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Weekend Manna: FRED SAID

Extracts from Manna Bible teaching commentaries by Fred Morris

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Weekend of 1st/2nd January 2022

1 Samuel 4: *The Philistines take the Ark of the Lord*

The elders disobeyed God and took the Ark of the LORD God Almighty from Shiloh. It held tablets of stone on which were written the covenant of God including the Ten Commandments. They carried it with them into the battle camp. Israel wanted to carry God with them, as the Philistines carried their little Dagon god statues. But God was not with Israel on that day. He left them to their own ways. They believed they had God Almighty with them on their side. Their faith was in the Ark of the Lord which He did not want them to remove from Shiloh.

The Philistines fought and defeated the men of Israel (4:9-10). 30,000 men of Israel died that day. God promised Joshua 300 years earlier, "No-one will be able to oppose you as long as you live" (Joshua 1:5). But the purpose of God for the salvation of Israel had not failed. He also planned for 1000 years of prophets, priests and kings to prepare the way for a new covenant through His Son, Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world.

Meanwhile, the Ark of God was captured by the Philistines. The Israelites believed that God had deserted them. They did not know that God would help Samuel to lead the country back into good ways. Because of what he did, the purpose of God to save the world would continue through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND SAUL" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 8th/9th January 2022

Mark Chapter 4: *Parables about the Kingdom of God*

Jesus asked, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or under a bed? Or do you put it on its stand?" (4:21). Jesus came as a light for the world (John 8:12). His light must be brought into the open (Mark 4:22). This light of Jesus is the truth from God.

Jesus said, "Everyone who has ears should listen" (4:23). He added, "Think carefully about what you hear" (4:24). We must seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to know what is the truth from God. We must be prepared to reject what non-believers tell us and even walk away from them. We must also test what other believers tell us by reading the written word of God in the Bible.

We should also share with others the understanding from God that we have received. The light of the truth from God will bless others. It brings gifts from God. It brings new life on earth, joy, peace, faith and eternal life in heaven. Jesus said, "As you give [to others], so you will receive. In fact, you will receive even more" (4:24).

However, people who do not listen and do not receive these gifts from God have very little to share. Jesus warned, "If you have nothing, even what you have will be taken away from you" (4:25).

So let us listen carefully and understand the things of God. Then let us share what we understand to bless others.

Extracted from "THE EARLY TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2008, 2016.

Weekend of 15th/16th January 2022

Mark Chapter 14: *The Last Meal of Jesus.*

Many years before Jesus lived on Earth, the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. Then God, by His great power, brought them out. This happened 3500 years ago.

Each year, at Passover, God's special people always remember what He did for them before leading them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Each family kill a lamb, just as they did at the first Passover in Egypt, when the angel of death passed over them. In remembrance, they eat the Passover meal as a family. At the time of Jesus, Jews came from all over the country, and from far-away places, to celebrate in Jerusalem. Jewish families still eat this meal today which includes lamb and bread made without yeast and wine.

Jesus was a devout Jew and ate the Passover meal with His disciples. Jews remembered that the blood of the lamb was painted on the doorpost of the Israelites to save them from the angel of death in Egypt. Today, we remember the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice of blood saved us from death into everlasting life.

Christians everywhere remember the Lord's Last Passover Supper. Some call it the breaking of bread, or Communion, or Eucharist, to remember the last fellowship meal that Jesus ate with His disciples. This was before He gave His life on the cross as punishment for our sins.

This last meal helped the disciples to remember their Lord's death. He became the Lamb of God and His blood would pay the price for our punishment and save all believers from their sins.

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS THE CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2020.

Weekend of 22nd/23rd January 2022

John 11:17-27. Martha and Mary meet Jesus.

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem four days after the death of Lazarus (11:17). Many Jewish friends were with Martha and Mary to comfort them (11:19). Martha went out to meet Jesus. Mary stayed at home (11:20).

'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'I wish You had been here! Then my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You anything You ask for' (11:21-22). Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again' (11:23).

Martha had a strong faith in Jesus. She also knew there would be a resurrection of the dead. This was taught by Jesus and promised in the Old Testament writings (John 5:29; 6:44; Daniel 12:2). Therefore, Martha said, 'I know that he will rise again. This will happen when people are raised from death on the Last Day' (John 11:24).

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And those who live and believe in me will never die' (11:25-26). These are the well-known words of Jesus which are often read at funeral services today. Then Jesus said to Martha, 'Do you believe this?'

Martha did not understand everything, but she knew the One who spoke to her. 'Yes, Lord' she told Him. 'I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God' (11:27). Martha believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Saviour to come into the world. For Martha, and for us all, this truth is the beginning of our salvation and eternal life.

Martha hurried home to talk to her sister Mary. Then Mary went quickly to meet Jesus (11:28-29). Others followed her.

Extracted from "THE GOSPEL OF JOHN Part 1" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2015.

Weekend of 27th/28th January 2022

John Chapter 17. *Jesus prays for all Believers*

Jesus told His Father that His prayers were not just for the twelve disciples but for all believers in Him, including those who are not Jews. His prayers were not just for then but for now. "I do not pray only for them. I pray also for those who will believe in Me because of their message" (17:20.) In this way, Jesus showed us that it is important to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and pray for those who tell and teach others the Good News. Also, to pray for those who hear and read and believe the Good News about Jesus, our Saviour.

Jesus prayed for the meetings of believers:

- to unite with each other and His Father (17:11).
- to be full of His joy (17:13).
- to be safe from the Evil One (17:15).
- to be holy and kept from sin (17:19).
- to share the Good News with others in a loving way (17:20).
- to make new followers of Jesus through showing true Christian unity with each other, both Jews and Gentiles, and with God and with our Lord and Saviour (17:21).

When we read how Jesus prayed for us, it encourages us to work for the Kingdom of God. He continues to pray for us today, interceding for us with His heavenly Father (Hebrews 7:25).

Extracted from "THE GOSPEL OF JOHN Part 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2017.

Weekend of 5th/6th February 2022

Acts Chapter 9. *Jesus sends Ananias to talk to Saul*

A believer called Ananias lived in the city of Damascus. Jesus spoke to him and said, "Ananias, go to the house of Judas... and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul... I have chosen this man to work for Me. He will carry My name to people who are not Jews, and to their kings. And he will bring My name to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer in My name" (9:11,15-16).

This confirms God's plan to save Israel AND the rest of the world through repentance and faith in Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah.

Ananias found Saul and prayed for him. "Brother Saul", he said. "The Lord Jesus, whom you saw on the road to Damascus... has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." At once, Saul could see! He now believed that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah and the Son of God. He was baptised. Then he ate some food and was strengthened (9:17-19).

Ananias confirmed to Saul the words of Jesus:

- His new ministry would be to reach the Gentiles with the Good News of Jesus.
- He would also be sent to reach the people of Israel.

His ministry would therefore face opposition from both Jews and Gentiles and suffer conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers. This is why the topics of church unity, love and respect appear later in several of his letters to the churches.

Extracted from "THE EARLY CHURCH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2004, 2012, 2019.

Weekend of 12th/13th February 2022

Acts 23. *Jesus speaks comforting words to Paul*

The Lord Jesus Himself came to Paul and said, "Be brave! You have given witness to me in Jerusalem. You must do the same in Rome" (23:11). This comforted Paul and encouraged him. He remembered these words in the difficult times ahead.

When things appear to go wrong, it feels as if God is no longer with us. Throughout the Bible, God often spoke directly to His people. We should remember that God has handed authority to His Son, the Lord Jesus, to judge what to do when things go wrong (Matthew 28:18).

