

In the Beginning, God ...



Encounters with God

Bringing Order ... Releasing Life

(A 7 week devotional study of Genesis – Deuteronomy)

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In the Beginning God

Encounters with God

(Genesis to Deuteronomy)

Topics:

Week 1: *In the Beginning God ...* (Genesis 1:1 – 11:32)

- **Keys to interpretation**
- **Creation and the Fall**

**Week 2: *Will the Covenant stand in the light of our sin & deceit?*
(Genesis 12:1 - 48:22)**

- **Abraham**
- **Isaac**
- **Jacob**
- **Joseph**

**Week 3: *The Oppressed Set Free God's mighty Deliverance*
(Exodus 1:1 – 18:27)**

**Week 4: *Entering into the Covenant of Grace*
(Exodus19:1- 40:38)**

**Week 5: *Living in Covenant ... The Path to prevent Amnesia*
(Leviticus – Numbers 1:1-9:23)**

Week 6: *Walking with God ...* (Numbers 9:1- Deuteronomy 5:33)

Week 7: *The Pathway to Blessing.* (Deuteronomy 6:1-34:12)

Biblical Quotations in this seven week study are taken from the NIV Translation

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INTRODUCTION

As you read through this series, take time to sit with God each day ...inviting the Holy Spirit to open the scriptures to you. Come on a journey of discovery as you meet with the God who spoke this world into existence and who seeks to walk with us in intimacy and friendship.

I have included this introduction to help bridge the gap between our 21st Century culture interests and mindset and that of the Biblical writers living in the ancient world 3 millennia ago. The Biblical writers write out of a deep experience of God experienced in historical settings very different from our own. They bring to the writing a distinctly Hebrew culture interests and worldview.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE? Our answer to this question determines the way we read it.

ISSUES THAT INFLUENCE OUR INTERPRETATION

A) 21ST CENTURY WESTERN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

When we come to the bible we tend to read it according to our cultural perspective and look for it to answer our questions. We often ask questions that were far from biblical writers mind questions the writer was not asking, and not intending. eg What was the light before the Sun ...or who did Cain marry ... surely not his sister?)

We want to put things in boxes ... define ... categorize ... We expect a literal interpretation. We ask How more than Why. We have a strong focus on the individual and are asking how it affects them more than seeing the wider impact.

By way of contrast the more we can read from a Hebrew mindset the more our argumentative questions seem irrelevant.

B) THE HEBREW MINDSET.

The Hebrew writers see God at work in the events of everyday life - the socio-political arena for example.

While the scientific (Greek) mind may probe into what God is like, the Hebrew writer approaches the question of God at a much more personal level. It is always assumed that God exists. The reader/hearer of the bible is continually invited to believe.

The Greek mindset sets out to be logical and definitive ... often it deals abstractly with an issue. The attributes of God are defined as being:

ALL POWERFUL / ALL KNOWING / ALL WISE

The Hebrew concept, on the other hand, is very personal.

'Lord you are my ROCK and my fortress, a very present help in time of trouble

Listed below are some of the features of Hebrew mindset that will significantly make a difference to our reading of the scripture.

- a) **The Biblical expression is concrete not abstract** (a story rather than an essay.)
- the verbs that are usedparticularly their tenses
 - the selection and ordering of material ...why were these particular aspects of the story included and what significance does the ordering of the material have?
 - pictorial language eg Noah shut into the ark ... Gen 7:16;
- b) **Dramatic..** The bible is written in SUCH a way as to **heighten** the sense of drama, & colour (Middle Eastern Culture eg. Job 42:10-17 or Gen 22:6;)

This has the effect of **inviting us to become PERSONALLY involved.**
Reading/ Hearing is not just an intellectual exercise. We are right there watching ... participating!

- c) **The Hebrew mind is asking 'why' more than 'how'**
- d) **God acts and intervenes in History. ... This is where He reveals Himself.**
- e) **There is a stress on Community Solidarity..... We are part of something much larger than ourselves and our own needs, interests and welfare.**

B. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE LITERATURE

The Scriptures were originally written to be read aloud Not many copies ... read by the scribes publicly rather than studied privately at home.

- 1) **Oral not written:**
- This necessitated the use of **pictorial** language-
eg Revelation 21:10-23; Ecclesiastics 12:1-7
 - **To emphasize a point the authors could use repetition and built Memory aids into the structure** - Gen 1: 1-31
- 2) **Authors built in Word Plays & humour to add colour.**
- 3) **Through the Bible there are many different types of literature ... it is essentially a library of faith literature written over a millennium or more**
- Poetry / History / Drama / Song / Legal / Story
- 4) **Faith Literature** - Designed to build faith of a particular community.
- 5) **Some understanding of the historical / grammatical and contextual framework is vital for sound interpretation.**

DAY 1: WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16

Reflect on what Paul writes here He has a very high view of the inspiration and power of the scripture.

- *God Breathed*
- *Useful for teaching, ... training in righteousness*
- *So that we may be **thoroughly** equipped for every good work.*

The claim of the Prophet, Isaiah, was that: *When God speaks, His word does not return to Him without accomplishing that for which it was sent, (Isaiah 55:8-11)*

Presuppositions:

- God has inspired this book and designed it to be a standard through which He communicates to us. It reveals what God is like, who we are, and how God deals with people.
- It is the Story of our origins.
- It provides the foundation for our faith.
- In reading and hearing it's message we can encounter God and that encounter has the Power to change our lives.
- The scriptures challenge & shape our values, attitudes, actions and thoughts, our understanding of life and the world.

DAY 2: “IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED “ (Genesis 1:1- 2:4)

In the beginning, God ... This is where our story begins ... the story of creation the universe, humanity, sin and redemption. Here in the first 5 books *The Torah* ... we find the wonder of Covenant and the roots of the doctrine of grace.

Genesis is divided into 2 sections

1. Primordial History (Chapters 1-11)

This begins with the powerful Word of the Sovereign King, Creator of the Universe and the issue of why the world is the way that it is, including the formation and dispersal of the nations.

2. The story of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and their covenant and their encounters with God)

The earth was without form and empty ... a chaos....in darkness...but hovering over the waters is the Spirit of God. What will happen ...This is a situation pregnant with possibility. What will God do?

God speaks and brings order, (form), and life, as he separates seas from skies / land etc and then through divine command brings life to sea and land.

And God called the The emphasis here falls not on naming but on calling into being and fixing in place. (Ordering the day etc. in a certain way.)

The creation story itself conveys the picture of a God who exercises His Authority to bring:

- Light into darkness
- Order/structure into a world of Chaos (*the earth was formless*)
- Life into emptiness / barrenness (*the earth was empty*)

So often darkness ...chaos ...emptiness / futility is a very apt description of our lives until we come under His authority and allow Him to bring His Light, His Order His Life into our situation.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Close your eyes and picture the Spirit hovering over the surface of the deep.

See the darkness ...the chaos and now watch what happens as God exercises His authority and speaks ...Let there be light!

Consider now your life ...are there places of chaos / darkness

Are there places of emptiness?

In the quietness invite the Holy Spirit to hover over these places and allow God to speak into them His Light

DAY 3: “IN THE BEGINNING GOD *CREATED* “ (Genesis 1:1- 2:4)

The tendency here is to attempt to fit the structure of Genesis 1 into an evolutionary framework or argue about the science. Before doing so, however, seek to catch the flow of the narrative without imposing our modern questions and mindsets on the text.

To aid this, make notes on the following:

- 1) What words and phrases are repeated in the telling of the story?
- 2) Identify the creative activity for each day
- 3) What is the final assessment of God as He surveyed what He had made?

Note the following structure:

- **There are 3 days of Separation ... ie 3 days of ordering / structuring followed by**
- **3 days of Populationie 3 days of filling the emptiness & creating life**
- **then, a day of Celebration in which God rests from His work.**

This structure once recognized is easily remembered and repeated...and so the original hearers are able to carry the story with them, just as we would a nursery rhyme.

Points emphasized by repetition

- **Power and Authority of God** The Sovereign Lord. ... He is the Great King whose word is instantly carried out. This is repeated over and over again.
- **Everything has meaning and Purpose** *and God saw that it was good.*
The term 'good', points to the marvellous design and order in creation.
Finally, when completed, **the creation was absolutely perfect in its design** and ordering. (Vs 31) *It was very good !*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Meditate on the Power and Sovereign Majesty of God portrayed in this account. What is God saying to you today regarding His Power & Majesty and the underlying goodness of His creation?

Write notes on what strikes you about Creation ...it's beauty ...it's design.

How do you celebrate Creation?

In the Beginning God

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DAY 4: Creation is made by Him, for Him.

Read through Colossians 1:15-20

Hold together carries the concept of all things finding their proper place meaning and purpose in the creation ... held in place by the sovereign power and authority of our great Creator.

Consider the concept that the creation was made by Him and for Him and that in Him all things holds together and journal your thoughts

DAY 5: MADE IN THE *IMAGE OF GOD* (Genesis 1: 26-28)

Humanity is made in the *image of God* Both male and female.
There are at least two concepts in understanding what is meant by 'image'.

1. bearing His likeness**2. being His representative**

- Meditate on what Paul means when he speaks of Jesus as the '*visible likeness of the invisible God*' in **Colossians 1:15-20**
- We could contemplate, the apparent unique capacities of humanity. Our sense of fulfilment, our capacity to appreciate the wonder and beauty of the world around us, our creativity, our capacity to love, to forgive etc
- *Gerhard von Rad* writes in his commentary on Genesis.

*"Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire ... so now is placed on earth, God's image. He is God's representative summoned to **maintain and enforce God's claim to dominion over the earth.**"* p 60

- **The creation of mankind is the climax of creation.**

From the way in which the account of Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 moves to a climax as humanity is created on the sixth day the hearer is to see that we are the crown of God's creation.

This is even more explicit in the Hebrew because *Bara*, a special word used only to designate God's creative activity, occurs three times in Genesis 1:27 while only being used in vs 1 (as an introduction) and vs 21 where God creates the great creatures of the sea..

The use of *bara* three times in the space of two lines indicates to the audience that a climax is reached with the creation of humanity. This conveys the concept that God is involved more intimately and intensively than in the earlier creative work. This marks humanity as something very special indeed.

Personal Application:

Reflect on the different ways you bear the image of God.

In your conversation with God today ...talk through and consider in what ways as His representative you can make a difference in your family / workplace / community?

For further thought:

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HUMANITY GIVEN IN CREATION.

- * Be fruitful and multiply (filling the earth An earth no longer empty)
- * Subdue the earth/ cultivate and keep it (Gen 2:15) ...
(An earth that now has structure and is no longer chaos)

To subdue and rule conveys the sense of governing as God's representative ...It implies ordering, nurturing, preserving not abusing or destroying.

The responsibility of humanity to fill the earth, to subdue it, to dress, till and keep it and to exercise dominion raises important issues relating to conservation and the exploitation of resources and the question of whether there should be any limitations applied to scientific and biological research and the use of technology.

THE POSITIVE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE.

The insistence in Genesis that this world has been brought into being by God and that it was created perfect in design and ordering, suggests that LIFE is to be embraced as a gift from the Father. This will include eating, drinking and making love.

Further, the creative abilities of humanity are expressed in the production of material possessions and through various art forms and recreational activity. These are not evil in themselves. Rather it is what we do with them and our attitudes that bring heartache and suffering and ultimately God's opposition to our destructive life choices.

DAY 6: WHY ARE WE HERE? (Genesis 2:5 - 2: 25)



Genesis answers through two different but complementary stories.

WHO ARE WE?

<u>GENESIS 1:1 – 2:4</u>	<u>GENESIS 2:5-25</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men and women are the Climax of creation. • The creation is prepared for them – a gift in which they are to live. • Male and female made in the image of God. • God is intimately & intensively involved in our creation (Genesis 1:26-27 & Psalm 139). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are the Centre of Creation – the man was made before the plants and animals. • Around Him and for Him the creation is made as a place of delight. (Eden means delight). • Molded from the clay of the earth, yet sharing the very breath of God. Molded by God’s own hand (like a potter). • God is intimately concerned with our well-being – <i>“it is not good for the man to be alone”</i>.

Genesis 3:8-9 provides a behind-the-scenes picture of God’s usual practice of walking with the man and the woman **in the cool of the evening**. Here we have a concrete picture of the relationship of peace and intimacy between God and His people.

