse with women even in the sacred court. They also brought into the temple things that were forbidden, so that the altar was covered with abominable offerings prohibited by the laws. A man could not keep the sab-
bath or celebrate the traditional feasts, nor even admit that he was a Jew.” (2 Macc. 6:3-6)

“Intensifying his push for Hellenization, Antiochus IV desecrated the Temple by trespassing into its sanctuary, plundering its gold and silver, and erecting an altar to the god Zeus in its precincts. Antiochus also destroyed copies of the Torah and sentenced to death anyone who was found to possess a copy of the Torah or observed its teachings. Antiochus ordered the total suppression of Temple sacrifices, Sabbath observance, and the practice of circumcision. In place of these, shrines and altars to the Greek gods were to be set up, and the Jews were to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals to the pagan deities. Jews were forced to eat food sacrificed to Greek gods and take part in festal processions held in honor of these deities (2 Mc 6:7-8). Those who were caught observing the Sabbath were burned (2 Mc 6:11). Families who were found to have circumcised their infants were put to death; as for the circumcised children, these were hung from their mothers’ necks (1 Mc 1:61 f.; 2 Mc 6:10). Antiochus saw to it that the walls of Jerusalem were torn down, and he established a citadel in Jerusalem and filled it with troops to ensure that the Jews kept his orders. In doing these things the Seleucid king attacked the three central symbols of Judah’s return to the land: the Temple that had been rebuilt under Zerubbabel, the Torah that had been the focus of Ezra’s ministry, and the walls that had been reconstructed under Nehemiah.

All this was part of the king’s program to obliterate Jewish distinctiveness and assimilate the people of Judah into the unified dynasty for which Antiochus Epiphanes longed. Thus, the considerable religious freedom the Jews found under the Ptolemies disappeared under the Seleucid’s aggressive promotion of Hellenistic culture as a means of unifying their diverse subjects. The resulting clash with the traditional symbols of Jewish identity created a volatile atmosphere ripe for revolt” (Walking with God)

**JUDAS MACCABEUS**

Resistance was steady but unorganized. A priest named Mattathias and his five sons organized a concerted resistance. Trusting in God they fought back taking bits if territory at a time, especially under Judas Maccabeus, the most talented among them.

“But Mattathias answered in a loud voice: ‘Although all the Gentiles in the king’s realm obey him, so that each forsakes the religion of his fathers and consents to the king’s orders, yet I and my sons and my kinsmen will keep to the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the commandments. We will not obey the words of the king nor depart from our religion in the slightest degree.’” (1 Macc. 2:19-22)

They succeeded in being a force to be reckoned with. Making alliances with Sparta and Rome, they gained victory and 125 years before Christ, an independent Israel was restored.

**Hellenized Jews**

“Beginning with John (grandson of Judas Maccabeus), the Hasmonean dynasty acquired the features of a Hellenistic regime. This could already be seen in John’s taking of a Greek regnal name, Hyrcanus (Hykanos). With the gradual Hellenization under John and his successors, Jews who were zealous for Torah observance fell
out of favor with the Hasmonean priest-kings. Tensions began to mount between
the Pharisaic movement, made up of precisely this kind of Jewish believer, and the
Hasmonean rulers, who favored a movement of Hellenizing Jews known as the
Sadducees.” (Walking with God)

**Martyrdom**

“When we take a step back and consider the events of the Maccabean Revolt, the
legacy left by Mattathias and his sons was an epic of courageous resistance to the
terrorizing Seleucid monarchs. So revered were these men that many future gen-
erations of Jews bestowed the names of the Maccabees (John, Simon, Judas, etc.)
on their own sons. However, the movement was itself characterized by extreme
violence, at times even directed against the Maccabees’ own countrymen. Further-
more, it is painfully ironic that a revolt ignited by zeal for the Torah and defiance
against Greek culture should result in a dynasty whose rulers eventually used the
power they had won to Hellenize the Jewish people. In the end, the Hasmoneans
became very much like the very people they fought.