Through His Spirit we see the Lord guiding Paul (Acts 23:11):

- Jesus spoke in the middle of the night.
- Jesus appeared in bodily form and stood near Paul.
- Jesus came to encourage him.
- Jesus prepared him to witness of Him in Jerusalem and in Rome.

When you have troubles, believe that Jesus will be with you and guide you. Sometimes He will let you know a little of what lies ahead. He does not tell us much about the future, so that we learn to live by

faith. Paul did not know much about the future, only that one day he would go to Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire at that time (23:11). God warns us not to be tempted by attractive ideas or fantasies about the future, especially from witches, fortune tellers, mediums or spirits of the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10-13). He wants to prepare us to trust only our Lord's resurrection power within us and obey the guidance of His promised Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

Extracted from "PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2012, 2021.

Weekend of 19th/21st February 2022

Romans 5:3 *Joy in our Suffering.*

Paul says that suffering can be good for us because it makes our faith grow strong. So we can rejoice in our suffering. There are different causes of suffering:

- the suffering caused by our own sins, habits, accidents or unhealthy diets and activities.
- the suffering caused by the sins of others or by our polluted world or by living in a world that is in chaos and ruled by Satan.

We can rejoice in all our suffering if we continue to trust in God and grow in faith. God therefore allows suffering, since it enables Him to produce more of His righteousness in us. Suffering gives us strength to go on (5:3). It produces a mature Christian character. It builds faith and hope of eternal salvation. It enables us to prove the love of God dwelling in us through His Spirit (5:5). He will also give us the wisdom to keep well mentally, physically and spiritually.

It is not a good thing to suffer and to refuse to trust in God. Always seek God in prayer and through reading His Word (both Old and New Testaments) and talking with Jesus. Learn how to rejoice in your suffering. Seek God in worship. Allow God to use your suffering for good. Open your eyes to see the promised power of God at work, so that you believe not because of "human witness but because of the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5). We need the power of God at work in our lives to endure suffering and persecution. In this way we grow in God.

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2012.

Weekend of 26th/27th February 2022

Romans 14. *Strong and weak faith: living together without judging*

Paul speaks strongly about faith in Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles must put their hopes in Christ and not add anything to what our Saviour said or did. Paul earlier warned the Romans not to let their traditions hinder the faith of weak believers. He now speaks about what they eat and drink (14:2-3,14-21) and which holy days should be remembered (14:5-6).

In every age, in every group of God's people there are always 'differences of opinion' (14:1). Groups of people may have a difference of opinion but this must not become a cause for judging one another (Colossians 2:16). For centuries the Jews lived under the Old Covenant rules regarding 'clean' and 'unclean' foods. No Jew ate pork, but Gentiles did. Some Jewish believers ate only vegetables (14:2).

Paul wrote, 'Accept those whose faith is weak without judging them' (14:1). God is judge. He will help the weak ones to grow strong (14:4). Therefore, stop judging one another and find ways to help believers to grow in their faith (14:13).

Every Christian must grow up in his faith. Some grow up quickly and become mature in just a few years. Others take a lifetime.

Paul told the Christians that they could eat anything set before them, if it did not trouble the person who watched. If the other person was troubled by what they were eating, they should not eat it with them. For example, if it had been offered to the local idols which caused problems for some believers.

Extracted from "LIVING IN CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2012.

Weekend of 5th/6th March 2022

1 Corinthians 5:7-8. *Bread without yeast and lives without sin*

If you ignore sin in your church or in your life, it will spread and affect your whole life and the lives of others. There is no such thing as a small sin; all sin is unholy and hated by God. He turns His back on

sin. We then quickly lose contact with Him and our Saviour. We also lose the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit within, unless we repent. Sin, however small, is like yeast which spreads throughout the lump of dough before it is made into bread.

At the celebration of the LORD's Passover, every Jewish family cleans out their house. All yeast must go out. Then the bread for the Passover Feast is baked without yeast. Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to keep the Passover Feast (5:8). But they must not celebrate with the 'old yeast' in their lives. They should use bread made without yeast and then celebrate with lives that are without sin. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we remember the sacrifice Jesus made for us to be forgiven so that we can put sin behind us. Jesus therefore invites us to break bread and remember Him with changed lives that are without sin.

When we share bread and wine together at the Lord's Supper, we must be honest and truthful. As true believers, we remember Christ's death as His sacrifice for us. No sin can be left among us. We must remember that "Christ has been offered up [sacrificed, KJV] for us. He is our Passover Lamb" (5:7). We must not boast in sin but repent and unite in worshipping Christ together.

Extracted from "CHURCH UNITY AND DISCIPLINE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 12th/13th March 2022

Ephesians 2: *We are saved by grace, not by any good works we do*

Paul wrote, "He gave us life even when we were [spiritually] dead in sin. God's grace has saved you" (2:5).

It was God's love and mercy that saved Paul and then sent him to Ephesus. He went there to preach the Good News. When people hear the Good News of Jesus and receive it, He sets them free from sin. Many in Ephesus believed the Good News about Jesus and were saved.

The truth from God reveals the darkness in people's souls. It also brings the light of Jesus to them (2:5-6):

- It gives men and women new life in Jesus.
- It frees them from the power of death caused by sin.
- It gives us a place with Jesus in His heavenly Kingdom NOW!

His grace is shown to us 'because of what Christ Jesus has done' (2:7).

"God's grace has saved you through faith in Christ." These are Paul's amazing words describing salvation (2:5,8). He adds, "It is God's gift" (2:8). God did this work when no-one else could. "He saved us from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves" (Colossians 1:13).

Two things worked together. First, God's grace came to these sinners. Then, when they heard the truth, faith rose up in their hearts and they believed (Romans 10:10; Hebrews 4:1). The Christians in Ephesus were not saved because of anything good they did to earn salvation. No-one could say, "Look what I have done!" It is faith in God's wonderful grace through the sacrifice of Jesus that alone enables us to receive His salvation and then do His good works to extend His Kingdom.

Extracted from "EPHESIANS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2018.

Weekend of 19th/20th March 2022.

Hebrews Chapter 10: *How to grow in faith.*

We can trust in the promise of God for salvation through Jesus. We must, however, hold firm to our faith and hope in Him. 'God, the One who promised, is faithful' (Hebrews 10:23). However, if we do not come close to God often, we will begin to lose our faith in God. Soon we might stop serving the Lord, or even stop meeting together with other believers.

The writer therefore encourages us to serve others (10:24-25). Think about this. To grow in faith in God, Christians need to encourage other believers in their faith. This means that we ourselves grow in faith as we help others to grow in faith. Therefore:

- Care for others with godly love.
- Encourage others to do good deeds.
- Do not give up meeting together.
- Encourage others with words of hope.
- Act in faith more and more to fulfil the promises of God.

- Live waiting for the return of Jesus.

This also means that we should:

- Grow together in reading and understanding the Word of God.
- Spend time with others in prayer.
- Meet together to worship God and share communion.
- Serve God together, seeking Him for the work He has for each believer to do.

Christians meet together in large or small groups all over the world. It does not matter how large or small your group is. You should encourage and increase the faith of others. In this way, you will honour God and receive His blessing for yourself.

Extracted from "HEBREWS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2016.

Weekend of 26th/27th March 2022.