This is what life is meant to be like.

MEDITATION:

Close your eyes and picture yourself walking with God as if it were the cool of the evening. What is He saying to you?

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- Humanity is given the privilege and responsibility of caring for and ruling over the creation as God's special representative.
- *Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over every living thing.*
- To walk with God (as it were) in the cool of the evening as a **special companion**.

POINTS EMPHASISED BY THE PICTURE LANGUAGE OF GEN 2:5 - 2: 25

- **Picture of God's intimate involvement in creation**

'Adam' (man) is made out of 'adama' (ground). The verb 'made' is that used of a potter molding clay and this seems the best way to visualize God's creation of man in this story. God the master potter moulds the clay (*adama*) until He is absolutely satisfied. He now has a lifeless but carefully shaped piece of clay. He breathes into this statue and the man becomes a living being.

- **Adam is from the dust of the earth and yet more ...**
(He has the breath of God breathed into him.)
- **Adam is centre of creation ...** The garden is prepared for him .. the animals are brought to him .. it is not good for the man to be alone.

For Adam to name the animals means to incorporate them into his life. They come under his dominion and are set in their places in his world. The ox domesticated - the lion a wild beast. As one made in God's image, Adam orders his world as God had done ... he names the animals in it.

- **A helper suitable for him is found after a long dramatic search.**
(Finally, the woman is brought to him and the man rejoices that at last here is one who stands opposite him, on equal ground.)

The meaning of the Hebrew '*the helper suitable for him*' (vs 18) is basically a helper who stands facing him, complementing him, equal to him, 'a mirror of himself.'

Eden in Hebrew means 'delight.'

The limits on his freedom are hardly oppressive. There is only one tree from which they are not to eat.

The reference to the man and wife being naked and not ashamed possibly suggests the understanding of sex as a gift of God, a gift which as yet has not been abused.

DAY 7: Read through Genesis 3:1- 5:32

WHY IS THE WORLD THE WAY THAT IT IS?
Genesis answers ...

God created order out of chaos and set the conditions for life – (Genesis 2:16-17), but Adam and Eve (you and I) rejected His authority - (Read Genesis 3:1-13).

Identify the desire that is at the heart of the temptation as it is recorded in Genesis 3?

We seek to go beyond the limits He has set – **we want to be free** – the temptation for all of us is that we would like to be like God – i.e. our own God, setting our own agenda for our lives. *“No-one is going to tell me what I can and can’t do”*. (Genesis 3:5)

Note the moment of choice - . In your mind’s eye picture the drama conveyed in the words of vs 6. The woman approaches the tree and there is a pause as she contemplates the possibility of eating the fruit.

She saw that the tree was good for food ..

that is was a delight to the eyes ..

that is was desirable to make her wise .. SHE TOOK AND ATE

As Adam & Eve eat from the tree, suddenly their eyes are opened. They see themselves as naked. They feel exposed ...shamedfull of fear, as they hear God coming to walk in the garden.

Desperately they hide in the bushes...desperately they try to cover up with *fig leaves*.

What a graphic picture of the sense of guilt, shame and fear that comes when we do something we know is wrong. This is our story. It reveals the truth that when we attempt to be our own god, we find ourselves isolated from God, and each other. Our choice to be god damages relationships.

In the moment of the discovery of their guilt we find them

- blaming someone else; ie rejecting responsibility.
- The sin committed in common didn’t unite them. It put a division between them.

Identify the specifics of God’s judgment -

For the woman	(vs 16)
For the ground	(vs 17-18)
For the man	(vs 19)
For the serpent	(vs 14-15)

Adam will work and sweat all the days of his life and for what? - thorns and thistles and in the end to be returned to the dust from whence He came. Each aspect of the judgment is **a graphic expression of Futility**

In our story in Genesis, the rebellion against God’s authority and a rejection of His rules, brings particular consequences.

Life is now marked by:

- Blame-shifting (Genesis 3:11-13)
- Futility (Genesis 3:17-19)
- Domination of the woman by the man.
- Violence (Genesis 4:23-24)
- Death ... (Genesis 5 ...)

note how *and he died* is repeated with each generation to drive home the point.

- Divisions between people (Genesis 11:1-9)

Now darkness covers the people of the earth – chaos and disorder reign. (Isaiah 60:2)

GOD'S RESPONSE

1. God made garments of skin (vs 21) to cover their shame .. An act of Mercy.
To provide this covering an animal gave it's life ... A Life for a life!
2. GOD drove them out of the Garden and a guard is posted (vs 23-24)
They are excluded & their entry to the Garden is barred lest they eat of **the tree of life** and live forever If they were to do this they would be trapped forever in an endless struggle of futility

Futility is the tragic consequence of being cut off from relationship with God ...the Life Force of the Universe.

Points to consider from the text:

1. The Hebrew verb 'to know' (*yada*), refers not just intellectual knowledge but more to the experiencing of something. Thus '*to know*' God implies that you are experiencing a relationship with him, and in that relationship you know Him, ie who He is His character and also what He is like. ...His ways
This relationship, if it is in proper order, is marked by obedience. After all He is the Creator. '*To know*' God is to obey God. (John 15:9-14)

To know good and evil traps us into becoming our own reference point for judgment as to what is good and evil. However we do not have the capacity to know all the facts behind our judgments. This will lead to disputes / revenge / harsh application of law and flawed approaches to ethics in modern science and technology and the angst involved in difficult political issues such as Australia's refugee boat people or a two state solution in Israel.

2. For the hearers of this story, it is absolutely clear that the man and the woman of their own free will disobey God. The serpent merely raises the question and suggests a reason why God might want to restrict their freedom. His lie could well have been rejected.
3. Genesis 3:15 prophetically anticipates Jesus (the seed of the woman) crushing Satan (the seed of the snake) For the ancient writer this word however has a primary meaning

not as a word of hope but as part of the judgment of continuing enmity and futility.

4. vs 16: Von Rad in his commentary of Genesis (p. 93) suggests that, “*There are three facts which because they are related to one another in unresolved tension grind down the woman’s life:*

- i.) hardships of pregnancy
- ii.) a profound desire for her man
- iii) a man in whom she still does not find fulfillment and rest but rather humiliating domination.”

The story suggests that we are willing to risk the possibility of death to reach out for the possibility of life greater than that provided by our Creator. (ie. a life without any restrictions where we are our own god.)

Implications for our understanding of life, ourselves and God.

THE GIFT OF LIFE.

- The breath of God. ...
We are much more than a bunch of chemicals / more than a random accident
- We were meant to dwell in a place of delight. (*Eden*)
- Adam & Eve were privileged to walk with God in the cool of the evening.... A picture of a safe, refreshing settled relationship of friendship and intimacy.
- Adam & Eve had a free will ... *Choice is given.*

The concept of humanity as created in the image of God, together with the whole biblical history of God reaching out to bring us back into fellowship with Himself, raises important implications on our understanding of the dignity of life and our own self image. While we may be wretched and weak, and continually prone to rebellion, we are still men and women for whom Christ died.

To the Father we are something very special - his sons and daughters, made in His image.

MEDITATION:

***What does it mean for you that God is Creator, and that as Creator,
He has a claim of ownership over you?***

**Week 2: PROMISE & COVENANT ...(Genesis 12- 48)
(Stories about our fathers in the faith)**

DAY 1: ABRAHAM ... The Father of Faith

Read Genesis 12:1-7: THE CALL OF ABRAM

- In this story of Abram's call, what was Abram to leave behind?...
- Why would God make this part of what was required of Abram?
- Where was he to go? ...
- What was the promise embedded in the call?

TODAY'S MEDITATION:

- **In what ways have you experienced God's call?**
- **What was required of you?**
- **What promise is embedded in your call.?**

FEATURES OF THE PROMISE TO ABRAM

- Land** - (the dominant theme of Numbers and Deuteronomy)
The promise of land is very significant for one pursuing a nomadic way of life.
- Descendants** (the theme of Gen 12-50) *'I will make you a great nation.'*
- A special relationship with God.** *I will bless you* - (The theme of Exodus and Leviticus)
- All peoples will be blessed because of you.** (This is a hidden theme finding explicit revelation in the prophets and through Abraham's blessing of others)
 - The promise was sealed with a sacred meal. (Gen 15:9-21)
 - It was established as an everlasting covenant through circumcision. (Gen 17:7-16)
 - The promise can only be fulfilled if there are descendants Circumcision is an offering of the male reproductive organ to God ... His future is in God's hands.

Consider: The prophetic proclamation in the change of name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of peoples) (Gen 17: 5), while Sarai (my princess) is changed to Sarah (princess of the multitude)

The rest of the Old Testament demonstrates how God kept his covenant with Abraham.

DAY 2: WILL GOD REALLY BE FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISE?**Read Genesis 12:10- 21:34** **God's Promise ... will fear and Abram's poor choices undermine the promise?**

1. The famine and Abram's response. (Genesis 12:10-20)
Abram's fear for his life and the subsequent risk to Sarai.
2. The quarrel with Lot ... (Genesis 13:1-13) Abram's generous deal to resolve the dispute puts the promise at risk. The fact that He had been told to leave His family and yet has brought Lot with him has had its consequence. Will the promise hold in spite of this.
 - God reaffirms His promise. (land and descendants) (13:14-18)
 - God reaffirms the promise and cuts a covenant. (Gen 15)

 The promise is delayed.... Will it ever come? ... Abram is now 86 years old. (Genesis 15 & 16)

Sarai proposes a solution to the delay in the fulfillment of the promise. ... her handmaiden Hagar will bear Abram's child. Abram agrees ... now Ishmael is born. However their human solution to fulfill God's promise results in hostility and strife.

 Thirteen years later ... God reaffirms the promise yet again !

Abram's change of name - (Genesis 17-18:15)

 Abraham is a slow learner Once again he puts the promise in jeopardy by passing Sarah off as his sister. (Genesis 20:1-18) **At last! 25 yrs after the promise of descendants and when all seemed impossible Isaac, the child of the promise is born (Genesis 21:1-7)**

Over and over God rescues Abram and reaffirms the promise ... even with an Ishmael ... God continues to press towards His original plan.

God's purposes in covenant will not be set aside by our failures.

GOD IS FAITHFUL !

MEDITATION:

Why would God wait 25 years before fulfilling the promise? What had happened to Abraham in his walk with God over that time? What had been developed in Abraham?

What is God working on in you as you wait on the fulfillment of His promises to you?

DAY 3: ABRAHAM GOD'S FRIEND

Read Genesis 18:16-33 & John 15: 9-17

What does it mean to be a friend of God?

Abraham is secure enough in the relationship with God that He is able to plead for the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah.

MEDITATION:

Why would Abraham feel secure enough in the relationship with God to dialogue with Him like this?what experiences would lead him to make out a case for sparing the city?

Why does God reveal His plan to Abraham ... Is He looking for Abraham to engage with Him? ...

As friends of Jesus what is He looking for us to pray on behalf of our city?

DAY 4: The Faith of Israel. The Story of Abraham

Read: Genesis 17: 1-27 and Genesis 22: 1-18

What is required of Abraham to protect His special relationship with God?... as a *friend of God*. Think again of the promise in Genesis 12:2

I will make your name great and I will bless those who bless you

We find 3 steps to Abram's deepening relationship with God.

- The journey begins with separation** (Genesis 12:1-3,)

Abram must leave behind his old ways ...his old gods ...even his family, as he steps into an unknown future. The only way he will know when he reaches his destination will be through his ongoing relationship with God. He is placing himself entirely in God's hands.

This principle of separation is a vital first step in the journey of faith. No longer are we to allow the world to determine our values, attitudes, mindset or destiny. We are being called to be a holy people ...holy in the sense of separated out to be God's people. We are called to be in the world but not of it.

Note this principle of separation is behind Abraham sending his servant back to his own country for a wife for Isaac rather than choosing a wife from among the Canaanites. (Genesis 24) Also the servant is instructed firmly not to take Isaac back to Abraham's home country (Genesis 24:6-8)

Esau ignores this in his choice of wives (Genesis 26:34)

- Obedience** - Gen 12:4, Gen 17: 1-27; particularly note vs 23-27, Gen 22: 1-18

The Scripture references above document Abraham's obedience ... In an interesting side issue, the fact that Lot comes along also, suggests Abraham's difficulty in leaving family behind. The presence of Lot however complicates things for Abraham ...but God is faithful and full of mercy ...Using Abraham's rescue of Lot for the encounter with Melchizedek and ultimately God rescuing Lot from Sodom.