Could there have been an alternative to violent resistance? With subtlety, the book
of 2 Maccabees seems to suggest just this. Sin rarely leaves good options, and in the
case of the Maccabean period, the options were to kill or be killed. Mattathias and
his sons took the first path and were commended as heroes in both the Maccabean
histories. Nevertheless, 2 Maccabees offers us a snapshot of the second alternative
requiring equal—and sometimes greater—courage: the path of martyrdom.

The martyrs did not see their subjugation to Antiochus IV as a consequence of their
political weakness per se, but rather as a result of their unfaithfulness to the co-
ventant. Despite the attempts of the pagan rulers to undermine the Jews’ fidelity to the
Torah that Ezra had worked so tirelessly to reestablish, many Jews chose to submit
to torture and death rather than to commit apostasy. These martyrs lived a life of
fidelity to the covenant and its laws, and like Daniel and countless others before
them, they confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers, begging God’s mercy.

There was a higher road to redeem the nation, and it was the path of martyrdom.
Although Mattathias and his sons did not choose it, 2 Maccabees shows a path of
redemptive suffering in people like Eleazar and the mother and her sons, which
transformed the destiny of Israel in a pivotal way and, ironically, gave the Mac-
cabean Revolt its success.

In his own time, Jesus called his fellow countrymen to a similar martyrdom. Faced
with another pagan oppressor in the form of Rome, he issued this summons for
revolution:

“Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to
him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have
your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from
you.” (Mt 5:39-42)

In fact, for Jesus, the only way to the renewal of Israel lay in the act of embracing the
supreme threat of Roman violence in his time—death by crucifixion.

Not only do the martyrs during the time of the Maccabees foreshadow Christ’s
own suffering, but they also foreshadow the courage and suffering of his mother,
the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is not hard to imagine that during the events of Good
Friday, Mary might have often recalled the noble spirit of the woman from 2 Maccabees 7, whose heart was broken having to watch the cruel torture and death suffered by her seven sons—but who was still able to encourage her sons to be faithful to God’s will and to hope in God’s ability to raise them from the dead. Mary’s heart, pierced even deeper, fulfills even more perfectly this mother’s love, courage, and fidelity.” (Walking with God)

But, was this the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies? What about restoring the king under David’s line? In order to answer these questions, we need to fast forward to the time of the New Testament to the small town of Bethlehem…

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

43. The book of Esther fits between the first and second returns. It gives us a window into the lives of those who chose to remain in Persia. Did God forsake the people left behind in exile, or is He faithful yet?

44. Have you ever had an experience where you strayed from the Lord, repented, and returned to Him? What rebuilding did you need to do?

45. Read 2 Maccabees 12:38-46. What does Judas Maccabeus do on behalf of those who died? What does the Church make of the practice of offering prayers for the dead?

46. Think about the pressures hellenization placed on devout Jews to stifle their faith. Do you see any parallel in the spirit of the world today? What influences in today’s society are attempting to desecrate your life or home, and how are you putting up a fight?

47. What connection can you make between martyrdom and the spread of the Kingdom? How is the witness of our own Coptic heritage in this regards?

48. During this period there is a tremendous influence of various competing cultures on the people of God…how can we learn from this in our own circumstances?
“In this period, Scripture’s story reaches its climax and fulfillment as God’s only Son, Jesus Christ, ushers in a worldwide blessing that opens God’s covenant family to all people. As we close the Old Testament and turn to open the New Testament, it is easy to think we are finishing one book and moving on to an altogether new story with its own characters, themes, and plot. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Even though there will be new characters and even new themes in the New Testament, the same plot that began back in Genesis stretches into and through the life of Christ and his Church. The New Testament must, therefore, be read in light of the Old, and the Old Testament story finds its climax and fulfillment in the New. All of God’s words and actions, his promises and covenants, his words through the prophets, will find their “yes” in his Son, Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1:20).