James Chapter 1: *Trials and temptations*

James said they would suffer all kinds of trouble for their faith. "When you do, think of it as pure joy." Can we be joyful when things are difficult? We can, because we know that difficulties make us more patient and faithful. Do we understand that winning trials and overcoming tests bring maturity of faith? It is not easy to be joyful at all times, but it is possible. We have the Holy Spirit power which gives joy... peace... patience... and much, much more.

When the lives of followers of Jesus become difficult "your faith will be put to the test" and your patience has a chance to grow (1:3). When God allows this to happen, your faith will develop through His grace and mercy. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He gives strength to go on and to keep going when troubles happen to us. We call this perseverance, the power to go on when we face difficulties.

None of us has this strength of ourselves. We receive it from God as we put our trust in Him. So, in these verses we see that faith in God:

- stands strong under trials (1:2-4);
- seeks God for wisdom (1:5-6);
- does not doubt God's care (1:6-8);
- is made humble by sorrow and loss (1:9-10);
- and wins a crown of glory (1:12).

The apostle John later wrote down these words from Jesus, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have. Then no-one will take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

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Weekend of 2nd/3rd April 2022

Revelation 2:18. *The message to the church in Thyatira*

At Thyatira, Each business had its own special god that the workers worshipped to try to gain success. The Christians in Thyatira were expected to do this or risk losing their jobs or business opportunities.

The chief god in Thyatira was Apollo. There were others. They were not just pictures or statues or idols but actual demonic powers. By those same powers, they revealed themselves to the various peoples of the day (1 Corinthians 10:20).

In this heathen religion, people disobeyed the first commandment given to Moses. They opposed Yahweh, the one true Almighty God, instead of worshipping Him. 'They thought they were wise, but they made fools of themselves' (Romans 1:22).

Satan also deceives people about God in nature, so that they worship rivers, trees, hills, stars and the sun and moon – treating them as gods. These people failed to worship God the Creator but instead worshipped what He created (Romans 1:25).

However, many people's hearts inquire and search for answers and for something or someone greater to worship. Because God has not stopped working, He keeps seeking and drawing men and women to worship Him.

This church in Thyatira did not yield to the threat from idol worship or the cult of Emperor worship. They refused to worship anyone or anything but God alone.

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2010, 2013.

Weekend of 9th/10th April 2022

Genesis 6:6 to 18. *Noah, a man of faith, builds God's ark*

'The LORD God Almighty was pleased with Noah' (6:8). Noah trusted God in a world that was filled with hate and murder.

Noah was a man of great faith and courage. He told everyone that God would judge the Earth because of their wickedness. He warned them that God would send a great flood. He was not discouraged when his neighbours mocked him because his faith was in God alone (Hebrews 11:7).

In His grace and mercy God saved Noah and his family, eight people. God then said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people... so make yourself an ark of pine or cypress wood... Here is how you will build it..." (6:13-16).

God designed Noah's ark. The word 'ark' is very old. It is also used in Exodus 2:3, Deuteronomy 10:1 and Revelation 11:19. This ark had ideal measurements given by God, nearly 150 m × 30 m × 20 m.

He then introduces the word 'covenant' for the first time (6:18). This is not just a promise like the promises He made to Adam and Eve. God's covenant with Noah, and the later covenants, are more important than promises, and become more and more important as time goes on. They were all part of His developing salvation plan for sinful mankind.

Extracted from "BEGINNINGS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2021.

Weekend of 16th/17th April 2022

Genesis Chapter 17. *Abraham laughs at God's promise*

God said, "You can be sure that I will give you a son by Sarah" (17:16). Abraham laughed. "Will a son be born to a man who is 100 years old? Will Sarah have a child at the age of 90?" (17:17).

Abraham's laugh showed that his faith was no longer strong enough to believe. His next question was to ask God to bless Ishmael. It was Abraham and Sarah's plan to have a son through Hagar, their servant. But it was God's plan to give them a son through Sarah. This would require a miracle because of her great age.

Abraham wanted Ishmael to be the heir to his property, but God quickly corrected the old man's thinking. "Your wife Sarah will have a son by you and you will call him Isaac. I will keep My agreement with him forever" (17:19).

God's agreement would pass from Abraham to Isaac, not to Ishmael. "But as for Ishmael," God said, "I have heard you and I will bless him too. I will make him the father of a great nation." But His special agreement would pass to Isaac, the son born to Sarah "by this time next year" (17:21).

God finished speaking with Abraham and Abraham got up from the ground where he had been lying face down. Then Abraham went to find the men of his household and told them what God had said. Abraham obeyed God at once.

Abraham circumcised every male in his household including himself and Ishmael. This is why many Arab descendants of Abraham, as well as Jews, circumcise their boys today, even if they do not follow the One True God of Abraham.

Extracted from "ABRAHAM" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2020.

Weekend of 23rd/24th April 2022

Genesis Chapter 27. *Jacob pays a high price for his blessing*

Esau was so angry with Jacob that he said that he would kill him! When Rebekah heard this, she told Jacob to prepare to go to his uncle's house in Mesopotamia and stay there until Esau's anger passed. Jacob's sins against his brother caused many problems:

- He never saw his mother again.
- He deceived and hurt his father.
- He was treated badly by his uncle Laban.
- Quarrels and wickedness divided his family.
- He became afraid of his brother and his brother's family.

- Later, his brother's tribe became enemies of Israel. People often cause their own family problems as did Jacob. We 'reap what we sow' (Galatians 6:7). If a man spends too much money, he gets himself into debt. If a man looks for too many good things, we may fail to trust in God (Proverbs 30:7-9). Rebekah stayed at home with Esau, the son she did not love, the husband she helped to deceive and the daughters-in-law she hated. Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am sick of living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land... my life will not be worth living" (27:46). So Jacob prepared to run off to his uncle's family in Paddan Aram in Mesopotamia to start a new life. Talk about this:
 1. What was important in Isaac's blessing for Jacob, then and now (27:28-29)?
 2. What was the result of Esau's actions?
 3. What was the result of Jacob's actions?
 4. What was the result of Rebekah's actions?
 5. What was the result of Isaac showing favour to Esau?
 6. What was the result of God showing favour to Jacob?
- Extracted from "ISAAC AND JACOB" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2018

Weekend of 30th April/1st May 2022

Genesis Chapters 37-50. Conclusion

The story of Joseph shows how God was in control, working out his plans for the future of Israel. He used family problems to do good. Joseph was a slave, a servant and a saviour of Israel.

This commentary also tells the story of Judah and how he served the purposes of God. God used him in his plan for a Saviour to be born in Israel through whose tribe Jesus Christ was born.

God wants all people to know Jesus and to trust Him to make them part of His long-term plan for the world. He wants to change people to become more like Him. It is sin which stops people from being what God wants them to be. Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God brings forgiveness and eternal life. It is always God's plan to bring good and salvation out of sin and suffering.

Joseph was the son of Jacob and became a servant and saviour for the whole family of Abraham. Jesus was the Son of God and became a servant and saviour of Israel and the wider family of Abraham who believe in Israel's Messiah or Christ. Through faith in Jesus we are all saved from death and receive eternal life with God. Hallelujah!

The story of Joseph also teaches us about the importance of love and unity in families. It teaches that forgiveness brings peace and freedom from guilt.

This story of Joseph is part of a divine plan for the family of Abraham to provide salvation to the people of Israel and then to all who believe in Jesus Christ their Messiah who is Son of God Almighty and Saviour of the world.

Extracted from "JOSEPH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2018

Weekend of 7th/8th May 2022

Exodus Chapter 19:1-25. God prepares the people to meet Him.