Radical obedience is vital if we are to be positioned for what God has in mind for us. (John 15:9-15.)

- Trust** - Gen 22:1-18

Abraham's obedience and trust are tested by God. He is told to take his son, Isaac ...the child of the promise for which he has waited 25 years and to sacrifice him as a burnt offering to the Lord. ...note the text of 22:2 says ...*your only son Isaac*.

In Canaanite culture the offering of a child in sacrifice would be the ultimate offering of your most valuable asset to attempt to achieve a victory in battle or to avert an impending disaster.

Here Abraham is being challenged to trust God with his future ... to make such an ultimate sacrifice. The story is made more poignant by the fact that it takes 3 days to reach the place of sacrifice....imagine the struggle in Abraham's heart in this journey.

Read Hebrews 11:8-19

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

What is God saying to you about separation from the world in your current setting?

Are you able to trust God with your future?

Consider:

While Abraham built altars and offered sacrifices and called on the name of the Lord, Abraham's encounters with God were FIRST initiated by God.

- Genesis 12:7 ... *To your offspring I will give this land*
- Genesis 13:14 - 17 ... after the quarrel with Lot
- Genesis 14:18-20 The encounter with Melchizedek
- Genesis 15:1ff God speaks to him in a vision
- Genesis 17:1-27 The covenant is sealed with the sign of circumcision.
- Genesis 18 ... The 3 visitors are their prophetic declaration of a son to be born ... then Abraham's dialogue with God over the fate of Sodom & Gomorrah
- Genesis 22:1-18 Abraham's obedience tested through the offering of Isaac.

DAY 5: THE FAITH OF ISRAEL: The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Read Genesis 24-28

The story from Abraham to Joseph sets out 4 aspects of ancient Israel's and subsequently our own relationship with God:

This faith is forged in experience as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph walk out their destiny under the promise and faithful intervention of God in a series of encounters that encourage them on their way.

1. The God of the Covenant remains faithful. ... in each generation.

- a) Isaac's foolishness and fear put the promise in jeopardy.
(the story of Abimelech and Rebecca. Genesis 26:1-11)
- b) Disputes over the land threaten the promise.
(the story of the wells - Genesis 26 reminds us Genesis 13)
- c) God reaffirms the promise to Isaac. (Genesis 26:3-4) and to Jacob in spite of Jacob's treachery. (Genesis 28:13 -15)

2. It is a faith that leaves the past behind and surrenders the future to God
(sealed by circumcision) This is the faith journey of Abraham who is willing to offer Isaac ...his future ...

3. It is a faith that speaks of transformation ... A new name ...a destiny to fulfill.
(Jacob at Peniel - Gen 32: 22-31) (see tomorrow's study)

4. It is a faith that on the basis of God's gracious faithfulness takes the stance that even when evil befalls His people, it can become a means for good in God's redemptive and creative purposes. (The Joseph story)

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

What prophetic promises do you carry in your heart, that have not yet been fulfilled?

What is God saying to you about them today?

Day 6: THE STORY OF JACOB: AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE COVENANT (Genesis Chapters 27 to 35)

1. **Jacob's Deception** –Jacob steals Esau's birthright and the blessing.

In this story of deception the character of both boys is revealed ... Jacob grasping for more, while Esau has very little regard for the birthright. He marries Hittite women ... the values behind the covenant mean little to him.

In spite of all this, astoundingly, we find God initiating an encounter with Jacob at Bethel in which the Promise is reaffirmed- Genesis 28:13-15.

Jacob is challenged here to trust that God is not limited by geography (Gen 28: 10-18)
“...I will be with you and watch over you and bring you back ...”

Jacob's response is still a grasping one- (Genesis 28:16-22 **(by including tithing in his vow Jacob is prepared to acknowledge God's right to Lordship over his life if He brings him safely back into the land)**)

2. **The deceiver, deceived** - the law of reaping and sowing seems to be in play as Laban deceives Jacob....This is how life operates (Genesis 29:21-29)

3. **Jacob prospers** under the covenant promise- God is using the adversity in his experiences with Laban to shape Jacob's character. (Genesis 30:25-43)

4. **Jacob's return to Canaan:**

- **Jacob's prayer** ... (Genesis 32:9-12)

While he is full of fear, Jacob prays on the basis of the promise made to him at Bethel when he first left the land some 20 years before.

- **Jacob's defining encounter with God.** (Genesis 32:22-32)

Jacob comes to the place where he is alone and now must face his doubts and fears. He wrestles with God and doggedly holds on to the promise of blessing. In the course of the struggle his hip is displacedhe is broken. No amount of scheming on his part can affect the outcome ...only dogged trust in a God who keeps His promises. (Genesis 32:22- 31)

- **Jacob receives a new name ... *Israel*** – This is the characteristic of the people of God. They are ones who have struggled with men and with God, doggedly holding on to His promises in spite of the circumstances. This is the heart of this special relationship with God. (Genesis 32:28)

- **Jacob fulfils his promise to God, while God reaffirms the promise made to Abraham.** (Genesis 35:9-12)

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Is there an area where you are struggling with God at present?

What is His perspective on that area?

What is He saying about your struggle?

DAY 7: THE JOSEPH STORY: CAN THE COVENANT HOLD IN THE MIDST OF TREACHERY AND REBELLION?

Read Genesis Chapters 37-50

a) Jacob's Sons rebellious, unfaithful ... treacherous

- Reuben had compromised his position of leadership in the family by sleeping with his father's concubine. (Gen 35:22, Gen 49:3-4)
- Judah took up the role of leadership (Gen 37:26) but fails to honour the separation principle. (Gen 38)
- Joseph's brothers were jealous and plotted to kill him. (Gen 37:12-20)
- Joseph has been sold into slavery

- What now is to become of this covenant with its great promise??

b) God uses the circumstances to work His plan of Blessing

- Though the brothers had meant it for evil, God uses the circumstances and Joseph's integrity and subsequent blessing to make provision for Israel in the famine. Behind the scenes, God's hand is at work bringing forward His purpose *"You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."* Gen 45:5-8, Gen 50:20
- The blessing covers not only Israel but all the nations of the earth.

Keys to Living in God's Blessing.

- The Covenant promise is certain - **God can be trusted.**
- Joseph has the **heart** of a **servant**, regardless of the circumstances.
- Joseph **chooses** not to wallow in self pity and bitterness.
- Joseph consistently exercises his **ministry gift** in spite of the circumstances (Gen 39:21, 41:33).
- Joseph maintains his **integrity** in spite of the temptations.
- Joseph exercises **forgiveness.**
- From start to finish** God's hand is upon Joseph.
(Compare with Phil 1:6 and Rom 8:28)

Personal Application:

Identify where you are in God's working out of your destiny... are you in prison as it were...waiting ..waiting? In the wider perspective, Joseph is positioned to bring blessing to his family back in Canaan as well as to Egypt but it only comes as He is faithful in the now. **What is God asking of you, for you to be faithful in the now?**

Week 3: THE OPPRESSED SET FREE

DAY 1:

DELIVERANCE FLOWS FROM THE HEART OF GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE

Read Exodus 1:1- 3:10

- 1) **The Setting** - Israel oppressed in Egypt. (Exodus: 1:1-22)
- 2) **The call of Moses** (infancy ... call and commissioning)
Note the motivation and action of God behind this call as it is set out in Exodus 3:7-10. God is not deaf to the cries of the afflicted.
 - * *I have seen the oppression.*
 - * *I have come down to deliver them.*
 - * *Therefore I will send YOU to Pharaoh.*
 - * *I will be with your mouth*
(I will put my words on your lips - ie I will be with you) (Ex 4:10-12)

In considering the nature of God revealed in the story, remember also Gen 16:13 where God intervenes for the sake of the afflicted/ oppressed, Hagar. He shows Himself to be the “*God who sees.*” (*EI - Roi*)

Context of the call:

Moses had fled Egypt after attempting to do something about the cruel oppression of his people. Forty years have passed. He has had plenty of time to consider the plight of his people 40 years in the wilderness looking after sheep ...plenty of time to wonder / to think about could he have done more

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Are there areas in your life where you are struggling under oppression or in bondage of some kind? ...(this may be an area of personal struggle ...like shame / fear or an addiction or perhaps something where you are suffering under the abuse / intimidation of others.)

What is God saying to you today about this?

DAY 2: THE BURNING BUSH ENCOUNTER

Read Exodus 3:1- 4:17

What captures your attention as you read today?

Make a list of the key points in the text:

-
-
-
-
-

NOTES:

God's name - **YAHWEH** *"I am who I am"*

There is a certain mystery about the meaning of God's name

- It is the Hebrew verb 'to be.' God was in the beginning and always will be.
- He brings things into being.
- He reveals Himself through His actions with people and in history.

The response of Moses to the call of God:

1. Who am I that I should go? (3: 11)
2. Suppose I go ...who do I say sent me? ... (3: 14)
3. What if they don't believe me or listen to me and say the Lord did not appear to you (4:1)
4. O Lord I have never been eloquent ... (I am not equipped) (4:10)
5. O Lord, please send someone else to do it (4:13)

What was God's response to each of these issues.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. What name is God giving you to encourage you in your call?
2. Is there an issue / a situation in our modern world that you find yourself thinking about over and over? Could there be a call of God to be involved in some way?
3. Ask Him about that ... what would that involvement look likenot the whole picture but just the first step...how? where? ... in what way?
4. Moses had something in His hand ...a shepherd's staff ...his work tools ... What have you in your hand that in the power of God can be a symbol of His power & presence with you?

DAY 3: THE BATTLE WITH PHARAOH.**Read: Exodus: 7:8 – 12: 50**

This Battle culminates in the final plague of the death of the first born son and the celebration of the PASSOVER.

- The story points to a **powerful conflict** between the gods of EGYPT and YAHWEH, the God of ISRAEL.
- For the Egyptians, Pharaoh is considered a god. The magicians at first are able to duplicate the power of Moses, but soon find they are unable to match the works of God.
- This story is about who controls nature, life and death, even the continuity of EGYPT. Pharaoh and the so called gods of Egypt worship, or YHWH?

Key Points in the Story

1. **Pharaoh's Impotence to restrict Israel is exposed** He is thwarted by women
 - The Midwives
 - The Israelite mothers
 - Pharaoh's Daughter
 - Miriam

In a culture where women were regarded as chattels

2. **Increased oppression as Pharaoh's response to the move toward deliverance**

3. **The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart**

4. **The Ten Plagues:**

1. *Water turned to blood* (Exodus 7:14-25)] Matched by the magicians.
2. *Frogs* (Exodus 8:1-15)
3. *Gnats* (mosquito) (Exodus 8:16-19)

The magicians cannot match the power of MOSES - they testify
"This is the finger of God." (Exodus 8:19)

From this point onwards, the plagues do not affect Israel.

4. *Insects* (Flies probably) (Exodus 8:20-32) no flies in Goshen
5. *Pestilence on the livestock* (Exodus 9:1-7) No animal belonging to Israel.
6. *Boils* (Exodus 9:8-17) - even the magicians are affected so that they can no longer stand in the presence of MOSES to oppose him.
7. *Storms* - lightning and hail. (Exodus 9:18-35) No hail in Goshen (9:26)
8. *Locusts* (Exodus 10:1-20)

Thus far the plagues are all natural phenomena the wonder / power is in the timing and the protection for the Israelites

(note too that it is by Moses' prayer that the plague is lifted.)

Now we move on to stronger supernatural manifestation in this power encounter.

9. *Darkness over the land.* (Exodus 10:21-29) ... Such a plague illustrates the impotence of *RA* ... the Egyptian sun god
He is considered to be the King of the gods ... creator of everything and the patron of the Egyptian Pharaoh. (Israel not in darkness ... (Exodus 10:23)

10. *The death of the first born.* (Exodus 11:1-10)

Egypt's continued existence as a nation is under threat - it is entirely in the hands of God.

The Egyptian gods and Pharaoh have no power to match YAHWEH - THE GOD OF ISRAEL.