The life of Jesus will divide this period into its four acts. Act one describes the historical setting into which the new Davidic king is born. Act two describes Jesus’ public ministry and key aspects of Jesus teaching throughout Judea and Galilee. Act three focuses on Jesus’ passion and death, which climaxes the story of Israel. Act four recounts Jesus’ resurrection and his encounter with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.” (Walking with God)

**A KING IS BORN**

**AUGUSTUS**

“In 63 B.C., the Roman general Pompey conquered Palestine, putting Israel once again under foreign occupation. Rome was the fourth Gentile nation to rule over Israel since the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 587 B.C. As the fourth of Daniel’s beasts, Rome was to be the Jews’ worst oppressor, but Rome’s rule also brought hope, for the fourth beast marked the last pagan tyranny before the long-awaited messiah vindicated God’s people (Dn 2, 7).

Not long after Pompey returns to Rome, another Roman general, Julius Caesar, takes his veteran 13th Legion across the Rubicon and into the city of Rome, sparking a civil war that transforms the Roman Republic into an autocratic empire. Julius’ victories are short-lived, as he is betrayed by his friend Marcus Brutus and a group of senators attempting to reestablish the Republic, on the Ides of March (March 15th) in the year 44 B.C. But Julius Caesar’s heir and adopted son, Octavian, later named Augustus, quickly
rises to power and defeats Julius’ enemies. Through a series of civil wars, he takes total control of the empire, ushering in the famous Pax Romana, an age of Roman prosperity and peace.

Caesar Augustus proposes legislation to a reluctant Roman Senate, declaring Julius to be a god, Divus Iulius, after which Augustus declares that if his father was a god, then Augustus was divi filius, “son of god.” Temples quickly arise throughout the Roman Empire for the worship of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus, and Caesar Augustus puts forth a massive propaganda campaign supporting the imperial cult and thus Roman rule. The birthday of Caesar Augustus was celebrated as “good news” to the world, for he was the bringer of peace, the savior of the world who ended the terrible political volatility of Rome and ushered in a time of unrivaled unification and prosperity. The term “gospel” in the Roman world had Caesar as its subject, and it told the story of Caesar’s rule as the hope of humanity and the source of all good and unity. Of course, it was Rome that was made prosperous, and peace came by the violent imposition of Roman power, most graphically illustrated by the brutal imposition of crucifixion for any who rebelled.” (Walking with God)

**HEROD THE GREAT**

“For the Jews, the only thing worse than Augustus’ blasphemous claims of divinity was the tyrant he set over them to keep them at peace by the point of the sword while taxing them into poverty for the wealth of Caesar and his empire. Herod the Great, a Roman client king, ruled the Jews with an iron fist, from Judea to Galilee. No one but the emperor possessed more wealth and engendered more fear than Herod, who was perhaps the greatest builder and businessman of the first century. Herod dedicated three cities to Caesar Augustus, where he built temples for the imperial cult: Caesarea Maritime, Caesarea Philippi, and the renamed ancient capital of Samaria, Caesarea. Herod built palaces for himself that were unrivaled in beauty and luxury, with large swimming pools, hot tubs, sculptures, frescoes, and the finest architecture of the time.

The one thing Herod did not possess was mercy. He was so ruthless that Augustus once quipped that it was safer to be Herod’s pig than his son (“pig” and “son” rhyme in Greek, and kosher laws prohibited the eating of pork). Herod had his two most beloved sons and his favorite wife killed out of envy and paranoia, and he killed many who questioned his leadership or appeared to be a threat to his rule. Once one understands Herod’s perilous combination of ruthless power matched with boundless paranoia, Matthew’s account of Herod slaughtering the innocent children of Bethlehem is all too consistent with his other murderous actions.” (Walking with God)

**JESUS BIRTH**

“Seventy years after Israel’s exile to Babylon, the prophet Daniel prayed for the end of Gentile rule and Israel’s exile. Gabriel appears to Daniel, who is praying at the hour of the Temple sacrifice, and tells Daniel that his prayer has been heard (this is the same time of day and the same message that Gabriel brings to Zechariah when he is ministering in the Temple [Lk 1:11]). Gabriel announces to Daniel that Israel’s exile will last not seventy years, but seventy times seven years; the era of Gentile rule, the time of the four beasts (pagan nations), will last 490 years (Dn 9:21-24). But Gabriel also announces that a messiah (anointed king) will come. The fact that Gabriel, of all the angels, is now sent to Zechariah and then Mary indicates that the
time of exile is now over, and the time for the anointed messiah is at hand! Gabriel comes at the outset and ending of the 490 years.