The people of Israel came to Mount Sinai and camped in front of the mountain. It was now three months since leaving Egypt. Mount Sinai was a high mountain. People call it a holy mountain, but God does not live in a mountain or in anything that He has made. He is much greater. He is all-powerful and has control over everything He has made.

God spoke to Moses from the mountain top and told him, "This is what you are to say to the family of Jacob (Israel)" (19:3). "Tell them, 'If you obey Me and keep My Covenant, then of all the nations you will be My special treasure. You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a special nation' " (19:5-6).

God told Moses "You will become a kingdom of priests to serve Me" (Exodus 19:6). God wants all believers to be priests and no special clothes are required. The sacrifice of Jesus made it possible for all believers to be God's holy people. We can come to God at any time, tell him what we need and what others need. He will listen to us. "You will be holy priests. You will offer spiritual sacrifices. God will accept them because of what Jesus Christ has done" (1 Peter 2:5).

Moses went to the people. He called the leaders of Israel and told them what God said. All the people answered Moses, "We will do everything the Lord says" (19:8).

So Moses went back up the mountain and told God what they said.

Extracted from "THE BIRTH OF A NATION" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2012
Weekend of 14th/15th May 2022

Leviticus 26. Joshua chosen to lead.

Moses counted the people a second time. This time there were 1820 fewer adult men over 20 years old (26:51). Nearly all the older people had died during their time in the desert (14:28-35). This was part of God's judgement.

Reuben's families were much fewer than before because his relatives were from the tribe of Korah which God judged (26:9-11). The greatest loss, however, was from the tribe of Simeon.

Then Moses said, "Almighty God... please appoint a new leader for this community. Then your people ... will not be like sheep without a shepherd" (27:16-17).

God replied, "Take Joshua, the son of Nun... Give him some of your authority" (27:18,20). God told Moses to lay hands on Joshua before the entire assembly to commission him in their presence and to pass on to him some of his authority so that everyone will learn to obey him. Moses 'did just as the LORD commanded him. And [Joshua] did just as the Lord instructed through Moses' (27:23).

From that day, Joshua shared with Moses in leading the people. He had been a helper for Moses from his youth. He was successful in war (Exodus 17:13) and gave a good report of the Promised Land when he went as one of the twelve spies (Numbers 14:6-9). He also guarded the Tent of Meeting which Moses put up outside the camp (Exodus 33:11).

Moses gave the authority for judging the people to Joshua, but he could not give him the office of prophet. Only God could do that. God had given Moses the gift of prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:15). In future, Joshua would have to go to the High Priest to find God's will for himself. This was a new way to seek God's guidance. God later appointed judges, kings and prophets as well as priests.

Extracted from "THE GROWTH OF GOD'S NATION" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2004, 2012, 2021.

Weekend of 21st/22nd May 2022

Joshua 7. The sin of Achan

Joshua brought each clan, each family and finally each person before the LORD. Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD." Joshua spoke gently to this man and called him 'son'.

Achan did not repent until he was proved guilty. God's law at that time required him to repent or be punished for his sins. Today, God wants each of us to repent so that we can receive forgiveness through Christ (Luke 13:1-4). God is more interested in the sinner who repents than He is in punishing sin. He wants to save sinners like us.

It was God's plan through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Rahab (from Jerocho) and King David, that the Messiah would be born to Mary as the baby Jesus. And it was His plan for Jesus the Messiah or Christ to take the punishment for our sins, so that we can live for ever. His Jewish name, Yeshua, means 'God's salvation' which is the same meaning as Joshua.

The people stoned Achan and his family. They put a large pile of rocks over his body near Ai (7:26). The people of God no longer stone sinners to death. Jesus said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into sin when you are tempted" (Matthew 26:41). Note these warnings. Never think that some little sin will not get in the way of God's victory in your life.

Note, too, that Joshua did not judge Achan. It was the word of God that proved Achan wrong.

Extracted from "JOSHUA" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2014, 2021

Weekend of 4th/5th June 2022

1 Samuel 2: Hannah's Song of Praise

Hannah praised and thanked God for His power over her enemies.

- She *rejoiced* in her salvation (2:1).

- She *worshipped* God for His great holiness. He was the rock in her life. There is no-one else like Him (2:2).
- She *claimed* there was no place for pride. God knows all things and is judge of all we say and do (2:3).
- She *believed* that mighty people are brought down by God and those who stumble are lifted up by God with renewed strength (2:4).
- She *rejoiced* that those who are hungry are fed and those who are childless are finally blessed. She saw how ungrateful people who have plenty of food and children end up unhappy (2:5).
- She *knew* that God gives life and He takes it away. He sends the wicked to Hell and believers to Heaven. He makes some poor and others rich. He humbles people and He lifts up whoever He chooses (2:6-8).
- She *trusted* in the Creator of the world, the LORD God Almighty (2:8).
- She *announced* that strong and wicked people will not finally win. God guards those who are godly (2:9).
- She *declared* that the enemies of God would be destroyed since He is the great judge of all nations (2:10).
- She *prophesied* about a coming king even at a time when there were no kings in Israel. He would be the 'Anointed One' of God (2:10).

Extracted from "RUTH AND HANNAH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2008, 2016

Weekend of 18th19th June 2022

1 Samuel 10: *Samuel anoints Saul as future king of Israel*

The next day as they were on their way out of town, Samuel spoke to Saul. He said, "Tell the servant to go ahead of us... I will give you a message from God." The prophet Samuel shared with Saul the secret message from God when they were alone.

Then Samuel took some olive oil. He poured it on Saul's head and kissed him. He said, "God has anointed you to be the king of His people. When you leave me today... You will go on to Gibeah. As you approach the town, you will meet a group of prophets. They will be coming down from the high place where they worship. People will be playing lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps at the head of the group. The prophets will be prophesying. The Spirit of the Almighty God will come powerfully on you. Then you will prophesy along with them. You will become a different person. Then do what you want to do. God is with you" (10:3-7).

God changed Saul's heart through the Holy Spirit before he was appointed as the first king of Israel, just as Samuel prophesied. God also blessed him with divine wisdom so that he would be able to choose to do what was right because God was with him.

'As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart' (10:9). This also happens today to people who trust in God. The Holy Spirit comes into their lives as they believe in Jesus, God's Saviour, and His salvation plan.

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND SAUL" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 25th/26th June 2022

Mark Chapter 3: *Jesus and His Mother and Brothers*

It may surprise you to read that on one occasion Jesus did not want to see His mother and brothers (3:31-35). He knew that they wanted to take Him away (3:21). They were worried about the things people were saying about Him in His home town of Nazareth. Some people even thought that Jesus was mad.

Jesus did not want to argue with His family. So He chose not to see them. In this way, they would not delay the plan of God. He wanted to stay with the people who needed Him. The crowds wanted Him to teach them and to heal them. He said that they were His mother and brothers and sisters (3:35). Followers of Jesus become the family of God.

Mark does not say that Jesus turned away from His own mother and brothers. He did not want to argue with them. So He chose to stay with those who were fulfilling the will of God. He did the kindest thing and the correct thing towards His family. He avoided a family argument while doing the will of His heavenly Father.

Sometimes, our relatives make it hard for us to do what God wants us to do. We must understand their loving concern. But we must understand what the plan or will of God is. We must also understand how to avoid troubles when we make family decisions.

Extracted from "THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2008, 2016, 2022.

Weekend of 2nd/3rd July 2022.

Mark Chapter 16. *Jesus rises from death*

Early on Sunday, the first day of the week, three women brought spices to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. They wanted to put them on the dead body of Jesus. It was the day after the Jewish Sabbath (16:1).