Summary of the 10 plagues

The ten plagues may be divided into 4 sections, three groups of three and a final plague. The first three sections are each introduced by a warning to Pharaoh ... They are each ended by a plague that comes without warning. Within the three sections we also see a distinct progression with regard to the long term effect the plague has upon the land.

- In section one we get temporary inconveniences that are applied to the Israelites and the Egyptians alike.
- In the second section we get the separation between Israelite and Egyptian, we also get plagues that may have some long-term side effects.
- In the third section Pharaoh is told that God has the capacity to destroy Egypt (9v15) The interesting point of section three is that the servants of Pharaoh (and later the people of Egypt) start to get far more involved with proceedings.

Each plague may also be viewed as an attack on one of the Egyptian Gods.

Plague	Warning	Replication	Respite	Response	God Attacked
Water into Blood	Pharaoh was warned and allowed to watch	Yes	The Egyptians managed to work around the problem	Pharaoh's heart was hardened	HAPI (the God of the Nile)
Frogs	Pharaoh warned but was not with Moses when it happened	Yes	Pharaoh named the time the frogs would go	Compromise but then Pharaoh hardened his heart	HEQT (interestingly many frogs was usually viewed as a good thing)
Lice	No Warning	No. The magicians saw the lice as an act of God	We're not told but presumably	Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He doesn't even speak to Moses.	KHEPER (God of beetles and flies)

Flies	Pharaoh warned but not with Moses when it happened	No. In fact they didn't even try	The flies were removed when Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go	Pharaoh hardened his heart	KHEPER
Murrain (Plague effecting the Livestock)	Pharaoh warned and told when it would happen	Again they didn't try	It was a one off action.. but the cattle stayed dead.	The heart of Pharaoh was hardened.	APIS (Sacred Bull)
Boils	Pharaoh not warned but was there when Moses did it	Magicians could not even heal themselves	We're not told but one would imagine scarring would result	The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.	IMHOTEP (physician God) and THOTH (Magic and healing)
Hail	Pharaoh and servants warned. Those that heeded the warning escaped.	Didn't try.	No respite, crops destroyed although some crops left.	Pharaoh admits sin but then sins more by hardening his heart	NUT (Sky Goddess)
Locusts	Pharaoh warned and his servants almost cause him to give in	Didn't try	Complete devastation, this years harvest gone.	Pharaoh acts in haste and compromises. The Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart.	SETH (God of Crops)
Dark	No Warning	Didn't try	Yes, three days only	Pharaoh heart hardened by God. Tells Moses to 'get out of sight'	RA (Sun God)
First Born	Yes	No	No – firstborn dead	Israelites let go	PHARAOH

Source: <http://www.bible-exposition.org/Ten%20Plagues.htm>

Accessed 9th January 2005

PERSONAL APPLICATION / MEDITATION:

What spiritual battle are you facing at present?

For God to SHOW you the powerlessness of the enemy in this battle, what would He need to do? Dialogue with Him about that.

Consider Psalm 23: 5 and write down what God is saying to you through this.

DAY 4: INCREASED OPPRESSION**Read Exodus 4: 27 – 6:12**

Pharaoh's response to the God sending Moses to effect the people's deliverance is to increase the level of oppression of the Israelites. Their working conditions become harder ...much more is demanded of them. (Exodus 5:6-14)

With the increase in the suffering of the people, the hope of deliverance is quickly quashed (Exodus 5:19-21)

This leads Moses to first complain before the Lord on behalf of the people

God's response is to reiterate the promise of deliverance

Moreover I have heard the groaning of the people and have remembered my covenant.

Moses is instructed to encourage the people with a promise of deliverance based on the covenant promises we saw last week. (Exodus 5:6-8)

But the Israelites would not listen ...*because of their discouragement and cruel bondage* (Exodus 5:9)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

1. So often, when God begins to move to bring deliverance for us ...eg from a fear or a particular behaviour pattern , we find the pressure against us increases.
2. When this happens the question asked of us is this:

Will we hold on to God's character and the promise of deliverance or will we cave in under the increased pressure and accept our bondage ..even embrace it as our identity.

3. Moses believed God and as a result deliverance became possible ...what would have been the case if Moses, too, had allowed his emotions to rule and settled in discouragement to build a case against God allowing a bitter root of disappointment and resentment and anger to grow in his heart.

DAY 5: THE MYSTERY OF PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE.

Read Exodus 7:8 – 10:29

There are 2 different perspectives presented in the telling of the story.

1. Pharaoh hardens his heart
2. God hardens Pharaoh's heart

In our 21st century approach we want to resolve this tension ...we find it difficult to allow the mystery presented here to stand. ... Who was responsible for the hardened heart ... Pharaoh or God?

We want to defend God ...surely He wouldn't deliberately harden someone's heart. Who would want to serve such a God?

Let's work through the text and allow the Holy Spirit to speak with us.

a) We learn in Exodus 4:21 that **God has determined to harden Pharaoh's heart,**

Perhaps what we are dealing with is the reality of God's judgment. God has determined to act in judgment against Egypt. That is the theological truth. We have very little insight into the full picture and so cannot claim this is an unfair act. This is God's creation. As Supreme Ruler, He is free to act in whatever way He thinks fit. We know little of the sins, oppressions and stubbornness of ancient Egypt. We do not know their story - only ours. We are called upon to take a step of faith - to trust that God is indeed **JUST, RIGHTEOUS AND MERCIFUL** as the scriptures consistently teach. (Cf Exodus 7: 3,)

b) **Pharaoh hardens his own heart,** out of fear of losing his labour force, pride and stubborn resistance.

This is also the truth and is clearly intended in the text at Exodus 8:15, 8:32, 10:3.

Somehow both realities come together for Pharaoh, Egypt and **for us**. Only God sees the full picture. Other Texts on this issue include Exodus 7:13, 8:19, 9:7, 9:34 -35

GOD ALONE IS THE JUDGE.

APPLICATION:

Consider John 6: 35 – 44 and I Corinthians 4: 3-6

Pray for your workmates, family, community leaders and parliamentary reps out of the insights in these passages.

DAY 6: WITH A MIGHTY HAND THE LORD BROUGHT US OUT...**Read Exodus Chapters 12- 15**

As we think about today's reading covering the Lord's instructions for Israel we find that Israel was called upon to remember the mighty deliverance of God by participating in ongoing ritual practice which would bring home in a visual and physical way the reality of God's action on their behalf.

Consider how the preparations repeated each year bring home the reality that they were a people delivered by God with a mighty hand. ...

It is, as it were, like a *sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead* ... ie something that governs actions (hands) and minds (foreheads)

Passover ...make notes on the following:

- The instruction for the preparation of the lamb
- Which day ? ... Which Month?
- How many days were they to care for the lamb? ...
- When was the lamb to be killed?
- How was the blood to be placed on the doorposts? ...
- How was the meat to be cooked?
- What else was to be part of the meal??
- .
- .
- Why should a foreigner be barred from eating Passover?
- On what basis could a foreigner living amongst them participate in the Passover?

Feast of unleavened bread

- Which days were set aside for the feast of unleavened bread?
- Why were they to celebrate it?
- What was the penalty for not observing the feast? (ie eating something with yeast)

Consecration of the Firstborn

The Israelites were to consecrate to God the first born of every womb ..both of the Israelites themselves and also their livestock....this was done through a redeeming sacrificial offering ...a life for a life.

MEDITATION:

In John 19: 14, Jesus dies on the cross at the time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, while Paul writes of Jesus as being our Passover Lamb in **1 Cor 5:6-7.**

Notice how Paul makes reference to the feast of unleavened bread here.

Take communion today and remember Jesus our Passover Lamb. Give thanks.

DAY 7: LESSONS IN TRUST**Read Exodus Chapters 13-17****1. The Bones of Joseph (Exodus 13:19 / Genesis 50:25)**

Joseph had had confidence that God would bring Israel out of Egypt
Carrying his bones with them becomes a tangible symbol of trust in a God who is faithful to His promises.

2. Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire (Ex 13:21-22)

These represent God's presence and they go before Israel on their journey.

3. Between a rock and a hard place ... Pharaoh pursues them with chariots.

Israel is instructed - Do not Fear!
- Stand by and see the Salvation of the Lord!

The excitement of leaving Egypt for a wide and spacious land evaporates as they face seemingly certain capture and destruction by Pharaoh.

This too is often the case for us ... we have a breakthrough in a particular circumstance through God's intervention, only to find ourselves confronted by a very intimidating situation that threatens to bring us back under bondage.

Our challenge, like that of Israel here, is to stand firm ...not to fear ... to be still & trust in God's provision and protection.

4. The song of Deliverance (Exodus 15) ... note the joy & wonder behind this song.**5. Bitter water at Marah?... The people grumbled: *What are we to drink?* (Ex 15:23-26)**

Note the conditional promise of the Lord who is healer (Exodus 15:26)

6. *If only we had died in Egypt ... Manna & Quail* (Ex 16:1-36)

Israel had seen so many signs of God's favour with them

- Joseph's bones
- The Pillars of cloud and of Fire.
- Deliverance at the Sea
- Waters sweetened

But it is not enough ...as they become hungry their cry is: *If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt ...there we had pots of meat and all the food we wanted* ... Did they indeed? They still have not learnt to cry out to God, trusting that he has a way. Still they allow their circumstances to dictate their thoughts and actions.

They are in a school ...God is setting tests ...each time they fail ...God in his grace provides deliverance.

FOR MEDITATION AND PERSONAL APPLICATION:

In the wilderness there is miraculous provision one day at a time. They cannot gather too much or too little ...the supply is sufficient for the day. If attempts are made to save some for tomorrow ... (indicating a lack of trust) then it decays. God made a special provision for the Sabbath ...on the sixth day double could be collected and saved for the next day and miraculously this extra did not go off overnight.

Here in daily lesson, Israel is to learn to trust God for provision.

Ponder this and consider how this might relate to what God is doing in your setting to build within you a deeper trust in Him. What tests are you facing at present?

7. Water from the rock (Ex 17:1-7)

Still Israel has not grasped the lesson ...still they believe they are about to die as their thirst grows ... even with daily provision of manna and yet in grace God provides for them in spite of their grumbling and lack of faith.

8. Victory over the Amalekites. (Ex 17:8-16)

Moses stood with his staff upheld on the top of the hill ...as long as he held up his hands Joshua and his men were winning. Aaron & Hur assist in holding up Moses hands. Moses needed help to stand in His authority as the battle raged ...**so do we.**

The staff represents the authority Moses had under God ...as long as he stood in this authority (hands held high) the Israelites prevailed.

Who do you have who believes in you and who can help you stand in your authority in Christ?

Dialogue with God about that.

Can you identify any significance in Moses calling the altar, "*The Lord is my Banner!*"?

Week 4: THE CALL TO BE A HOLY PEOPLE (COVENANT AT SINAI.)

DAY 1: ENCOUNTER AT SINAI

Read Exodus Chapters 19

Consider vs 3-6 ...

1. **God has initiated Deliverance** ... God has brought them to Himself
2. **The purpose is that they, out of all the nations, might be for God:**
 - A treasured possession
 - A kingdom of priests
 - A Holy Nation
3. **Such a destiny is conditional on their obedience**

The people are happy to take up the challenge and they are now told to prepare to meet with God who will come in a dense cloud and speak with Moses in their hearing. Such a display will strengthen Moses' authority.

The Preparation:

Consecration of the people over two days .. the meeting being on the third.

1. They are to wash their clothes
2. They are not to set a foot on the mountain or they will be put to death either by stoning or shot with arrows but with no hand to be laid upon them.
3. They are to abstain from sexual relations

Remember the principle ...by doing something physically a spiritual reality is being appropriated. They and the mountain must be set apart as holy.

In following this process the people psychologically have a sense of awe ...something very special is to take place ...God is going to meet with them ... This is God, the Creator of the universe; the One who delivered them from Egypt...The Holy One!. He cannot be approached with a flippant or casual attitude. ...:

This is a moment of utmost significance and privilege.

APPLICATION: Read Hebrews 4:14-16

Other than just rocking up to meet with God for 'church' on Sundays what preparation might be appropriate for us in the 21st century?

Why would God want a Kingdom of priests, a Holy Nation?