Gabriel describes the child that Mary will bear as royal and messianic: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32-33). Jesus fulfills both the great covenant oath made to David that one of his line will rule forever and be God's own Son (2 Sam 7) and also the covenant promise that Abraham's name will be made great with a royal dynasty (Gn 12:1-3; 17:6). This royal proclamation is confirmed when Elizabeth greets Mary, the new Ark of the Covenant bearing God's presence conceived in her womb, and exclaims: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Lk 1:42-43). This passage only makes sense in the context of the Davidic Kingdom of old, in which the mother of the king—the gebirah—was queen over Israel. Elizabeth greets Mary with the respect due to the queen of Israel, praising the new Davidic king and his queen mother.

The simple story of flight to Egypt recalls an earlier journey to Egypt when Jacob's son Joseph provided refuge for the sons of Israel in Egypt. Now St. Joseph brings Jesus, the new Israel, into the refuge of Egypt. No words or deeds of the infant Jesus are recorded in this brief story, but his itinerary hints that signs and wonders are soon to follow.” (Walking with God)

**Jesus’ Public Ministry**

**A New Wilderness**

“Jesus, whose name recalls that of Joshua, is baptized by John, crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land like Joshua of old. At his baptism, the Holy Spirit comes out of the heavens and descends upon Jesus in a bodily form like a dove, recalling Noah's salvation through water and the dove's return with a sign of the new creation after the flood. Then a voice from heaven proclaims, “Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased” (Lk 3:22). Jesus was not baptized because he needed to repent of sin; rather, as St. Peter says, Jesus' baptism was his anointing (Acts 4:27; “anointed one” is the English translation of the Hebrew, messiah, and the Greek, christos). When David was anointed king, he was filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Sam 16:13). The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus and the voice of God affirming that Jesus is his beloved Son recalls God's words to David in 2 Samuel 7:14: “I will be his father, and he will be my son.” Jesus’ baptism anoints him King over Israel; he is the new David who will reign forever.

After his baptism, Jesus sets off for a forty-day retreat in the Judean wilderness. Led by the Spirit, Jesus fasts and prays, and at the end he is tested by the devil. The number forty evokes Israel's forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, where they also were led by the Spirit. Jesus’ fasting is reminiscent of Moses' forty-day fast on Mount Sinai. But above all, the three tests Satan uses to tempt Jesus echo the testing of Israel in the wilderness. In response to each of the devil's temptations, the gospel of Matthew details Jesus quoting Deuteronomy, in which Moses recounts Israel's failure in the wilderness and its spiritual lessons (Mt 4:4, 4:7, 4:10, and Dt 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13, respectively).

Jesus is not only a new Moses; he is the new Israel. Precisely where God's firstborn son Israel (Ex 4:22) stumbled in the wilderness, Jesus is faithful; the vocation and
storyline of Israel finds its long-awaited fulfillment, in the person of Jesus, God’s faithful firstborn Son.” (Walking with God)

A NEW KINGDOM

“After forty days in the wilderness, Jesus travels through Galilee proclaiming, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). Jesus’ message makes the bold claim that Israel’s long suffering is coming to an end and that her prophetic stories of hope are at long last being realized as he establishes his kingdom. Jesus is not simply a moral reformer teaching people how to be good. Moral reformation is part of Jesus’ message, but Jesus’ moral teaching is always tied to the transcendent truth that the kingdom of God is at hand, a truth that requires a wholehearted response from those who hear Jesus. All of Jesus’ preaching and teaching throughout Galilee is focused upon the good news of God’s kingdom. This is at the forefront of the Our Father and its petition “thy kingdom come” (Mt 6:10).” (Walking with God)

