

Week 3 Discussion Questions

THE STORY OF GOD: ISRAEL

God did not just leave the nations to be confused and without hope forever, but He called one man, Abraham, and made a covenant with him. The covenant stated that God would bless Abraham and multiply his offspring so that his offspring would be a blessing to all nations. Abraham's family would be the means by which God would cure the world.

After many years of waiting, Abraham had a child named Isaac. In one of the most dramatic scenes in the Bible, Abraham was instructed by God to sacrifice Isaac, the child of promise. At the last moment, God provided a ram for the sacrifice instead. The ram was substituted for Isaac, and the promise continued.

Isaac multiplied into a great nation called Israel. As generations passed, Israel became enslaved to the Egyptians, the strongest nation in the world. They were beaten, abused, mistreated, and hopeless. They cried out in misery to God, and God heard their cries for help.

He rescued them by His mighty hand, using a man named Moses. This exodus from Egypt was the great act of God that Israel would always look back on to remember, "God is our Savior and will keep His covenant with us!"

Soon after they were rescued from slavery, God spoke to Moses on a mountaintop and told him the commandments they were to live by. However, just like Adam and Eve, the people of Israel didn't always obey these commandments. Because God always does what is good, right, and perfect, He could not overlook their sins, and the ultimate punishment for sin was death. A life must be given to pay for each person's disobedience. However God loved His people, so He provided a way for them to substitute the life of an innocent animal in place of their own. This pattern of an innocent life of a lamb being substituted for sin would continue long into the future.

You might think after being rescued out of slavery, Israel would be the people who would finally forsake their rebellion against God. That wasn't the case. As they journeyed to the land God had promised them, they began grumbling against God. They even wished they could go back to their slavery in Egypt. At one point, they took all their gold jewelry, melted it down, and made a golden calf to be their god. Even their rebellion could not thwart God, though; He was still on His mission to restore and redeem His creation.

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After forty years, God raised up a man named Joshua finally to lead Israel out of the wilderness and into the beautiful land God had promised to them. God had rescued them out of slavery and into the safety of their own land.

You might think now that Israel was safe in their land, they would break the legacy of rebellion against God. Rather than worshipping the true God, they quickly fell into a devastating cycle of rebellion against God. During the next centuries, they would fall further and further away from the God who had rescued and delivered them.

But God was still on His mission.

Even though God had shown Himself to be a good King, the people cried out for a human king, so God gave them kings. One such king was David. David ruled well and brought the nation together. As David was about to die, God made a covenant with David that one of his sons would reign over God's people forever.

David's sons did not follow after their father, and they certainly did not follow God. They turned to the many gods of other nations and led the people away from God. Because of their rebellion, God brought other nations to conquer and exile Israel from their land. All seemed lost. But God was still on mission.

In the midst of the exile, God spoke through prophets. He gave them a great promise that He would one day come and rescue His people. He would send a mighty, yet humble, Servant to redeem them.

So God's people were left, waiting, longing, and hoping for the day when God would rescue them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is God's promise to Israel?
- What was Israel supposed to do? Did they do it?
- What do you learn about God in this story? About people? About God's world?