

WINTER/SPRING 2021

GOD'S FAMILY

Exploring the history of the family that we've been adopted into

Where are you from?

BY CHRISTOPHER TIMSON

If you have ever heard me talk about this you know that this is a hard question for me to answer. As a person that was born in Canada, spent most of his life in the Florida, but now lives in Nebraska, I can get a little flustered when figuring where to call "home". As we know though our history is not just made up of our lives. It consists of those that came before us too. In this study we're taking this idea to the next level. Where do we, as Christians, come from?

There is so much rich history of our people in the Bible that is not only compelling, but also very applicable to our daily lives. God's plan for his people didn't start when our church was formed, when Paul wrote his first letter, or even on the first page of the New Testament. God has had a plan for his people since the beginning of time and we're a part of that! Join me as we take a look at and learn from our own history as God's people.

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STUDY 1

WE ARE AMBASSADORS

I Am an Ambassador

Say it with me: "I am an ambassador."

Ambassador has a few different meanings as we will explore in this study, but ask yourself: "What does being an ambassador mean to me?" Think of it this way- you have a family name and when you go out into the world the actions you take and the way you present yourself in some way represent your family. From Genesis to Jesus the Bible over and over again calls us to represent God in this world.

Remember you are an ambassador to this world for God.

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Abassadors

If you're reading this there is a decent chance you're a Christian or are at least interested in Christianity on some level. Our personal story as Christians starts with Jesus, but our collective story as "God's People" starts much, much earlier. You see when Jesus came to earth and left the Holy Spirit he provided a way for me and you to become a part of God's people who up until that point were just the Israelites. Knowing that we've been adopted into that family means that their history is now our history. Let's take a look at the beginning of our History known as Genesis.



In the image
of God He
created him;

male and
female He
created them.

GEN 1:27

Let's Read: Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, and over all the earth itself and every creature that crawls upon it."

27 So God created man in His own image;

in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that crawls upon the earth."





Talk About It

1. Does anything stick out to you in this passage from the creation story?
2. What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? (this is debated, but open to interpretation even among scholars)
 - a. If you were to create an Image of yourself how would you do it?
3. God instructed them to rule over creation. What do you think makes a good ruler?
 - a. What makes Jesus a good ruler?

Talk About It

A lot of other local religions in the same area of the world also had creation stories like the Jewish people. What makes this creation story so significant is that instead of God asking his people to build statues and idols (images) to represent him, God makes US those representations.

1. Why do you think God chose this way?
2. What does this say about our God as opposed to other gods.





Application

Let's Read: Colossians 3:16-17

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.



We are Ambassadors for Christ

In Genesis we see that we were made in the image of God and we were tasked with ruling over all of creation. Who can we look to when looking for a good leader? Well Jesus of course! The kind of ruler that Jesus was is emulated so well in text that we just read.

Taking into account the Genesis story and the text in Colossians we see the whole story of the Bible calls God's people (US) to represent him to the world. The messages of both of these texts we lot in common.

1. Why do we need both?

We have been tasked with being rulers and ambassadors to the world representing Jesus so that people might know him better.

1. What are some ways we can represent Jesus well?

2. What are some ways we can rule creation well?

3. What is one way we can do better with this during this week?

STUDY 2

WE ARE SURVIVORS



I Am Survivor

Say it with me: "I am an Survivor."

When viewing the Bible as a whole we see that God's people are a people that survive. From slaves in Egypt to foreigners in a new land, God's people have always been survivors. It's incredible to read the Bible because there is no way that this small nation could have survived on their own, but that's the way God works. He is made perfect in our weakness. In this study we're going to look at a couple of my favorite books in the Bible that show just how faithful God is to his people and how he protects his own.

Remember you are a survivor.

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Survivors

The first book we're going to dive into is the book of Esther. Esther was an Israelite woman living under foreign rule who gets thrown into a position where she now belongs to the King. She gets elevated to a very high position eventually even becoming the queen. One day her and her cousin Mordecai hear of a corrupt plan for the kingdom to kill every remaining Jew. Esther takes action.