NEW MOSES, NEW LAW

“Many of Jesus’ words and deeds show him to be a new Moses (Dt 18:15). At one point after Jesus leaves Nazareth, he goes up into the hills and prays all night, recalling Moses’ going up Mount Sinai to be in the presence of God. Just as Moses gives the law at Mount Sinai, Jesus gives the new law in the Sermon on the Mount. In this new torah, Jesus gives the “beatitudes,” which in Greek means “blessings.” As Genesis made clear, the story of the patriarchs and Israel has been a search for the blessing. This new law is the royal road to the new blessing, the universal blessing that Jesus brings.” (Walking with God)

TABLE FELLOWSHIP

“An amazingly controversial feature of Jesus’ ministry is his table fellowship with sinners and the outcast. By eating meals with sinners and tax collectors, Jesus shows that he is preparing for a covenant feast to which everyone will be welcome, and this deeply angers the Pharisees. Luke describes one such encounter when “the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus]” and the Pharisees and scribes incredulously responded, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Lk 15:1-2).

Jesus, in eating with sinners and tax collectors, is acting like the father in the parable (of the prodigal son). He is taking in the lost and celebrating their return. The tax collectors, sinners, and even Gentiles are coming back to the Father after a long period of disobedience, exile, and isolation. Just as the elder brother refuses to celebrate the return of his younger brother and tries to exclude him from the family, so also the Pharisees want to keep others out of the kingdom. Jesus ends the story of the Prodigal Son abruptly, neglecting to tell us whether or not the elder brother attends the feast to celebrate the return of his brother. Just as the story is open-ended, Jesus is extending an open invitation to the Pharisees and the scribes to come in and to celebrate the return of their lost brothers and sisters with the Father.” (Walking with God)

New Ministers
“At the outset of his public ministry, Jesus chooses twelve apostles, pointing to his kingdom building plans. The prophets foretold that at Israel’s restoration God would re-gather the twelve tribes. Jesus announces the restoration of the kingdom and selects twelve apostles, appointing one of these as prime minister, thereby re-gathering Israel around her King. Like King David before him, who had three chief leaders (2 Sam 23:8), Jesus selects an inner group of three, Peter, James, and John. Jesus also chooses and sends out seventy disciples (Lk 10:1). The table of nations, the family genealogy of the descendants of Noah’s three sons, numbered seventy descendants in Genesis 10. Jewish tradition saw the number seventy thus representing the nations of the world, and so Jesus’ choice of seventy points to the global mission he plans, one that will go beyond the mission of the Twelve to Israel. Additionally, just as Moses selected an inner group of three (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu) and seventy elders when the Old Covenant was established between God and the twelve tribes of Israel, Jesus gathers the twelve, three, and seventy as he establishes the kingdom of God and its New Covenant.” (Walking with God)

**JESUS’ PASSION AND DEATH**

**PALM SUNDAY**

“Roughly one-fourth of all the gospel text focuses on the seventy-two-hour period of the Passion narrative, which is the climax both of the gospels and of Israel’s story. Just before entering Jerusalem, Jesus tells a story about a king returning to his kingdom, rewarding the faithful and punishing the unfaithful (Lk 19:12-27). Luke includes this parable in his gospel to prepare for the true King’s return.