As they went to the tomb they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" (16:3). The stone was large and heavy, but they found it had already been moved. An angel of God had done it (Matthew 28:2).

- The stone was not rolled away by the Roman guard.
- The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out.
- The stone was rolled away by the angel to let the followers of Jesus in to see that He had risen from death.

A young man dressed in white was sitting in the tomb on the right (Mark 16:5). "Do not be afraid," he said to them. "I know you are looking for Jesus ... He is not here. He is risen! ... See the place where they had put him" (16:6-7). "Go quickly! Tell His disciples He has risen from the dead" (Matthew 28:7).

The angel specially mentioned Peter, who had denied Jesus three times. The angel then said that Jesus would go to Galilee to meet the disciples. "It will be just as He told you" (16:7).

The women ran from the tomb, saying nothing to anyone. They were afraid yet full of joy (Matthew 28:8). When they got back to the city, they told the eleven disciples and the others, but they did not believe the women until later (Luke 24:11).

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS THE CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2020.

Weekend of 9th/10th July 2022.

John Chapter 3. *Jesus says, 'You must be born again'*

Jesus replied to Nicodemus. 'What I am about to tell you is true. No-one can see God's Kingdom without being born again' (3:3).

Then Jesus said a third time, 'What I am about to tell you is true' (3:11). He knew that the religious leaders rejected the witness of Himself and His disciples. But Jesus wanted to tell Nicodemus many true things from Heaven (3:12). John the Apostle faithfully tells us what Jesus said. Millions of people have read these words and believed that they are true.

Jesus said these wonderful truths about Himself:

- Jesus, the Son of Man, came from Heaven as the Son of God (3:13). 'Son of Man' was one of the names of the promised Messiah given in the Old Testament writings.
- 'Moses lifted up the snake in the desert. The Son of Man must be lifted up also' (3:14; Numbers 21:8-9). Jesus spoke in this way about His death on the cross.
- 'Everyone who believes in Him can live with God for ever' (3:15).
- In this way, 'God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son' (3:16). Jesus died for our sins. He is our Saviour.
- On the cross, the punishment and price for sin was paid.
- 'Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life' (3:16). Then all who believe in Him are forgiven forever, in this world and the next.
- 'God did not send His son into the world to judge the world. He sent His Son to save the world through Him' (3:17).

Extracted from "THE GOSPEL OF JOHN" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2015.

Weekend of 16th/17th July 2022.

John Chapter 20. *The testimony of John*

Jesus welcomed the worship of Thomas and said, "Blessed are those who have not seen Me but still believe" (20:28-29).

The writings of John include some of the many miracles that Jesus did. There were many other miracles (20:30). He wrote this book so that we could believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He said, "If you believe this, you will have life because you belong to Him" (20:31).

To some people, the life and death of Jesus is nothing more than a strange old story. To millions of others, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the greatest event in human history. It was God's plan for His Son to change history, forever, and He can change your life, too.

To all people everywhere, Jesus died so that we could live (2 Corinthians 5:15). There was no other way for us to be saved from eternal punishment. All who do not receive Jesus by faith, will die in their sins (John 3:36). And all those who repent and follow Jesus become like Him. We will be in glory forever with Him (14:2-3; Colossians 3:4).

Think about this: Do you remember and give thanks for the times when your fear turned to joy? What encouragement did Jesus give to all who believe in Him (20:29)? What promise did John give to his readers (20:31)?

Extracted from "JOHN'S GOSPEL PART 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2017.

Acts Chapter 6. *Preparing the Church to grow*

More and more Jews were joining the 'Messianic fellowships' in Jerusalem (6:1). Soon they needed more people to help share food for the poor and the widows. This needed to be shared fairly to avoid complaints. They needed extra helpers and teachers to enable the church to keep growing.

The apostles asked the believers to choose seven men. Notice how they chose them:

- They understood that this work of serving others was important.
- They called a church meeting.
- They chose the men to do this work so that the apostles could be free to teach (6:2).
- They chose men who were wise and full of the Holy Spirit (6:3).
- The apostles laid their hands on the seven men they chose and prayed with them and for them (6:6).

The result of choosing church helpers who were filled by the Holy Spirit was:

- Everyone was pleased (6:5).
- God's message, the Good News of Jesus, continued to spread (6:7).
- The numbers of believers in Jerusalem continued to grow (6:7) and included many of the Temple priests.
- One of the chosen workers performed miracles among the people (6:8).

Extracted from "THE EARLY CHURCH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2004, 2012, 2019.

Weekend of 23rd/24th July 2022.

Acts Chapter 20. *How Paul decided what to do*

Paul knew when to stay and when to move on. He was a busy preacher and teacher but he listened to the Holy Spirit to guide him. He stayed in Ephesus until the troubles was over. Paul encouraged them when it was time for him to leave (20:1). He left to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) before planning to return to Troas in Asia Province (20:3-6). Paul knew that he must:

- fulfil his divine calling to preach the Good News to the Gentiles;
- be guided by the Holy Spirit to know when to move on;
- plant new churches and teach and encourage the new believers;
- obey his church leaders in Antioch-in-Syria who regularly prayed for him.

Paul also hoped to visit Jerusalem and then Rome and then Spain. He never saw Greece or Syria again, including his home church.

Seven of the Christian brothers went with him to Macedonia then went on to Troas to wait for Paul to arrive. He joined them there and stayed seven days to teach.

The believers met in an upper room and Paul talked to them until midnight. It was hot and the room filled with smoke from the oil lamps. A young man sat in the open window. He fell asleep

and fell to the ground below. When they reached him, he was dead. Paul went down and threw his arms around the body of the young man and his spirit came back into him again (20:10).

Extracted from "PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2012, 2021.

Weekend of 30th/31st July 2022.

Romans Chapter 5: *We have peace with God in suffering*

Paul next explains 'justification'. This is what happens when God forgives sinners and makes them right with Himself (5:1-3). Through Jesus:

- we have wonderful peace with God (see also Colossians 1:20).
- we have a way to come to God (see also Hebrews 10:19).
- we receive the grace of God and stand before Him, forgiven and made clean (see also Ephesians 4:32).
- we are given hope to share His glory (see also Romans 8:17)

'And that's not all. We are full of joy even when we suffer' (5:3). This is strange talk! When we suffer for Christ our hope grows stronger. Suffering makes us strong (1 Peter 5:10). Suffering makes us push forward to know Christ better (Philippians 3:10). It helps us to understand the causes of suffering.

Paul encourages them to believe that "suffering gives everyone strength to go on" (5:3). This hope never lets us down, because God fills our hearts with His love and peace. He does this through the Holy Spirit He gives us (5:5). We need to encourage this hope to grow. Hope in Jesus brings us the love of God. God pours His love into our hearts. The Holy Spirit does this work. He fills us with the great love of God. Sometimes hope seems to be just a dream but our hope comes from God Himself who can be trusted.

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2012.

Weekend of 3rd/4th August 2022.

Romans Chapter 13: *When leaders rule badly*

God is the creator of law and order. He created order and harmony in the universe. He gives laws to govern all people, whatever their position in life. Leaders are responsible to Him and will have to explain to Him their deeds (14:12).

Paul says that God sets governments in place. He allows men and women to rule. Christians should obey their government. Christians may be a minority in some countries, but they have God on their side! Sometimes governments write laws that make it difficult for Christians to obey; then we must pray and follow God's way.