DAY 2: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**Read Exodus 20:1-24:18**

Note the Commandments are introduced with a statement of the grace of God already experienced:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery

The first 4 Commandments have the purpose of protecting the special relationship they have with God ...they are to be his treasured possession ... A Kingdom of Priests

1. **No other gods** ... this is to be an exclusive relationship
2. **No idols** ... this will distort the relationship ...people control what the idol stands for (its character) and when it is to be approached ...used!
God cannot be put in a box ...He determines how and when he will reveal himself. He sets the ways and purposes of approach. We are not God.. He is! ... He has chosen relationship with us and is determined to protect it. He will not be used!
3. **Misusing the name** ... This is much more than cursing or using the name of Jesus as an expletive. This is about using our relationship with God to further our agenda *The Lord told me to tell you that* This can be a highly effective way of trying to manipulate people. *I felt led to* When really it is simply our own desires that are behind the action. We use God to further our own purposes.
4. **Remember the Sabbath day and keep it Holy.**
This is a way for Israel to honour their Creator and Redeemer. It is a way to keep in touch with who they are and to whom they belong ... a treasured possession ...a Holy Nation!

The next six commandments aim to protect the destiny of Israel as a Holy Nation. They are to be a people whose relationships create a society governed by honour for parents and for marriage. This if observed will lead to a stable, secure family environment where both young and old are cared for. Other commandments focus on respect for life, truthfulness and respect for the rights of another.

These commandments reflect something of the character of God and are an expression of His grace in that they would lead to an ordered and secure social life.

He is steadfast and keeps his covenant as Israel is expected to do in marriage. He is a God who is truthful in all His ways. He created life and has a zealous love for His creation.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:**Take time today to honour God for His Creation and Deliverance through Christ.**

Try doing something creative to express what this relationship with God means to you ...eg Write your thoughts in a journal; draw a picture; write a poem; write a song or simply enjoy a walk with Him in the cool of the evening.

Consider vs 18-21.... The people are not yet ready for close relationship with God. This will come in time as the Covenant with God is lived in, experienced and tested.

DAY 3: THE ARK AND THE TABERNACLE**Read Exodus 25:1- 27:21 and 30:1-10; 30:17-21& 31:1-11**

Moses is given instruction to make a SANCTUARY for God ... *Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you* (Exodus 25:9)

The Furnishing:

1. **Ark:** This chest is to be made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold
Inside the ark is to be placed the Testimony God will give Moses.
An Atonement cover is to be made for the chest ...with 2 Cherubim as part of the cover...one piece.

There above the cover between the two cherubim I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites (25: 22)

The Ark came to be regarded as a sign that God is in our midst.

The Ark contained:

- 1) The Stone Tablets ... the 10 commandments
- 2) A pot of Manna (note Heb 9:1-15)
- 3) Aaron's Rod that budded (Numbers 17:8)

2. **Table:** This also is to be made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold.
The Bread of the Presence is to be on this table before God at all times (25:30)

3. **Lampstand:** This is to be made of pure gold.... Of one piece

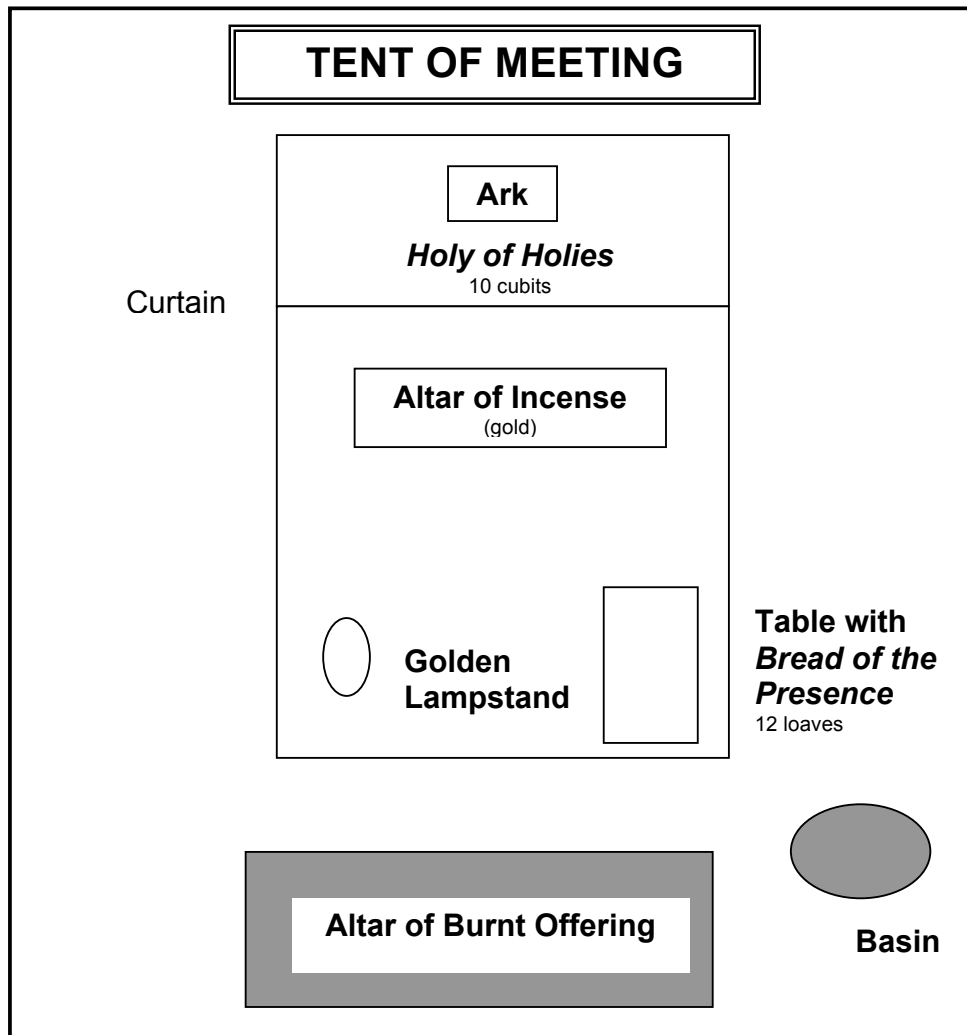
See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. (25:40)

The Tabernacle ...an elaborate tent (See Exodus 26)

Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain (26:30)

Within the tabernacle there is to be:

1. **The Most Holy Place:** a separate section within the tabernacle divided off by a curtain. ... The Ark is to be placed in here. (26:33-34)
2. **The Altar of Burnt Offering:**
Make an altar hollow, out of boards. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain. (27:8)
3. **The Courtyard**
4. **An Altar for burning Incense:** (30:1-10)
5. **A Bronze Basin for washing** ... This was for ritual cleansing before entering the tabernacle or making an offering by fire. (30:17-21)



Two Craftsmen are designated by God to oversee the work and to handle the design etc Bezalel and Oholiab. Bezalel has been filled with the Spirit of God and skill has been given to all the craftsmen by God. (31: 1-11)

Again *they are to make them just as I have commanded you.*(31:11)

MEDITATION:

Over and over God calls on Moses to make the Tabernacle and the furnishings **according to the pattern He has been shown**. It seems that God is **very carefully** setting in place a pattern for meeting with Him. Do we follow any of these steps in our worship today?

Does this pattern still apply...How?

God is looking for us to have fellowship with Him ... (12 loaves of bread are continually set before Him at His request ... to share together as it were.)

Think through the symbolism here ... the priests are to enter the tabernacle through sacrificial offering and cleansing. The 12 loaves representing Israel are to be kept before Him each day. The lamp is to be kept burning continually (Lev 24:1-4) The Incense is to be offered up to Him every morning and every evening when the lamps are tended.

DAY 4: THE ANOINTING OIL AND THE INCENSE**Read Exodus 30:22 -38****What are the ingredients of the Anointing Oil? (Ex.30:22-24)**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 500 shekels of liquid myrrh ▪ 250 shekels of fragrant cinnamon ▪ 250 shekels of fragrant cane ▪ 500 shekels of cassia ▪ A hin of olive oil | } | <p>These blend together to make the sacred anointing oil.</p> |
|--|---|---|

To make the sacred anointing oil the ingredients are mixed with olive oil in a process that involved crushing, heating and stirring together.

Moses was told to anoint Aaron and his sons, so they may serve as priests. Ex 30:30

The Anointing oil:

- was not to be poured on men's bodies (flesh)
- was not to be copied – *don't make any oil with the same formula.*
- was to be considered holy and treated as such.
- was only for the priests and later the King.

The act of anointing in the O.T. was a sacred setting apart for God's special purpose, preceded here for the priests by cleansing, dressing in sacred garments, and an act of consecration (Ex 40: 9-14)

New Testament Context: All Christians are *anointed ones*.... We are indeed a Kingdom of Priests

- (a) God has set His seal of ownership upon us and put His spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. (Ephesians 1:13-14 & 2 Corinthians 1:21)
- (b) The word of God has been conveyed to our hearts by the Spirit and the Spirit enables hearers to sift out and receive what is true. (1 John 2:20 and 27)
- (c) As the priests (and later the prophets and kings in the Old Testament) - Christians are anointed (gifted) for particular purposes in God. (Romans 12: 3-8)

What is the Anointing?

Anointing refers to divine power acting upon a person enabling a task to be done.

- *It is a special endowment from God*
- *It enables us to go beyond our natural abilities.*
- *It is the flow of God's grace. We don't earn it.*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Today, praise God for his anointing upon you and allow Him the space to pour fresh oil over you ...

DAY 5: THE GOLDEN CALF**Read Exodus 32:1- 33:6**

Moses is on the mountain meeting with God, meanwhile the Israelites become impatient

Aaron casts an idol and fashions it with tools and declares a festival. Aware of their idolatry God threatens to destroy Israel and make Moses into a great nation instead ... but Moses successfully intercedes, arguing the case for mercy for Israel based on two factors

1. The reputation of God
2. The Promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Carefully consider Moses' prayer Exodus 32:11-13

How important is the covenant / the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Israel in the intercession.

Read Revelation 2:1-7 & 3:1-6 and 3:14-22

Take 5-10 minutes (or more if you have time to do so) to pray specifically for the Body of Christ across the city and in our nation as the Holy Spirit gives you thoughts on what to pray.

Is repentance needed? In what ways?

What promises of God are vital in the intercession.

Aaron excuses his responsibility by omitting the fact that he had fashioned the idol with tools. I threw it in the fire and out came this calf ...wow ...awesome! ... it had to be a divine sign of approval?!

In this sordid episode Moses stops the chaos and brings order back through a cutting down of 3,000 people.

The stakes here are incredibly high ...It would be so easy for the relationship with God to be corrupted by ideas of idolatry and the festivals of Israel to be marked by sensuous revelry ...*running wild*

The whole concept of Israel being a holy nation ...a nation unlike other nations ...a nation through whom the whole earth is to be blessed ...a nation through whom God could reveal what He is like ... is under extreme threat before the journey even begins.

What if this had been allowed to continue ... and to become the norm for Israel's worship.

Sin has consequences ...this is the truth about life. As we sow, so shall we reap ...this principle is built into the creation.

DAY 6: SHOW ME YOUR GLORY, LORD**Read Exodus 33:7 - 34:35**

Moses asks the Lord *to teach him His ways so that he may know Him and continue to find favour with him..*

Moses makes the point,: *How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? He asks, what else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?*

The Lord's responds: *My presence will go with you and I will give you rest*

Moses now asks the Lord: *Show me your glory.* In answer to Moses' request God proclaims His name revealing the essence of His character ...which is His Glory. This character governs His ways.

The Lord is:

- Compassionate and gracious
- Slow to anger
- Abounding in love and faithfulness ... (ie steadfast love & truth)
- Maintaining love to thousands (This is about a faithful God intent to bless down the generational line of those who have walked according to the covenant. ... It refers to thousands of generations)
- Forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin
- Yet a God of justice ...not leaving the guilty unpunished
- This punishment extending to the third and fourth generation

The Lord promises to reveal himself in great and mighty acts on behalf of the people. He will drive out the tribes of Canaan before them

For their part in the Covenant, the people must take seriously the command not to worship the gods of these nations for the Lord is a **jealous** God ... jealous in the sense of being zealous about the relationship He is looking for with Israel.

This relationship would be compromised if they worshipped other gods or worshipped the Lord according to the way of the Canaanites. (34:11-17)

For these people there are **visible signs of God's presence** ... the pillar of cloud at the entrance of the tabernacle when Moses met with the Lord and the way Moses face shone after being in His presence and speaking with Him face to face as a friend.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Read John 14: 15-21

Take time today to sit with God and worship Him for who He is ...