Does God call her to his action? Probably not- at least not explicitly. You see- God is never mention in this book of Esther, but He is still present. It's her faith in God and her cousin Mordecai who encourage her to take action.



Let's Read: Esther 4:12-16

12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?".

ESTHER 4:14B





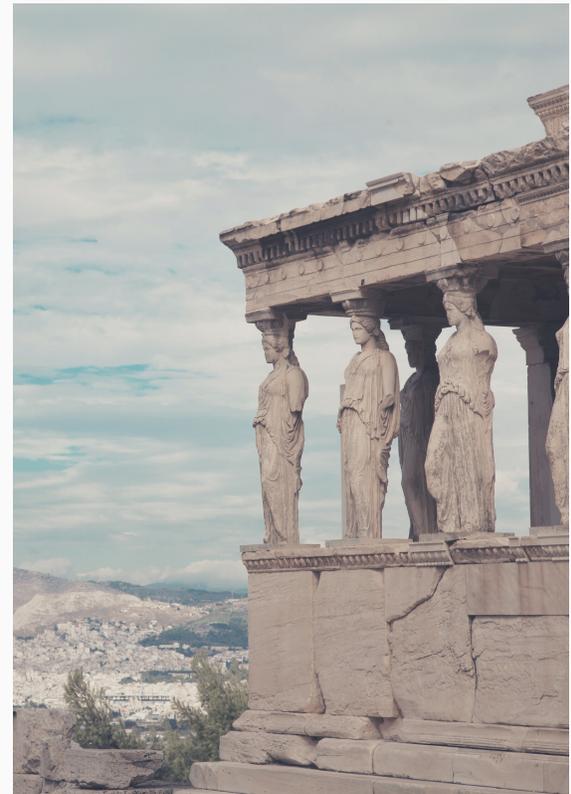
Talk About It

1. What do you think about this story? Is there any part of it that you find confusing? (Feel free to look up answers or read the story as a whole.)
2. We often say things like "if God wanted to protect X or help Y he would do it, but in this case we don't see God acting explicitly. What do you think about that?"

Talk About It

The king had ultimate authority in this story. He could have chosen to not listen to Esther and kill her people, but he chose to honor her. The crazy thing here is that obviously the king is not a follower of God, but nevertheless God uses him for good.

1. What does this tell us about God and the way he operates?
2. If God can use people that don't know for the good of the kingdom, how does that change how you see others that reject him?





Application

Let's Talk about Esther

And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

1. When Mordecai says this to Esther it is a challenge to her to use what her status and ability to help save her people. How can we apply these words to our own lives?

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do.

1. Esther called upon her people to fast in a time of need. Why would someone do this? What advantages would there be to taking time to do something like fasting when her people could be dead so soon?



1 Peter 2:13-17

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. 17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

When Peter wrote these words Christians were being accused and martyred for things they did not do. Peter echoes many of the same thoughts that Esther does. Not urging people to wage war, but to change the world they're in by doing good, showing respect, and love.

1. After reading these texts what are some characteristics of a Survivor?
2. What can we learn from Esther acting without needing to hear God explicitly?
3. What are some ways we can use our positions to better the lives of others?
4. How can we change the lives of others by "doing good"?



STUDY 3

WE ARE CHOSEN

I Am Chosen

Say it with me: "I am an Chosen."

This study is not meant to get theological, but it can easily go that way. To clarify: the way I'm using "chosen" in this study is not a theological stance, but rather a Biblical interpretation. It is just a way to describe the relationship between God and His people. The Bible tells us that God chose the family of Abraham to enact his plan to restore humanity back to himself and it is through Jesus that we are a part of that family. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that means anyone can be a part of this family. Anyone can be chosen.

Remember you are chosen.

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Chosen

"Chosen" can come off as kind of a "holier than thou" thing when in reality it is not. God chose one family to enact his plan, but that was only so that EVERY person could be restored back to Him. On top of this chosen people in the Bible often do not live holy lives and those that are not chosen are recorded to be some of the strongest followers of God. This is relatable even today for us. We know God and he knows us as his children, but our Job is to help every person know him and glorify his name. We start with Abraham because that is who God first chose and it's important to know this when trying to understand Jesus's place in the story and consequently our place as well.