Daniel and his friends were ordered to worship a great idol which the king had set up. They refused and were punished (Daniel 3:28). Peter was ordered not to preach about Christ. He told the leaders, 'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29-32). He went out and preached the Gospel, the Good News of God's salvation plan in Christ. He was punished but carried on preaching (Acts 5:40-42).

Sometimes we must choose between obeying God and obeying our leaders. Quietly resisting an unjust law without being violent may be a good choice in the same way as Daniel, Peter and many other faithful believers.

Extracted from "LIVING IN CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2012.

Weekend of 20th/21st August 2022.

1 Corinthians 11: *God's marriage law*

God gave Adam and Eve His marriage law (Genesis 2:24). In marriage, a man and woman are joined together as one person, in body, mind and spirit. They become one flesh. God means them to be together as long as they live. Two minds agreeing in work, worship and witness, with the desire to bring up children.

Because marriage is God's plan for male and female, He will honour every effort we put into our Christian marriages. Paul wrote, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful, or proud, or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged

[thinks no evil, KJV]" (1 Cor. 13:4-5).

Christ showed His great love for the Church, "by giving Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). This is an example of how God wants marriage to be. In marriage we give ourselves up to each other. Marriage should make each person mature by giving them a loving, caring place where they can grow and develop in a godly way. Each person's special abilities should be developed as in the Church.

As each person's gifts and talents contribute to the marriage, the family grows in strength, creativity and service. We share the responsibility for growing together in Christ, which benefits both men and women.

Extracted from "CHURCH UNITY AND DISCIPLINE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 27th/28th August 2022.

Ephesians Chapter 5: *Take every opportunity to do good*

Paul said again and again, "Be very careful how you live your life" (4:1,17; 5:2,8,15). He also explained, "Make the most of every opportunity. The days are evil. Do not be foolish... Understand what the Lord wants [you to do]" (5:16-17).

Only the Old Testament Scriptures were available at that time for everyone to read and follow. Paul encouraged the believers to build on these writings of Moses and the prophets through the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus. Paul warned, "Do not fill yourself up with wine... Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit" (5:18). Speak from the Spirit of Christ within you and sing from your heart to the Lord" (5:19).

So be wise and be true to Jesus. Paul said in another letter, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). So, to please God we must:

- keep away from evil;
- expose it when we find it;
- do good;
- stop doing foolish things that anger God;
- understand what the Lord's will is;
- be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not come to fill an empty space, but to fulfil a life which has received Jesus as Saviour. We must be under His control every day. God said we are to ask for this control of Holy Spirit power in our lives (Luke 11:13). We should keep on asking. We come often, we come boldly, we come asking: that pleases our Father (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Extracted from "PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2018.

Weekend of 3rd/4th September 2022.

1 Corinthians Chapter 13: *The 'agape love' of God*

The Greek word for God's love used in the New Testament is difficult to translate into English and other languages. The New Testament writers took a little-known Greek word, 'agape love' and used it in their letters to the early Christians. They used it to describe God's love including the love that Christ had for His Church. Few others wrote about 'agape love'. It means a selfless concern and compassion for others, as a father and mother should have for their children.

Paul says, "Suppose I speak in the languages of human beings and of angels. If I do not have love, I am only a loud gong or a noisy cymbal. Suppose I have the gift of prophecy. Suppose I can understand all the secret things of God and know everything about Him. And suppose I have enough faith to move mountains. If I do not have love, I am nothing at all. Suppose I give everything I have to poor people. And suppose I give my body to be burned. If I do not have love, I gain nothing at all" (13:1-3).

Paul then describes 'agape love' to the Corinthian believers. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not want what belongs to others. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It does not look for its own interests. It does not easily become angry. It does not remember other people's wrongs. Love is not happy with evil. But it is full of joy when the truth is spoken. It always protects. It always trusts. It always hopes. It never gives up" (13:4-7).

Extracted from "CHURCH UNITY AND DISCIPLINE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 10th/11th September 2022.

Ephesians Chapter 4: *Teaching how to live a new life*

Next Paul warns the Ephesian church not to live as they did before they believed (4:17). At the time of Paul, most of the people in the nations did not believe in the one true Almighty God of Israel. They worshipped false gods and idols. They were unholy and their thoughts were useless. They did not know God or understand His truth. They were stubborn and sinful. They had lost 'all feeling of what is right'. They were full of greed (4:18-19).

Paul reminded them, "That is not the way of life in Christ that you learned about... What you learned was the truth about Jesus. You were taught to renew your thinking. You were taught to start living a new life... truly good and holy, just as God is" (4:20-24). It is the life created in the image of God. Renewing the mind comes through dying to your old sinful life and being born again by the Holy Spirit. It also comes through reading the Bible and asking the Spirit to give you divine understanding.

Several years later, Jesus Himself gave a warning to the church in nearby Sardis through the apostle John. "Remember what you have been taught and have heard. Obey it! Turn away from your sins! Wake up!"

God calls us to live in the light, seeking His will and to be free from sin in our spirits. We must think godly thoughts and follow His Son Jesus. That is what God created us for. We do this by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Extracted from "PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2018.

Weekend of 24th/25th September 2022.

Hebrews Chapter 7. *Jesus is our Great High Priest of a New Covenant*

The Old Covenant provided a relationship between God and His people. The people, however, could only approach God through the priests. Because of the blood sacrificed by Jesus, we are made holy. True believers can now approach God at any time (Ephesians 2:18). His blood was the final sacrifice that God required for sin. Jesus is now our new High Priest and our way to God (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus will always be there for all sinners who repent and seek God (7:24). 'People now come to God through Him. He is able to save them completely and for all time. Jesus lives forever. He prays for them' (7:25). This wonderful news means that we can ask in faith for the salvation of friends and relatives near and far away. Jesus hears us and talks to His Father about our prayers. He does this for us whenever we pray.

Therefore, through Jesus Christ alone, we are saved and brought back to God. We do not need priests or special saints to seek and pray to God for us. Jesus died to fulfil all the many requirements of the Law. He died to set us all free from our sinful past. He died to set us free from old religious traditions. His salvation brings us to our Lord God Almighty. He also sent the Holy Spirit to help us to be free from the power of sin. This is the New Covenant between man and God with Jesus as our Great High Priest. If we confess our sins and repent, God is willing and able to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

Extracted from "HEBREWS: A letter to the Early Christian Church" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2016.

Weekend of 1st/2nd October 2022.

Revelation Chapter 3: *Wake up and repent!*

The risen Christ warned them, "Wake up! Strengthen what is left, or it will die. You have not done all that My God wants you to do" (3:2). We must repent from works that lead to spiritual death. Works that are not done with love and care and perseverance. Works that do not bring glory to the name of Christ. Works that are done by human effort without the power of the Holy Spirit. These things do not please God. Jesus knew the problem and He knew that the remedy was to repent and confess sin. Jesus warned them:

- "You have a name for being alive but you are dead" (3:1).

- "You must strengthen the remaining gifts that are about to die" (3:2).
- "The good things you have done are unfinished in the eyes of God" (3:2).
- "Remember what you have received and heard and hold on to it" (3:3).

All disciples of Christ need to remember what He has done for them. That is why Jesus took bread at His last supper, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is My body given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

Every time the Jews celebrate Passover, they remember that God had rescued them through the sign of lamb's blood on their wooden doorposts. The blood saved them from the angel of death and from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:13). When Jewish and Gentile believers celebrate the Lord's Supper, we remember that God rescued us through the blood of Jesus on His wooden cross.

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES: Christ's teaching for believers today" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2010, 2013, 2022.

Weekend of 8th/9th October 2022.