Key Issue: *How much of the glory of God shines through us?*

- His Character ..in the fruit of the Spirit
- His Majesty and power through the gifts / anointing of the Holy Spirit.

DAY 7: DEDICATION OF THE TABERNACLE

Read Exodus 35: 2-38:31 and 40: 1-38

Consider the following:

The offerings to make the Tabernacle:

Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work

This appeal was so successful that the people had to be told to hold back

And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because they already had enough to do all the work

The Consecration of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle and its furnishings, the priests and their garments were consecrated and anointed with oil, then the glory cloud filled the tabernacle and even Moses could not enter

The Pillar of Cloud...This represents the presence of the Lord.

They were led in all their travel through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night.. God's presence was with them every step of their journey in spite of their rebellion and sin. He is indeed faithful to the promise He made with Abraham.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We do not have a pillar of cloud or of fire but as believers who have put our trust in Jesus Christ we do have the Holy Spirit living in us. The Breath of God, Himself, living in us, guiding us into all truth ...leading us on the way. We are his people; we hear his voice (John 10: 1-5 and 27-30). Jesus is the way, the truth and the Life.

What an awesome privilege we have. Our covenant is superior and is founded on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6)

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Read Romans 12:1-2

Offer your body as a living sacrifice to Him today.

Ask Him to fill you afresh with His Glory!

Ask Him to set up for you a divine appointment today (ie an opportunity provided by the Holy Spirit to share His life / Healing etc with someone today)

Week 5: LIVING IN COVENANT WITH GOD INSTITUTIONS THAT PREVENT AMNESIA

DAY 1: Read Genesis 17:9-13 and Exodus 20:8-11 and Deut 5:5-12

In the grace of God, as part of the covenant stipulations, the Israelites were given a number of rituals and practices that involved physically doing something that represented a spiritual reality.

The most important of these was the mark of circumcision ...instituted through Abraham as a seal to the covenant God made with Him.

- 1) Circumcision** - a physical sign as a permanent reminder of the covenant
(Gen 17:9-13) worn in the body.
.... a distinctive mark.
.... a one way step.
- involves the creative organ - we are dealing with an offering of the whole life and future of the Nation to God.

Serves as a continual reminder of who they were and to whom they belonged.

Christian Baptism in a similar way conveys the idea belonging.

The second distinctive that sets Israel apart as God's people was the keeping of the Sabbath. The Sabbath day- a day to remember:

The Torah gives two reasons for resting on the Sabbath.

1. To remember God's creative work (Exodus 20:8-11)
2. To remember that they once were slaves in Egypt but have been mightily set free. (Deuteronomy 5:5-12)

As God's holy (set apart) people, one day each week was to be consecrated to Him ...set apart to remember ...to keep before them, as part of their world view both the marvel of Creation and the wonder of God's mercy and steadfast love in their deliverance from Egypt.

Such a command was not a burden, but a gift. It provided needed physical rest in an agricultural society ... it gave time for contemplation ... it provided rest for animals and for those of other nations living in Israelite society.

MEDITATION: For the Christian, every day of the week is Holy to the Lord. Is there a CASE for the keeping of a special day set apart for God to remember His Creation and His mighty act of deliverance in Jesus Christ. ... If so how would you argue it?

What would keeping a special day to celebrate Creation & Redemption look like for you?

DAY 2: PILGRIMAGES AND FEASTS.**Read Leviticus 23 and 25**

There were to be 3 occasions each year where the whole of Israel was to gather for a feast. These were

- Passover - Unleavened Bread
- Pentecost - First Fruits
- Tabernacles - Harvest Ingathering.

The past, the present and the future hope of Israel were kept in sharp focus through the celebration of these feast days. **Israel's future was dependent upon how well they remembered their past.... ie who they were and to whom they belonged.**

Below is a chart of the feasts, their regulations and their purpose:

Appointed Feast	Regulations	Purpose
Sabbath 7th day. Ex 16:23-30	A day of rest dedicated to the Lord.	Celebration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ of Creation (Ex 20:8) ▪ of Redemption (Deut 5:12-15)
Passover .. 14th day First Month	10th day choose a lamb	Celebration of Deliverance
Unleavened Bread 15th - 21st day	Eating bread without yeast ..holding assemblies ..designated offerings	Remember how the Lord brought them out from Egypt in haste
First Fruits	1st & 7th days gather for worship	Offering of the first fruits of the harvest
Pentecost 50 days after offering the Passover	Offering of 2 leavened loaves of white flour Leviticus 23: 15-22	Marked the completion of the corn harvest. Celebration of the giving of the law on Sinai
Trumpets 1st day of 7th Month	Sacred assembly ..a day of rest. Extra burnt offerings	Lev 23:24-25 Num 29:1-6
Day of Atonement 10th day of 7th month	No Work ...a Sabbath rest for you. (Lev 23:26-32)	Cleansing Priests and people from their sins.
Tabernacles Num 29, Deut 16: 13 - 15 (15th - 22nd day of 7th month)	Building of booths no work for 7 days Burnt offerings 8th day to be a day of Sacred Assembly ...no work burnt offering	Completion of Harvest (fruit, oil, wine) Wanderings in the wilderness (Lev 23:33-43)

As we look at these feasts keep in mind the perspective of the New Testament:

Colossians 2:16: *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

and **Hebrews 10:1:** *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves.*

In addition to the annual feasts above there were special years to be observed.

<p>Sabbath Year Every 7th year</p>	<p>The Land was to keep a Sabbath. Crops were not to be sown ...the land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields by itself will be food for you. the poor to eat from it)</p>	<p>Leviticus 25:1-7 & 20 & 22 Exodus 23:10</p>
<p>Jubilee Every 50th year</p>	<p>1. Trumpet blown on Day of Atonement to announce year of Jubilee ... a Proclamation of Liberty 2 Do not sow or reap what grows of itself ...eat only what the land</p>	<p>Freedom for slaves Return of mortgaged property. Leviticus 25:8-55 & 27:17-24</p>

There are two fundamental concepts central to Israel’s worldview found in the regulations regarding the Jubilee.

1. ***The land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine. You are my tenants*** (Lev 25:23-24)
2. ***The Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt.*** (Leviticus 25:55)

APPLICATION:

Meditate and journal your thoughts on Psalm 24:1 *The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.*

If the feasts are a shadow ...like a sign pointing to something ... and Christ is the reality how does Christ fulfill the feasts of

- Passover
- Pentecost
- Tabernacles

DAY 3: THE PRIESTS, THEIR GARMENTS & THEIR CONSECRATION.**Read Exodus 28-29 and Leviticus 8- 10**

The part the Levitical priesthood played in the life of Israel ensured that there would be a constant reminder that Israel as a nation was chosen to be a Holy Nation.

The tribe of Levi was set apart through a special ceremonial consecration (Exodus 29) (Leviticus 8-9) and through the wearing of elaborate priestly garments.(Exodus 28)

Priestly Garments: To give Aaron dignity and honour

1. **Ephod:** On the shoulders of the ephod there were 2 onyx stones each with six of the sons of Israel engraved on them.

Aaron is to bear the names (of Israel) on his shoulders as a memorial before the Lord

2. **Breastpiece:** The Breastpiece was for making decisions

Four rows of 3 precious stones ...each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart ...as a continuing memorial before the Lord. (28:29-30)

What were the Urim and Thummim?"

The Urim and Thummim were objects that were carried by the high priest in the ephod They were used to determine God's will in some situations ...perhaps a little like casting lots or maybe by touch. The most likely explanation is that they were kept in a pouch and were engraved with symbols identifying **yes / no** and **true / false**.

About them Leviticus 28: 30 notes: *Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.*

Other items were the **Robe, a woven tunic and a sash and a turban** ...attached to the turban was a sacred diadem made of gold with the words **Holy to the Lord** inscribed on it

Consider the symbolism of Aaron carrying the sons of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart as well as carrying the means of making decisions ...judgments over his heart.

APPLICATION:

Applying the symbolism ...In prayer today, as priests of the most High God, we have the awesome privilege of carrying the wider Body of Christ in our hearts and on our shoulders. Ephesians 6: 18.

Think of the congregation that you are part of ...ask God how He would have you carry them on your shoulders and over your heart.

The Ordination of Aaron

Washed them with water / dressed in the priestly garments / anointed with oil

Sealed with Sacrifices: a bull for sin offering / a ram for burnt offering / a ram for ordination - Aaron touched with the blood

The Task of the priest was

- To distinguish between holy and common
- To distinguish between clean and unclean
- To teach all the decrees of the Lord.

The anointing of God made manifest.

In the climax of the story of Aaron's ordination and the beginning of the ministry of the priests comes the wonder of fire coming out from presence of the Lord (between the cherubim) and consuming the offering. God seals the priests being set in place with a display of His presence and approval.

The story of Nadab & Abihu and the offering of *unauthorized* fire. **Leviticus 10:1-3**

Comment:

Nadab & Abihu take it on themselves to offer up fire to the Lord outside their realm of authority as instructed by the Lord through Moses. Very possibly they were seeking to glory in the prestige of their new position in the community. They pay the ultimate price for their disobedience.

At stake was the whole way the priesthood would function. Was this to be according to their whim and self seeking or was it to be as a holy service to the Lord according to His instruction?

As his priests today, Christians need to note this lesson well.

Of interest here is the story of **Ananias and Sapphira** in **Acts 5:1-11**

The new Christian community in Jerusalem had just been established and God was moving powerfully. Ananias and Sapphira seek to gain kudos in the eyes of the congregation by magnifying the extent of their gift to the apostles for the welfare of the community. Like Nadab and Abihu, they pay the ultimate price for seeking to use God for their own agenda.

Throughout history, whether that of ancient Israel, or that of the church, many have used God in this way without paying such a price. It seems God has written into the record these examples to warn us from following such a path.

DAY 4: CLEAN & WITHOUT BLEMISH .. SYMBOLS OF HOLINESS

**Exodus deals with where to worship God ie The Tabernacle
Leviticus deals in detail with how this is to be exercised.**

For Leviticus the key theme is Holiness. “Be Holy for I am Holy.”
Two concepts make up HOLINESS.

- 1) Separate - Distinct - Set apart.**
- 2) Purity Without blemish**

Leviticus is concerned with 2 key issues in relationship to the covenant with God

- Right Worship
- Right Living (ie with becoming Holy and staying Holy.)

In Leviticus, spiritual holiness is symbolised by physical perfection. Skin infections/ bodily discharges are outside the normal and represent impurity.

Any sign of blemish or disorder here points to the underlying spiritual reality of the impact of sin in excluding people from the place of God’s special presence. (the camp.)

Re-entry into the life of the community comes through the offering of the prescribed sacrifices (animals without blemish.) These sacrifices themselves point beyond, to the provision of God’s perfect sacrifice offered ‘once for all’ in Jesus Christ.

Through the regulation of worship, daily life, and even diet, God reminds Israel that He has claimed them physically and spiritually for His Holy purpose.

The material in Leviticus along with Numbers 1-10 interrupts the flow of the story of the people of Israel in the wilderness. This material covers the regulations and the description of rituals which are to govern the social and religious life for the Covenant Community.

While we in the 21st century find it boring and perhaps quaint to read its detail, we ought to recognize that **to interrupt the narrative in this way highlights the importance placed on this material.** This matter of Holiness is no small thing ...it is central to the covenant with a Holy God.

Read Leviticus 11-15

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Food Laws ... clean and unclean animals | (Leviticus 11) |
| 2. Purification after childbirth | (Leviticus 12) |
| 3. Regulations on infectious skin diseases | (Leviticus 13) |
| 4. Regulations on mildew etc | (Leviticus 13:47-59) |
| 5. Cleansing rituals ...skin diseases and mildew | (Leviticus 14) |
| 6. Bodily discharges | (Leviticus 15) |

Read Leviticus 21-22

We no longer think of holiness in terms of foods / skin diseases / physical deformity or imperfection etc but the principle that holiness is to govern personal and communal life is a vital one for Christian disciples

Note in the offerings to God they were to be without blemish ...not bringing something second rate to the Lord.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

What does holiness look like for you as you remember who you are and to whom you belong?