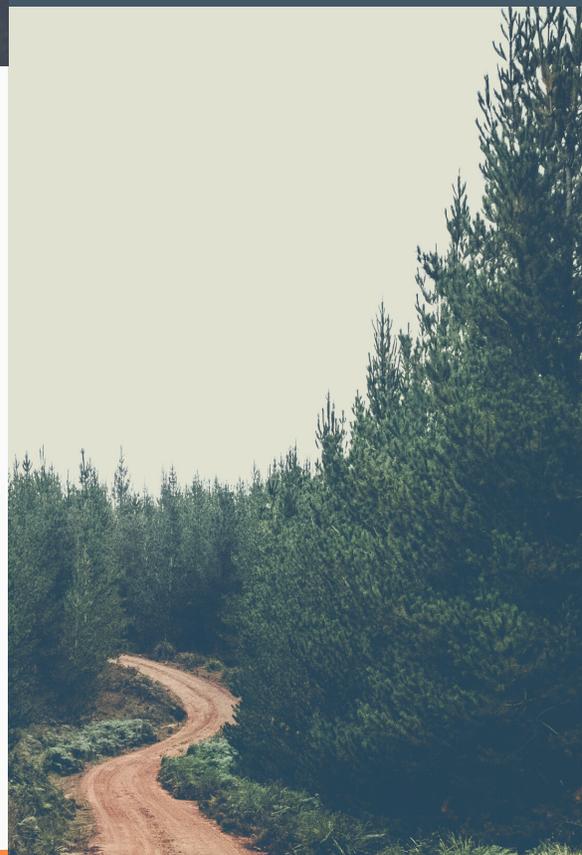
**"I will make you
into a great
nation,
and I will bless
you; I will make
your name great,
and you will be a
blessing."**

GENESIS 12:2



Let's Read: Genesis 12:1-3

12 The Lord had said to Abram,
"Go from your country, your people and your father's household
to the land I will show you.
2 "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.





Talk About It

God talk a lot about blessing here. It's not a word we commonly use outside of church and honestly we all have a hard time really defining it.

1. What do you think it means to "be a blessing"?

Strong's concordance
(a Greek/Hebrew Bible study tool)
defines Blessing as "to bestow good"
or to "make happy" depending on the
context.

Talk About It

Abraham had a hard time holding up his end of the agreement with God. You see Abraham and Sarah did not trust God for a child, but instead they oppressed Sarah's servant to provide a child for them in Sarah's place. God chose to still make this child a part of his family even though he was part of the plan even though He wasn't part of the "chosen" plan

1. What does this tell us about God?
2. Why do you think God chose one family to enact his plan. (No one right answer here)





Application

Jesus Answers accusers about Abraham. John 8:54-59

54 Jesus answered, "If I give honor to myself, that honor is worth nothing. The one who gives me honor is my Father. And you say that he is your God. 55 But you don't really know him. I know him. If I said I did not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I obey what he says. 56 Your father Abraham was very happy that he would see the day when I came. He saw that day and was happy." 57 The Jews said to Jesus, "What? How can you say you have seen Abraham? You are not even 50 years old!" 58 Jesus answered, "The fact is, before Abraham was born, I Am." 59 When he said this, they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus hid, and then he left the Temple area.



Jesus The Ultimate blessing

"Your father Abraham was very happy that he would see the day when I came. He saw that day and was happy."

Jesus here claims that Abraham looked forward to the day when he would come. You see Jesus is the ultimate blessing that God promises Abraham over a millennium before Jesus was born on earth. Jesus is a descendant of Abraham and fulfills God's covenant.

Where Do we come in? Well it is because of Jesus that we have been adopted into the family of the "Chosen". Without Jesus we would have to convert to Judaism, follow customs, and be welcomed in. With Jesus anyone can be a part of this family as long as they acknowledge Jesus as their savior and king.

1. After reading these texts what would you say it means to be chosen?
2. The phrase "blessed to be a blessing" has roots in the Abrahamic text. How can we live this out?
3. Jesus allows anyone to enter this family and be chosen. What does that mean to you?