Genesis Chapter 1: *The six days of creation*

After the period of time when the world had no shape, God spoke six times to create suns, moons and planet Earth with its abundant life. God said six times that everything that He made was good (1:9,12,18,21,25,31). We see this in the world around us, despite the pollution caused by mankind.

God gave us His holy writings which tell how He created Earth and all the things in it. This was written in Genesis Chapter 1 over 8000 years ago, so you can read it for yourself. We must thank God for the Bible which tells us what happened 'in the beginning'. If we did not have the Bible, we would not know where this wonderful Earth came from. Or why we live here. In the Bible, God tells us about both the origin and purpose of life.

New discoveries are being made all the time about our amazing world. God did not tell us everything about how He created the Universe and Earth, but He told us everything we need to know in simple words. It is in the Bible. The creation took place because God wanted it. He spoke the words to do it and He said it was good. He loved what He had made and welcomes our prayers and praises.

God's words are powerful and they are true. His words create life. God said, "Let there be light" and there was light (1:3). There could not be life on Earth without light and heat and God's plan was to create life, including mankind in His likeness (1:27)

Extracted from "BEGINNINGS: The Origin and Purpose of Life" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2021.

Weekend of 15th/16th October 2022.

Genesis Chapter 16. *Sarai tries to give Abraham a son*

Ten years after Abraham and Sarai left Haran, Abraham still had no son and heir. The story continues with Hagar, an Egyptian slave woman in Abraham's house. Abraham and Sarai treated Hagar well. She was a slave girl to Sarai. At this time it was a common thing for slave girls to have children for their mistresses. Sarai gave Hagar to Abraham so that Hagar could have a son to give to Abraham and Sarai.

In the Bible, Jesus tells people to keep the command of God. Marriage is for two people, a man and a woman, to be joined together as one (2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; Genesis 2:24).

This story covers four things in Hagar's life:

- The servant's children belonged to the wife. The husband provided for them all.
- When Hagar became pregnant she laughed at Sarai. Abraham brought many problems into his home by having more than one wife and trouble filled the house. Hagar's pride caused envy, jealousy and hatred. Then Sarai treated Hagar badly (16:6). It was so bad for Hagar that she ran off into the desert.
- An Angel of the LORD God Almighty visited her in the desert. He called Hagar "Sarai's servant" and not "Abraham's wife". Sarai's maid should be in Sarai's tent, doing her work. Then the Angel told her, "Go back to your mistress and obey her" (16:9). Hagar repented and went back to her home.
- The Angel added a promise from the LORD: "I will greatly increase your children. They will be too many to count" (16:10) The Angel told Hagar, "You will have a son. You shall name him

Ishmael" (16:11). He became the head of a family of Arabs who trusted in the God of Abraham.

Extracted from "ABRAHAM" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012.

Weekend of 22nd/23rd October 2022.

Genesis Chapter 26. *God provides for Isaac*

"There was very little food in the land" (26:1). This famine was a test for Isaac. Was the Land of God's Promise not so promising after all? Trials and testing are part of this world, but we remember that Jesus said, "I have won the battle over the world" (John 16:33).

God told Isaac that he did not need to move down to Egypt to escape the famine (26:2). God would provide for him and his family in the land that He had promised to Abraham (26:3). Many details match those of Abraham's life. We learn from this that God's promises are offered to each generation (26:4). God provided seed for Isaac to produce a harvest. God provided a family for Isaac to bless the world.

We also learn a little of Isaac's character. He was not a man of war or a man who demanded his rights. Isaac met trials in the Promised Land, but God was faithful. We therefore learn from this example that God will always give us peace in our hearts as we trust in His goodness and mercy, even in times of difficulty.

However, Isaac did not always learn from the mistakes that his father Abraham made. It is a sad fact that mankind does not learn lessons from the mistakes of history. This is because we are all born with a sinful nature. This is why God later prepared a Saviour for the world through the family line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This family line continued through Judah and King David to Jesus, to Israel's Messiah.

Extracted from "ISAAC AND JACOB" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2018, 2021.

Weekend of 29th/30th October 2022.

Genesis chapter 45. *Joseph tells his brothers who he really is*

Joseph could not keep quiet any longer. "Make everyone leave me," he shouted out. And he began to cry so loudly that everyone in the house heard him. He loved his brothers even though they had hurt him. He knew it was God's love that had brought them together again.

He said to his brothers, "I am Joseph!" The brothers were afraid. Joseph called to them to come closer. "I am your brother Joseph," he told them again. "I am the one you sold into Egypt. Do not be upset. Do not be angry with yourselves ... God sent me ahead of you to save many lives" (45:4-5). "It wasn't you who sent me here. It was God" (45:8).

In this way Joseph showed how much he had learned to trust God in all things and to believe in God's wonderful plan to save his family, the twelve sons of Jacob later called Israel. He did not know at that time of God's bigger salvation plan for all the people of Israel and later, for the whole world, through Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph helped his brothers to choose between good and evil. God encouraged them to choose to do what was right. They came back to Egypt and took the blame. In this way they showed Joseph that they were now changed men and were sorry for the wrong they had done all those years ago. Jacob suffered at first by losing his son in Canaan. Joseph suffered at first by being a slave in Egypt. But now all his brothers were reunited.

However, Joseph refused to tell the Egyptians about the wrong things his brothers had done.

Extracted from "JOSEPH, THE SERVANT AND SAVIOUR" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2018.

Weekend of 5th/6th November 2022.

Joshua 22. *The men from the east of Jordan return home.*

The soldiers from Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, had settled their families to the east of the Jordan (12:6). They had promised to fight with the other tribes of Israel to win the whole of the Promised Land of Canaan including the land to the west of the River Jordan. Now the LORD had honoured that promise, these men were sent home to the east bank.

Joshua gave them wise advice. "Be very careful to keep the commandments and the Law that Moses gave you. He commanded you to love the LORD your God. He told you to live holy lives. He told you to obey His commands. He told you to remain true to Him, Yahweh, our Almighty God. He told you to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (22:5).

On the way home to the other side, these tired men built an altar to the LORD near the river (22:10). When the other tribes of Israel heard this, the elders sent Phinehas, with ten others, to find out more about this new altar (22:13). They chose to talk and not argue with their brothers. They pleaded, "Do not turn against us by building an altar for yourselves" (22:19).

The men from the eastern tribes of Israel replied that their altar was not a place of worship. The altar was to remind all future generations that the eastern tribes belonged to the LORD God and to Israel. It was not a place of sacrifice (22:27). Everyone went home happy and praising God (22:32-33). We must always seek God for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to do what is righteous and right for us all and to the glory of God.

Extracted from "JOSHUA" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2014, 2021.

Weekend of 12th/13th November 2022.

Ruth Chapter 1. *Introduction to the story of Ruth.*

The Old Testament book of Ruth is often read by Jews at the Feast of Pentecost. The story of Ruth, a non-Jew, covers approximately 12 years. It happened around 3,300 years ago when the nation of Israel was ruled by judges. The judges were leaders of Israel before the time of the prophets of God and the kings of Israel. It was not a happy time for the people of God in Israel, because their leaders often disobeyed Him and led their people into sin.

This book tells us how Ruth chose to leave her home in the country of Moab and live in Bethlehem south of Jerusalem. She chose to give up her false gods and trust in the one true and living God, the LORD God Almighty.

This is the amazing story of how Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David in the family line of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-6). Jesus was the promised Christ or Messiah of Israel who became the Saviour of the world.