DAY 5: THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM -**Read Leviticus 1-7**

Israel's Sacrificial System has some unique features when compared to other cultures. In Mesopotamia the sacrificial animal was used for divination, while in Israel there is no divination, the sacrifice being linked with concepts of Covenant & Holiness. The sacrifice had to do with restoring or celebrating relationship with God and with restoring holiness.

With a blood sacrifice which involves the costly gift of life, the worshipper is reminded that to live in the Covenant involves placing his own life before the Lord.

A list of the sacrifices expressing different aspects of the relationship with God is set out in the table below:

Offering	Ritual requirements	Purpose
Burnt Offering Leviticus 1 Leviticus 6:8-13	A male without defect ... bull, ram or dove for poor)	An expression of devotion, worship to God. (voluntary) Atonement for unintentional sin.
Grain Offering Leviticus 2 Leviticus 6:14 - 23	Grain, fine flour, olive oil, incense, baked bread. There was to be no yeast. Accompanied by Burnt & Fellowship offerings	An act of worship & devotion to God. A recognition of God's goodness and provision.
Fellowship offering Leviticus 3 Leviticus 7: 11-21	Any animal without defect from herd or flock. A variety of breads.	An act of worship Thanksgiving & fellowship (included a communal meal)
Sin offering Leviticus 4:1 -5:13 Leviticus 5:1-13 Leviticus 6: 24-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Priest & congregation ...a young bull without defect ▪ a leader ... male goat .. ▪ Israelite .. female goat / lamb ▪ Poor .. a Dove / pigeon ▪ Very poor ...A tenth of an ephah of fine flour 	Mandatory Atonement for a specific unintentional; sin Confession & forgiveness of sin. Cleansing from defilement
Guilt Offering Leviticus 5:14- 6:7 Leviticus 7:1-10...	Ram or Lamb	Mandatory Atonement for unintentional sin requiring restitution. Restitution ..pay fine of 20%

Read 1 Peter 1: 13-2:3

Jesus has given us a communal meal in which we can remember his precious sacrifice for us ... a lamb without defect ...atoning for all our sins unintentional and intentional. Share communion today with your family or a Christian friend and remember Him!

DAY 6: THE DAY OF ATONEMENT**Read Leviticus Chapter 16**

Atonement was to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites: This was done on the 10th day of the 7th Month.

This was a special Sabbath ...atonement made for cleansing from all their sins.
Regulations:

1. Restrictions are placed on entering the Holy Place ... Aaron can't come at any time and in any manner he might choose.
2. There is quite extensive detail on what is required in the way of preparation to enter into this sacred space....including a sin offering, a burnt offering , ritual bathing and the putting on of sacred garments.

Think through the impact that this level of preparation might have on Aaron and the priesthood?

What impact would there be on the people's understanding as they watched Him prepare?

3. 2 Goats were to be presented before the Lord at the entrance to the tabernacle
4. Lots were to be cast ...one goat being designated for the Lord, the other to be the scapegoat.
5. The goat designated as for the Lord, was sacrificed as a sin offering. An elaborate ritual was followed in sprinkling blood to make atonement for the Most Holy Place the Tabernacle and the Altar because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites.
6. The other goat was then brought out and Aaron was to lay his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites. The goat was then sent into the desert out of the camp.
7. Aaron and the man responsible to lead the goat into the desert then needed to go through a ritual bathing again.

Read I John 1: 5- 2:2 ; Romans 3: 21-26; Hebrews 7:22-8:6 & Hebrews 9

Jesus is our atoning sacrifice ... Both Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders laid their hands on him as they crucified him. Given that Revelation speaks of Jesus as the lamb slain from the creation of the world it is interesting to contemplate why God would put in place this elaborate ritual to bring home the necessity of atonement for sin as a condition of living in relationship with God.

Take time today to praise God that all your sin has been atoned for once for all through the offering up of Jesus on the cross.

DAY 7: REMEMBERING THE COVENANT

Read Exodus 13

The Firstborn

The first offspring of every womb belonged to the Lord...The firstborn needed to be redeemed as a permanent reminder that Israel's future was to be in the hands of God. This requirement was a continual reminder of the deliverance from Egypt and that Israel belonged to the Lord.

It was to be like a sign on their hand and a symbol on their forehead. It would give a reference point for their actions and their thinking.

Numbers 15:37-40 and Numbers 6:1-21

The Tassels

The Israelites wore Tassels on the corners of their garments as a visual reminder of the demands of the covenant.

The Nazirites

The appearance of these men and their abstinence from strong drink would remind Israel of the call to be a separate people, **a Holy Nation**.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

What are the things that help you remember who you are and to whom you belong that can encourage you to have faith into the future?

Week 6: **WALKING WITH GOD** **THE PLACE OF TRUST AND OBEDIENCE**

Numbers as a book, tells of the murmuring and rebellion of God's people and of their subsequent judgment.

Those whom God had redeemed from slavery failed to respond with faith, gratitude and obedience. Their walk was marked by unbelief, ingratitude, and repeated acts of rebellion.

Numbers gives a graphic portrayal of Israel's identity as the Lord's redeemed, covenant people and their call to be the servant people of God.

The Main Theme is Preparation to Move On.

Numbers is arranged in 3 parts:

- Encamped at Sinai
- The Desert Wanderings From Sinai to Edom / Edom to the Jordan
- Encamped on the plains of Moab (final stop before crossing the Jordan)

Day 1: Read Numbers 1:1- 2:34

A Census is taken to identify the strength of the nation for military preparedness and organise them around the tabernacle.

Numbers Chapter 2 "The Arrangement of the Tribal Camps"

"The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: ² "The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family." Numbers 2:1,2

There are many congregations on the Gold Coast each one raised up by God to give Him glory and to represent Christ. Each congregation/denomination represents a different expression of that sense of call, yet we are all under One Lord, we have One Faith and One Baptism (Eph 4:5). Some 'tribes' fly the Pentecostal banner, some the Anglican banner, others the Baptist, Independent, Faith stream, Uniting Church etc but, what we all have in common is the desire to see Jesus Christ lifted up as Saviour and Lord.

What if...

What if the church on the Gold Coast were more strategic?

What if the many tribes here on the Gold Coast were to 'camp together'?

What if the church of the Gold Coast honoured the many banners?

What if the church of the Gold Coast actually marched TOGETHER?

Let this cry be the focus of your prayer today!

DAY 2: CHOSEN TO SERVE

Read Numbers 3:1 – 4:49 and 8: 20-26

In the census of Chapter 3 every Levite over one month old is counted. The Levites are particularly set apart as belonging to the Lord.

Each of the clans had a special task to perform in the service of the tabernacle and a particular place in the camp.

In the census of Chapter 4 notice that all the men aged between 30 and 50 were to be counted. The work to be performed here was that of transporting the tabernacle ...heavy physical work.

In Numbers 2 we find that there is a set order for the placement of the tribes while in Numbers 3 we see that the clans of the tribe of Levi have their special positions.

In Numbers 8:24, we find the age for levitical service is 25 with a retiring age of 50. After that they may assist their brothers. The older men would need to be training up the younger.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Consider: What is the special place your congregation has in the church of the city and what is your place within the congregation.

Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27 & Romans 12: 4-8

DAY 3: THE POWER OF THE PRIESTLY BLESSING**Numbers 6: 22-27 (NIV 1984)****The Priestly Blessing**

²² *The LORD said to Moses,* ²³ *“Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:*

²⁴ *““The LORD bless you
and keep you; (ie Be your guard and source of provision)*

²⁵ *the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you; (ie show favour)*

²⁶ *the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.” (ie showing mercy and giving well being)*

²⁷ *“So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*

This blessing was an important part of the responsibility of the priests to impart blessing and favour over Israel. *I will put my name on the Israelites* carries the concept that God's presence and character will be displayed in the favour that will flow over them.

See if you can memorize this blessing.

Be creative ...can you draw this ..put it to music .. Feel into it and speak it over yourself.

Remember Genesis 12:2-3 and the promise given to Abraham.

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³ *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10

As one of the priests of the New Covenant have fun today releasing this blessing over those you come across.

DAY 4: TIME TO MOVE ON TO THE PROMISED LAND.**Read Numbers 7:1-10:36**

Numbers 7 records the extensive offerings brought to the dedication of the tabernacle. There were twelve days of celebrative pageantry. Note Num.7:89. There is a building excitement as the tabernacle is dedicated and Passover celebrated in preparation for the journey to the promised land. ... Israel has been a year encamped at the foot of Sinai ... The necessary structuring of their communal life has been organized, the covenant set in place ..they are ready to step into their destiny.

In the Passover celebration they specifically remember the past as a starting point for faith for the future.

The Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire: (Num 9: 15-23)

Israel was to move only when the cloud moved ... the levites out in front with the ark. If the cloud didn't move they stayed put. They were to follow the cloud. There were times when they encamped only over night, other times a few days and yet others months.

On the 20th day of the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted and the Israelites set out and traveled from place to place until the cloud came to rest. Num 10:11

Numbers 10:35-36

Whenever the ark set out, Moses said,

"Rise up, LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you."

³⁶ Whenever it came to rest, he said, *"Return, LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel."*

This prayer is about God making a way for Israel scattering those who would oppose the mission and for God to protecting them when they are in the camp.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

In bringing change into our lives we need to wait on God for his movement to open the doors for us.

For the congregation as a body we need to be watching to see what God is doing and how He is moving and follow Him.

Consider John 5:19 -20: What is God moving on in your life and in the life of your congregation in this season?

DAY 5: .. THAT THE LORD WOULD PUT HIS SPIRIT ON ALL HIS PEOPLE

Read Numbers 11:10-30

Moses complains to the Lord about the ongoing complaining coming from the people. He is finding the burden of leadership is too heavy.

The Lord's solution is to take of the Spirit that was on Moses and put that Spirit on seventy of the elders. When the Spirit rested on them they prophesied ...though just that once.

Eldad and Medad were listed among the elders but had remained in the camp. They began prophesying upsetting Joshua who felt this was out of order.

Moses replies with a dream in his heart. *Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them.*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Read Acts 2: 1-4 and 14-21

God has indeed poured out his Spirit on all his people and they will prophesy. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a prophetic word for someone from your congregation (ie a word of encouragement) This may come as a thought or as a mental picture or through God drawing your attention to something around you.

Share this with them in the company of another on Sunday.

DAY 6: TESTING IN THE WILDERNESS**Read Numbers 11:1 – 14:45; 16:1-17:11 and 19:1 - 21:31****The passages today deal with God's chastening of His disobedient people.**

- God had entered covenant with Abraham.
- God had delivered His people from bondage in Egypt.
- God had brought Israel into covenant with Himself as His treasured possession.
- God had revealed His Holiness and gracious means of approaching Him in this special relationship. (Leviticus 1-7)

But the people struggled to really place their trust in Him.

- **They complained about Hardships** (Num 11:1-3)
- **We want more.** (*Give us meat to eat*) (Num 11:4-35)
Note the comment on the Rabble and the romanticized past.
- Aaron and Miriam **exalt themselves** and look for more authority. (Num 12:1-15)
- The leaders (spies) **are afraid** and reject the plan to take possession of the land (Num 13:1-33)
- The people **are discouraged** ...*let's go back to Egypt* (Num 14:1-10)
- The people **act without God's guidance & support.** (Num 14:39-45)
- **Moses' leadership is rejected.**
A council of 250 community leaders led by Korah claim that they too are holy and look to take the leadership from Moses. (Num 16)
Even after God dramatically deals with this rebellion the people still **grumble.**
- **Complaints against Aaron's position as priest.** Who should be priests? (Num 17)
God chooses who will be priests through the miraculous budding of Aaron's rod.
- No water to drink. **(Moses fails to uphold the holiness of the Lord.)** (Num 20:2-13)
- The people grew **impatient** on the way and spoke against God and against Moses. *Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die.* (Num 21:4-8)
The plague of serpents

Over and over again God acts to support and authenticate his designated Leaders and to safeguard the mission. So easily the people could have turned back to Egypt and missed the destiny that awaited Israel.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

We, too, can fail to take up the challenge of pushing on with Christ when we are discouraged, impatient, afraid or have a case against one of His leaders.