Jesus, the true King, comes to Jerusalem riding upon a donkey. The people “began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice … saying, ’Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’” (Lk 19:37-38). The people recite a psalm used for the enthronement of kings (Ps 118:26), recognizing that Jesus is claiming Davidic kingship, just as Solomon did when he rode upon a donkey into Jerusalem (1 Kgs 1). Jesus’ disciples rejoice to see the Davidic heir who they anticipate will restore the political kingdom of Israel and vanquish her oppressors.” (Walking with God)

**THE PASSOVER**

“Jesus chooses the time of the Passover (Lk 22:1) as the moment in which to come to Jerusalem and die for his people. During the Passover feast, the people were to eat unleavened bread, remembering the Israelites’ hurried flight from Egypt, and they were to kill and eat an unblemished, male lamb, recalling the sacrificed lambs whose blood protected Israel’s firstborns from death. The Passover was the greatest feast celebrated in Israel, as it commemorated the most important event in the history of Israel, the Exodus (Ex 12). Jesus takes on the meaning of this feast and transforms it into something even greater. Jesus, the “Lamb of God” as John the Baptist proclaimed (Jn 1:36), offers himself as the new Passover lamb of his new Exodus. He who is the “Bread of Life” (Jn 6:48) offers the bread and wine of the Passover, transforming them into his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28). As Moses lifted up the serpent to free rebellious Israel from the bite of the adder, so the Son of Man will be lifted up on the cross (Jn 3:14) to deliver the rebellious human race from their fall to the serpent’s temptation in the Garden of Eden. Just
as the sacrifice and blood of the lamb set Israel free from Egyptian bondage, so will Jesus conquer sin and death and free all mankind from the shackles of sin.

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus celebrates his Last Supper with his apostles. During the meal Jesus gives thanks to God (Mt 26:27). Even before his suffering and death, Jesus offers thanksgiving, trusting in the Father for his deliverance from death, a deliverance that will come mightily in the resurrection. This first Eucharist, and Jesus’ passion, is re-presented in each Mass, where Christians are called to join the offering of their own lives to Christ’s offering and to give thanks for their deliverance from sin. Just as the manna in the desert sustained the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings, so the bread of Christ’s Body in the Eucharist sustains Christians as they journey to the Promised Land of heaven.” (Walking with God)

**THE GREAT “YES” OF CHRIST**

“St. Paul says that “all the promises of God find their Yes in [Christ]” (2 Cor 1:20). All that God promised to Abraham and Israel is fulfilled in Christ. In the great drama of salvation, the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ are the climax, the zenith. It is in this Person that the whole story of Scripture finds its “Yes.” Jesus, through his life, fulfills the Scriptures of Israel, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (Lk 24:27). As Jesus himself said to his disciples on the road to Emmaus, “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:26)” (Walking with God)

**JESUS’ RESURRECTION**

“The story of Jesus’ resurrection takes place on a particular day of the week, the “first day of the week, at early dawn” (Lk 24:1). The Church Fathers understood that because of Jesus’ victory over death, a new age had dawned and therefore the resurrection marked the “first day” of the new creation. This seems to be suggested by John, who emphasizes that Jesus’ tomb is in a garden (Jn 19:41), recalling the first creation’s Garden of Eden.

The goal of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is not a mere intellectual appreciation that Christ is the fulfillment of the story of salvation but that we might believe and have life in Jesus’ name (Jn 20:31). Jesus desires that we participate in this new life that he won for us on the cross. Thus, Jesus tells the disciples, including those he walked with at Emmaus—now that they have recognized him and understand how Scripture’s story comes to its full meaning in his death and resurrection—that “you are witnesses of these things” (Lk 24:48). We, too, who are traveling on our own road to Emmaus in studying the Scriptures, are addressed by these words of our Lord—we, too, are witnesses of the work of God in Christ.

Jesus tells his disciples that they are to wait in Jerusalem “until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49). This is precisely how Acts of the Apostles begins, with the coming of Pentecost and the mission of the Church. To this mission and its beginnings we now turn.” (Walking with God)

**THE CHURCH**

“If the cross is the coronation of Jesus as the messianic king, and if Jesus’ resurrection marks the momentous beginnings of a new creation, then the story of Jesus’ kingship needs a kingdom, and the first day of the new creation can only mean
more work lies ahead. Who becomes a king without intending to rule and build a kingdom? What does the first day of a new creation mean if not the tilling of creation’s garden so that it bears much fruit? This is precisely the story that the Acts of the Apostles intends to tell. Through his Church, Jesus extends his kingdom to the end of the earth, and all who are baptized into Christ are made new creations bearing the abundant fruit of life in the Holy Spirit.”