The book of Ruth begins with the story of Naomi and her husband Elimelech. They lived in Israel at the time of the judges. They chose to move from Bethlehem to the country of Moab and took their two sons with them.

The book of Ruth also gives the story of Boaz, a family relative in Bethlehem. Boaz married Ruth soon after Naomi returned with her to Bethlehem, where their first son was born.

Jesus the Christ or Messiah was sent as Saviour to Israel over 1000 years after the time of Ruth, the ancestor of Mary the mother of Jesus. Jesus was also born in Bethlehem.

Extracted from "RUTH AND HANNAH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2008, 2016.

Weekend of 26th/27th November 2022.

1 Samuel 15:22. *Obedience and honour to God from the heart.*

The words of God quoted by Samuel to King Saul are re-quoted in both the Old and New Testaments:

- by King David in Psalm 40:6 and 51:16-17.
- by King Solomon in Proverbs 21:3; Ecclesiastes 5:1.
- by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 7:22-23.
- by Hosea in Hosea 6:6.
- by Micah in Micah 6:6-8.
- by Jesus in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7; Mark 12:33.
- by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 10:5-7.

The way we sacrifice our time, talents and resources must be in line with the purpose and calling of God. We must also learn to honour God through developing a personal relationship with Him. This will help increase our obedience to Him and witness of Him through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as promised by Jesus our Saviour.

Saul knew that he had disobeyed the LORD God Almighty. He confessed, "I have sinned. I have broken the LORD's command... I was afraid of the people. So I did what they said I should do." (15:24).

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND SAUL" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 3rd/4th December 2022.

1 Samuel Chapter 26: *David spares Saul's life again.*

Saul began to drive David out of the Promised Land and into the arms of his heathen neighbours. Now Saul and 3,000 chosen men searched for David in the Desert of Ziph (26:1-2).

At night, Saul slept in his camp with his army around him. General Abner was sleeping close to the King. David and his commander, Abishai, crept into Saul's camp. They got close to Saul without anyone hearing them. 'They found Saul lying asleep inside the camp. His spear was stuck in the ground near his head' (26:5-7).

Abishai said to David, "Today God has handed your enemy over to you. So let me pin him to the ground. I can do it with one jab of my spear" (26:8).

David held his arm. "Do not destroy him," he said to Abishai. "No-one can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed king and not be guilty. You can be sure that the LORD lives. And you can be just as sure that the LORD himself will strike Saul down. Perhaps he will die a natural death. Or perhaps he will go into battle and be killed" (26:9-10).

So David took Saul's spear and water jug and left the camp. No-one saw David and Abishai, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

Next morning David stood on the top of the hill and shouted to Abner, "You and your men are worthy of death. You did not guard your master. He is the LORD's anointed king. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?" (26:16).

Then Saul said, "I have sinned. My son David, come back. Today you thought my life was very special ...May the LORD bless you. You will do great things. You will also have great success." So David went on his way. And Saul returned home (26:21,25).

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND DAVID" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2022.

Weekend of 10th/11th December 2022.

2 Samuel Chapter 28: *Saul seeks help from a witch.*

When Saul saw the large Philistine army, terror filled his heart. Saul asked the LORD for a battle plan to fight King Achish, but the LORD did not answer him, not by a dream, nor by the priest's ephod, nor by sending a prophet (28:6).

He was desperate. "Find me a woman who is a spirit medium," he told his servant (28:7). This was Saul's final act of disobedience to God. He already knew that he had disobeyed God which had resulted in the loss of communication with the Almighty (v.15). God had also warned His people not to talk to witches.

He told the witch of Endor, "I want you to talk to a spirit for me." Saul told her, "Bring up the spirit of Samuel."

Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you troubled me by bringing me up from the dead?"

"I am having big problems," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me. God has turned away from me. He does not answer me anymore" (28:15).

God's message to Saul was the same as before. "The LORD God Almighty has turned away from you... The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands. He has given it to David" (28:17; 15:28).

'Immediately Saul fell flat on the ground. What Samuel had said filled Saul with fear. His strength was gone' (28:20).

We, too, may be tempted to go to the wrong places for divine help. Some go to ungodly people for help. Others let friends read the palms of their hands, or use special cards to find advice for the future. They also read horoscopes based on the date of their birth. However, God's Spirit overruled and established His purpose for Saul, the Philistines and for David. Saul's greatest enemy was not the Philistines nor David but himself. He had failed to trust in God but trusted in himself and unwisely used a witch to help him.

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND DAVID" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2022.

Weekend of 17th/18th December 2022.

Mark Chapter 7: *Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man*

Isaiah, 740 years before the ministry of Jesus, prophesied that God's Messiah would "bring the family of Jacob (Israel) back to Him ... make the people a light for other nations ... and make it possible for the whole world to be saved" (Isaiah 49:5-6).

From Tyre, Jesus travelled back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The people who lived there also were not Jews. He continued to perform miracles among these non-Jews. Jesus healed a man who was deaf and could not speak very well.

The man was healed because the people brought him to Jesus with faith. 'They begged Jesus to place His hand on the man' (7:31-35). He put His fingers in the ears of the man. He touched the tongue of the man. The man was healed. The people were amazed.

Think about this: Do you help only people inside the church or outside the church as well? Do you pray for foreigners and for those who do not worship the Lord God Almighty?

Extracted from "THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2008, 2016, 2022.

Weekend of 24th/25th December 2022.

Mark Chapter 11. *Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey*

The week before His death, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Passover. He sent two disciples ahead of Him into the city. "You will find a young donkey tied..." He told them. "Untie it and bring it here... Say, 'The Lord needs it' " (11:2-3).

A donkey was an animal that carried heavy loads. Sometimes poor people rode on donkeys. The mother of Jesus rode on a donkey to Bethlehem with the unborn baby Jesus. Rich important people and kings rode on horses. God said through a prophet that the Messiah would ride humbly on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). This was said hundreds of years before Jesus rode on the donkey to Jerusalem.

So, Jesus rode the donkey into the city. He did not hide from the people when He arrived in Jerusalem (11:8-11). The crowds knew from the Old Testament what that meant. They met Him and waved palm branches, shouting, "Hosanna!" This means "Save now!"

They also shouted, "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:9-10; see Psalm 118:25-26). All that the prophets wrote about Jesus now began to happen (Zechariah 9:9). The long years of waiting had ended. The people of Jerusalem could see their Messiah. Jesus did not have any political power. The Son of God came to the city as a servant, in a humble, peaceful way. He was not riding on a horse, as a king with soldiers, but on a young donkey. This was a sign of peace.

Extracted from "MARK'S GOSPEL Part 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2020.

Weekend of 31st December/1st January 2022/3.

John Chapter 11: *Jesus raises Lazarus from death*

Once more Jesus became very sad. He went to the place where the body of Lazarus lay. There was a heavy stone across the entrance of the tomb (11:38).

"Take away the stone", He said (11:39).

"But Lord," said Martha... "By this time there is a bad smell. Lazarus has been in the tomb four days" (11:39).

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (11:40). So they took away the stone (11:41).

Jesus looked up and thanked His Father for hearing Him. "I know that You always hear Me." He said this for the sake of the people standing there. He wanted them all to believe that His Father, our Almighty God and Creator, had sent Him (11:42).

Then Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man walked out of the tomb covered in strips of cloth. Our Father God listens to the voice of His Son when He makes requests on behalf of His people today (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus said to them "Take off his burial clothes and let him go" (11:44).

Extracted from "THE GOSPEL OF JOHN PART 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2015, 2022.