Is there any situation / circumstance where today that fits what is happening in your heart? Read Philippians 1:6 and Philippians 4:4-8

DAY 7: A GOD OF STEADFAST LOVE

With the passing of the old guard {Miriam, Moses, Aaron} what will become of Israel? Given their history of rebellion, will Balaam succeed in cursing them?

No he cannot!!

Read Numbers 22-24

Look closely at Balaam's oracles

- Numbers 23: 7-12
- Numbers 23: 18-26
- Numbers 24: 3-14 **What is different about this oracle to the others? (see 24:1)**
- Numbers 24: 15-19

A God of steadfast love stands behind the covenant in spite of His people's unfaithfulness.

His grace is renewed as surely as the dawn and His redemptive purpose will not be thwarted.

The signs of God's presence, grace and favour:

- Provision of Food (Exodus 16 & Numbers 11:31-34)
- Provision of Water (Exodus 17:1-8)
- The Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6:22-27)
- Cloud/ Pillar of Fire (Numbers 9:15-23)
- The Lord leads them throughout the wilderness wanderings.
- Victory in the Battle (Exodus 17:8-15)
- Balaam's Blessing (Numbers 22-24)

The Challenge before Israel - Live under the Rule of God.

Choose Life - Deut 30:15-20

MEDITATION:

Consider the signs of God's presence, grace and favour you have experienced over the past year. Write out a brief testimony as a memorial along with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Week 7 : THE STATUTES AND BLESSINGS OF THE COVENANT

DAY 1: DEUTERONOMY – DOCUMENT OF THE COVENANT

Background:

The covenant at Sinai had been sealed after the great victory of God against Egypt in Exodus (Exodus 15:1-18), and it was now to be renewed before entry into the promise land.

The outcome of future battles and whether Israel would be established in the promised land was dependent, not on military strength but in the **power of God** and **their faithfulness** to the Covenant. Here we have an appeal to whole-hearted commitment to God, covering every area of life. The principle here applies just as much in the 21st century. *It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord (Zechariah 4:6)*

Israel was no longer a slave, dependant upon the mighty power of Egypt, but on God.

The Structure of Deuteronomy closely follows the model of Ancient Near Eastern Vassal Treaties that were drawn up between a powerful King and a subject people that looked to him for protection and security.

This is set out below:

- **Preamble** **“These are the words...” (Deuteronomy 1:1-5)**

- **Historical Prologue:** ie. the events leading up to, and forming the basis of the treaty. **(Deuteronomy 1:6 - 4:49)**

- **General Stipulations:** The basic framework for the relationship. **(Deuteronomy Chapters 5-11)**

- **Specific Stipulations - to safeguard the relationship** **(Deuteronomy Chapters 12-26)**

- **Blessings and Curses** **(Deuteronomy Chapters 27-28)**

- **Witnesses** **(Deuteronomy 30:19, 31:19, 32:1-43)**

In using a familiar form of the day the writer of Deuteronomy is able to bring home to the Israelite people ...the claim God had over their lives as the great King. His people would live under his protection and favour while for their part they would be required to live under His rules.

In the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus, his people were to live under His rule and in that way they would be salt and light in the earth. **Read Matthew Chapters 5-7**

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Ask the Father if there is any specific way you could be salt or light today?

Day 2: PROVISION FOR THE COVENANT TO CONTINUE.

Deuteronomy is a book about a community being prepared for a **new life**. Hardship and the wilderness lie behind; the promised land lies ahead. But in the present moment, there is a call for a new commitment to God and a fresh understanding of the nature of the community of God's people.

Though the scene is set more than 3000 years in the past, Deuteronomy is a book of considerable contemporary relevance. Then, as now, the surrounding world was experiencing a time of **change**, of **political tension** and **military engagement**.

But in the midst of world events, a relatively small community was being urged by Moses, the "man of God," to commit itself wholeheartedly to the Lord, before engaging in the struggle for the promised land.

The kingdom of God's chosen people was coming of age, unnoticed by the great powers of the time, and struggling against what were by human standards, impossible circumstances. This is surely the way it is for the kingdom of God in the modern world.

Like Israel before us, it is a time for the 21st Century people of God to renew our commitment within the New Covenant and by faith to take up the promises of God in our disciplining of the nations.

The Ceremony of Covenant Renewal:

- A Solemn declaration - (Deuteronomy 26:16-19 & 29:1-18)
This is at the heart of the covenant ...*the vassal treaty*
- Curses and Blessings - (Deuteronomy 27-30)
- The offer of life and death - (Deuteronomy 30:11-20)

"They are not just idle words for you - they are your life" - Deuteronomy 32:47

The picture behind the commands is that God as a Father loves, teaches and disciplines His son. (Deuteronomy 8:2-5) These precepts teach that the whole of life, wealth, etc, are dependent on Him and not on ourselves. (Deuteronomy 8:10-18)

They are essential - for long life
- for prosperity
- for ongoing possession of the promise

Notice how the law is taught ... first the history of how God has brought deliverance and then the blessing released through keeping His way of life. (Deuteronomy 6:20-25) God's favour would be dependant upon obedience.

MEDITATION: Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. How do we renew covenant today?
What is it that would be Life to us?

DAY 3: BLESSINGS OF THE COVENANT**Read Deuteronomy 7 and Deuteronomy 28**

The people are warned against making any compromise ... a compromise that would lead them into following after other gods. They were to be a holy people ... a people set apart for God as His treasured possession.

They were instructed to take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws they were given. To do so would bring great blessing and favour upon them. In this covenant this blessing would be expressed in very practical physical terms

He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers (Deut 7:11-15)

- bless the fruit of your womb, crops, herds

You will be blessed more than any other people

- Young people and livestock will be not be barren.
- You will be kept free from disease.

The Lord will drive out the nations in Canaan before you; no one will be able to stand against you.

In **Deuteronomy 28** it is expressed poetically this way:

You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

- *The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.*
- *Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.*

You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

- *The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.*
- *The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to.*

The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

The LORD will establish you as his holy people, ... Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you.

- *The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground*
- *The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.*
- *You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.*
- *The LORD will make you the head, not the tail.*

APPLICATION: In the New Covenant the focus shifts from physical blessing to the richness of spiritual blessing in Christ ... **Read Ephesians 1:3-14**

- **Consider today how you have been blessed by God and have enjoyed His favour.**
- **Are you aware of any areas where you are compromising or are being tempted to compromise at present? What is the Lord asking of you in this?**

DAY 4 WHAT DOES THE LORD ASK OF YOU?

Read Deuteronomy 6: 1-25 & 10:12-22

The laws which were to govern the life of Israel are outlined in Deuteronomy. They carried the promise of long life and security in the promised land.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.^[a] ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

- Impress them on your children.
- talk about them at home/ on the road/ when you lie down, and when you get up.
- tie them as symbols on your hands and foreheads.
- write them on your doorposts/ on your gates.

In other words they were to be at the very centre of their life.

"Fix these words in your hearts and minds" (Deuteronomy 11:18)

And now Israel what does the Lord ask of you? (Deuteronomy 10:12)

- 1) Fear the Lord your God.
- 2) Walk in all His ways.
- 3) Love Him.
- 4) Serve Him with all your hearts.
- 5) Observe Him with all your hearts.

APPLICATION:

Think about the Commandment Jesus gave us: *Love one another as I have loved you* or His words from Luke 6:27-38

Father help us to live in the power of your Spirit in our relationships with others this week.

DAY 5: LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE:**Read Deuteronomy 1:1 – 3:11; 4: 1- 40 and 7:17-23**

While Israel fought physical battles against cities and tribal groups our warfare today is not against people but against the spiritual forces of darkness that hold people captive.
(Ephesians 6:12-18)

Jesus came to set the captives free! (Luke 4:18-20)

To be victorious in our battle we must learn from the mistakes Israel made in their physical battle for the promised land.

1. **Do not allow the fear or the appearance of the power of the enemy discourage and rob us of the ability to take up what God is asking of us.**
2. **We need to trust that God will indeed go before us and fight for us**
(Deuteronomy 1:26-32 and Deuteronomy 2: 25)
3. **We dare not go into the battle without the leading of the Holy Spirit.**
Israel went up into battle without the Lord's presence and were soundly defeated.
(Deuteronomy 1:41-45)
4. **We need to follow God's directions in choosing which are the battles we are to take on,** as Israel did in the following:
 - not the Edomites (Deuteronomy 2:5) not the Moabites (2:9)
 - not the Ammonites (Deuteronomy 2:19) nor the Amorites (2:24)

Like Israel before us, obedience to God in how we live is vital. Our authority in the battle is undermined when we fail to live out holiness ...ie where we allow judgments in our heart or un-forgiveness and resentment to govern our thinking and responses.

Remember *God is merciful and faithful* (4:29-31) - *the Lord is God ...there is no other* (4:35)

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

At times we may think, why doesn't the Lord deal with all my junk at once? Or, why doesn't He get us to stand against every evil operating over the Gold Coast to completely break the power of the enemy over the city.?

The key issue is that **once ground is taken it must be occupied** and a new regime established. This applies in our private battles in our own behaviour patterns and thought life as well as on a broader scale in the city. We find this principle in Deuteronomy 7:22 *You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once or the wild animals will multiply around you.*

What is it that God is asking you to do, to hold the ground in the current battle you are facing?

DAY 6: ISSUES RELATING TO NEW AGE TEACHING:**Read: Deuteronomy 18: 9 - 22**

As some in the Western world become dissatisfied with the rampant materialism and consumerism of our culture, they seek to re-discover the spiritual side of their nature. This has led to a revival of many ancient practices at times with a 21st century spin.

eg

1. Wicca and the interest in spells and incantations etc
2. Revival of ancient paganism
3. Tarot card reading and clairvoyance
4. Channeling of ascended masters and spirit guides
5. Seances and ouija board

In Deuteronomy, God is very clear

⁹When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. ¹⁰Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, ¹¹ or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.

¹²Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. ¹³You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

WHY? “You must not worship the Lord your God in their way” (12:4 & 12:31)

The issue at stake is the nature of the relationship with God.

In Canaan, child sacrifice was practiced. The thought behind it is; if I sacrifice something costly enough surely god will do what I want. To gain security ...to prosper ...to turn back disaster a child needs to be sacrificed ... this will turn away the god's anger or win his favour. The basis of the relationship is HOW CAN I MANIPULATE THINGS SO YOU WILL BLESS ME.

For Israel, however, obedience to the covenant and a broken and contrite heart was what was needed because the issue is ABOUT RESTORING DAMAGED RELATIONSHIP.

Each of the practices outlined below undermined the type of relationship God is looking for.

- **divination or sorcery** (eg tarot cards / palmistry) interprets omens (astrology)

Divination seeks to determine the future, not by trusting in God or the leading of the Holy Spirit or in His purposes and plans for us but by mechanical means ...according to a formula. Personal relationship with a living God is not needed.

- **casts spells** ... (witchcraft) ...

This is about manipulating others for your own agenda or controlling forces for your own

favour. No relationship with God is necessary ..where one is claimed it is irrelevant to the outcome.

- **medium/spiritist** (channeling)_consulting the dead ... (seance ... ouija board)

These practices seek to build relationship for comfort and guidance from other spirits than the living God. To follow such practices opens us to relationship with demons who masquerade as angels of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)

MEDITATION:

Write down the things you most appreciate about your relationship with God and give thanks to Him for them.

DAY 7: GOD WILL RAISE UP A PROPHET

Read: Deuteronomy 18:14-19

God in fact raises up many prophets down through the years including Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Joel who all prophecy that a day is coming when all God's people will prophesy and the Spirit would write God's laws on our hearts.

Read Matthew 16:13-18

Many in Jesus' day identified him as one of the prophets ...one sent by God as Moses had foretold.

But Jesus is more. He fulfils the role of Prophet, Priest and King. He is the Christ the Son of the Living God.

Read Mark 9:1-13 and 30-32

Think about the way in which the disciples saw the glory of the Lord on Jesus ...his face shining ...his clothes dazzlingly bright and then the voice from Heaven saying *This is my Son whom I love. Listen to him!*

No wonder they couldn't believe He would be rejected and Killed ... They had seen His Glory / His Majesty.

MEDITATION:

Consider: In this transformational experience Jesus true glory is seen ... yet in **John 12: 23-33**, **Jesus says the hour of the cross is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified.**

Think about how and why Jesus, who could command companies of angels, was willing to allow himself to be arrested and crucified.