“Luke begins Acts by reminding Theophilus that in his earlier book (i.e., the gospel of Luke), he related “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1; emphasis added). This short statement highlights Luke's understanding that the story of Jesus in the gospels continues in the life of the Church. Indeed, a careful reading of Acts reveals that the stories of Peter and Paul contain many important parallels to the story of Jesus. In writing his two works, Luke communicated what he learned from Paul—namely, that the life of Jesus is embodied and continued in the Church, his Body.” (Walking with God)

**PENTECOST**

“Under the Old Covenant, the feast of Pentecost celebrated God’s revelation of the Torah fifty days after the Passover, where God manifested himself in fire and thunder before Israel, who were gathered at the base of Mount Sinai. Now, during the first Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection and ascension, the house of God is filled with a great wind, and all the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit manifested as tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4). Pentecost celebrated the gift of the law, which was the center of Judaism. Now, the Holy Spirit is poured out and will become the center and source of life for the new Israel. This event transforms the feast of Pentecost.”

“This miraculous gift of tongues is a profound sign that recalls the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. Because of sin, humanity was divided and communication disrupted by diverse languages. Now, with the manifestation of God's Holy Spirit, people from different nations all hear and understand Peter’s proclamation of Jesus. With Pentecost, Babel begins to be reversed, and God begins to re-gather humanity into his “catholic” (i.e., universal) family. The scattered and divided family of Adam, to whom God promised to give worldwide blessing through Abraham’s descendants, is being united in the New Adam, Jesus Christ, through the pouring out of the Spirit, marking the beginning of the new creation and the continued fulfillment of God’s promises.

Luke began his gospel with the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary so that Jesus was conceived in her womb. He now begins the Acts of the Apostles with the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary and the disciples, giving birth to the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Just as Jesus went forth from the Jordan River anointed in the Holy Spirit, manifested in the form of a dove, his disciples now go forth from Pentecost empowered and baptized in the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that empowered Jesus to perform mighty deeds and healings likewise empowers the apostles.” (Walking with God)

**THE APOSTLE PAUL**

“As Saul sits blinded by the light of Christ, he begins to grasp a deeper revelation of who Jesus is, an insight that profoundly shapes Paul's understanding of the Church. Reflecting on Jesus’ question, “Why do you persecute me?” Saul realizes that Jesus identifies himself with his disciples. This realization infuses Saul’s understanding of the mystical meaning of baptism, as he will later write to the Romans,
“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (Rom 6:3-5)

Baptism binds the Christian to Christ in a deep and mystical union, one St. Paul often refers to as being “in Christ” (Rom 6:11, 8:1; Gal 2:4).

This identification between Christ and the Christian as a result of baptism, such that what happens to a disciple of Jesus can be said to happen to Jesus himself, is something that Paul (Saul) will teach the early Christians under the description of the Church as the Body of Christ. For Paul, this is no mere metaphor; it is a sacramental and metaphysical reality. Paul will teach the Corinthians that there should be no divisions (literally, schisms) among them since they are the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12). Interestingly, Paul first recounts that the Corinthians receive Jesus’ body and blood in the Eucharist (1 Cor 11) before he teaches that they are the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12). The point is simple but profound: the unity between the Christian and Christ is sacramental, stemming from both baptism and Eucharist, which are at the heart of being the Body of Christ, the Church.” (Walking with God)

CONQUERING FOR THE KINGDOM

“Augustus claimed to usher in a new era, a golden age. Several decades later, the emperor Nero claimed to embody this age and built the largest palace known to Rome, calling it his golden palace. Desiring to outdo Augustus in glory, Nero wrote his own tragic epic poem entitled “Burning of Troy.” Unfortunately, Nero releases this poem on the fateful day of July 19th, A.D. 64, the day a horrible fire breaks out in Rome, burning ten of the fourteen regions of the city. Nero, who it seems was behind the fire, sought to burn down what he considered a shabby and ill-designed city so that he could rebuild and rename it Neropolis, the city of Nero. Word of this gets out, however, and social unrest quickly grows. Nero, who needed a scapegoat, finds one in the young and little understood Christian movement. Nero blames the burning of Rome on the Christians, who claim a different gospel and Lord, and begins a horrific persecution.

While Acts of the Apostles ends without detailing Peter’s and Paul’s deaths, Christian tradition has passed on how Peter and Paul were caught up in Nero’s persecution and executed on the same day. According to Christian tradition, Peter asked to be crucified upside down, not being worthy to die just as his Lord had. Because Paul’s Roman citizenship did not permit his crucifixion, he was beheaded. In a prophetic inspiration, several years before they suffered Nero’s cruel persecution, Paul wrote to the church in Rome, proclaiming,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, “For thy sake we are being killed all the daylong; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Rom 8:35-37)

The Greek word for “conquer” or “victory” is nike. If you take the tour beneath St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, down in the first-century catacombs where Peter’s tomb was discovered, you can see Christian graffiti written close to where Peter’s body was buried, and among the graffiti is a word written in Greek, nike. The Christians recognized that Peter, Paul, the martyrs, and all who lived in fidelity to Christ are
the ones who conquered. By their deeds and their blood, they conquered the paganism and hatred of the empire and became the seed for a new Rome that would swear allegiance to the true Lord of all, Jesus Christ. Augustus was correct; a new age had begun, a golden age founded on the rock of Peter with Jesus Christ as its cornerstone and built up by God's grace throughout the world in a global reach the Caesars could never have imagined.

While this final period of the story of Scripture recounted in the Acts of the Apostles draws to a close, God's story does not. It looks forward, as is clear in the book of Revelation, to the time when the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven and all that began anew in Christ Jesus will be fully realized. As history works towards that glorious moment, God calls each of us, just as he called Abraham, Moses, Ruth, David, Mary, Peter, and Paul, to say “yes” to his invitation to enter into his covenant and take up our role in his story as witnesses to Jesus Christ.” (Walking with God)
**STUDY QUESTIONS**

49. Review Luke 1:26-38. Is there anything here that makes you think that at last we have a “new Eve” - the woman who does what Eve failed to do?


51. What kind of authority did Jesus invest in his twelve apostles as he reconstructed the kingdom around himself?
   A. Matthew 18:18-20
   B. John 20:21-23
   C. Luke 10:18-20 (Think back to Genesis 3:15. How are they sharing in Christ's mission?)
   D. Matthew 16:13-20

52. Read the following passages that deal with the kingdom of God. Luke 13:22-30; 14:15-24; 17:20-21 and Matthew 25:31-46. Where is the kingdom? Who is invited? Who will get in?

53. Put yourself into the story of the prodigal son. Think about the inheritance you have in Christ. Are you squandering your inheritance?

54. Christ’s Passion begins in a garden. Describe the struggle Jesus is going through. In what sense is Jesus’ struggle here similar to that faced by Adam and Eve? (Genesis 3)

55. From the beginning of this study, we have seen how person after person faced a test; “Can you trust God?” Based on what you know now, can you trust the Father? On what do you base your trust?


57. Review Acts 10. Describe the vision that came to Peter. What did it mean? Read Matthew 15:11 and 15:19-20. How did Jesus prepare the way for this new kind of thought? How did Peter respond to the vision?

58. How do the lives of the apostles and early believers give witness to the new life they have in Christ? What is the reason? Is this new life evident in you?

59. Emmanuel means “God with us.” Meditate on what ways God is with us through the coming of His Son…think in terms of your personal life and the sacramental life of the Church.

MESSIANIC FULFILLMENT AND THE CHURCH