

# Getting to Know Your Bible



## REFLECTIONS FROM REVISION

### Notes from Zoom Bible Study Sessions on Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus

at

Allander Evangelical Church

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### Introduction

As a prelude to our continuing study of the Pentateuch this winter we decided to look again at those books we have studied already this year – Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus – before embarking on Numbers.

### Genesis

Genesis is the first book in the Bible. It is where we start. And, it starts with God: *In the beginning, God....* So, Genesis introduces us to God.

Taking an overview of the book, it shows an integrated, coherent, world in which God is portrayed as powerful creator, deliberately using those powers for his purposes, being a benevolent provider, and forming a wonderful relationship of responsibility and dependence with mankind.

Sadly, that ideal picture is shattered with man's vulnerable succumbing to temptation, (the Fall) obeying Satan and thus displeasing God.

From that time on, God is external to his creatures and creation. He does not occupy a central place in their life. No wonder that life pattern turns out to be so disastrous, ending with confusion.

It is as an 'external' God that he then exercises his benevolence in 'calling' Abram to be the 'father of a great nation' as the beginning of a redemptive process. In obedience Abram (later Abraham) sets out to follow this God, making many mistakes along the way but ending up in great faith. He is followed by Isaac and he, in turn, by Jacob by whose name the chosen nation is known. But, far from being the ideal person, Jacob – the deceiver – has to go through a range of adverse experiences which transform his life. Eventually, several sons are born to him who become the twelve tribes of Israel.

One of these is Joseph who, though 'despised and rejected' by his brothers, turns out to be a key man in their life in Egypt and, in so being, is a 'demonstration model' of the saviour figure fully manifested in Christ.

Genesis shows what can be: how 'paradise lost' can – with appropriate measures – become 'paradise regained'.

## **Exodus**

The second book, Exodus, relating to a period centuries removed from that of Genesis, opens with a devastating picture. Things have changed for the worse and Joseph's charismatic leadership and foresight with its resultant salvation are forgotten. Instead there is resentment – and worse – towards these incomers.

In that situation, where God is a residual memory, there is despair and anguish over the increasing bondage that is being experienced. Naturally they *cry*, and later, through Moses, *try* and obtain deliverance. It seems that God has forgotten them.

But, He hasn't. All the time he has been making preparations, turning evil intent into good, preserving a testimony – as witnessed in such well-known verses as: "*You meant it for evil but God meant it for good*" or "*Jacob have I loved but Esau I have hated*". God is at work and, sovereignly calls on the 'trier', Moses, (himself a miracle child preserved by God in - of all places - the King's palace)

That Moses is given a message which appears so incongruous (weak lamb v devastating plagues) in this context yet, through the sacrificing of the Passover Lamb they are released and brought through the Red Sea, out of Egypt and into the wilderness en-route for the land promised to Abraham.

Acceptance of that message – the exercising of faith – transforms their life and makes them children of God where he has access to, an entrance into their lives, and increasing influence over them expressed in wonderful provision.

From there God becomes more pro-active by giving Moses the Law – His Word – and proposing an idea – the Tabernacle – which would be his dwelling place and vehicle of expression among them. While the Law was given intact and complete, the Tabernacle was a pattern to be materialised and realised by human generosity and effort through contributing resources, following directions and diligent manufacture.

Ironically, initial human endeavour - while commendable - was futile in failing to achieve an objective. This second human endeavour is essential in securing the realisation of that which God desires as an appropriate and effective manifestation of His presence.

That expression has two aspects: religious and administrative. While the Book of Numbers deals with the practicalities of order and mobilisation, Leviticus is mainly concerned with the devotional.

## **Leviticus**

The Book of Leviticus centres on the Tabernacle and its significance as a model for worship and ministry. As a redeemed people, having responded to the divine challenge of being “*the people of God*”, the emphasis is on developing a dynamic and devoted relationship with God.

The book begins with a series of offerings designed to enable the participant to approach God. There is a range of different offerings, variations within each that make allowance for what is feasible, consideration for varying circumstances, but all designed to provide a way for voluntary or obligatory access to God. Administered by a devoted priesthood it results in blessing for all.

However, there is a dark side. Not only is improper procedure (such as Nadab and Abihu’s wrong action) condemned but there is the highlighting of a wide spectrum of natural conditions that debar access to God.

Essentially, the critical issue is acceptability. While the divinely appointed procedures, properly carried out, are wholly accepted, what belongs to the natural – or self-motivated – order is clearly not: it is defiled and not acceptable.

Yet, there is forgiveness enacted through the substitutionary sacrifice on the Day of Atonement by the High Priest in a process which ensures pardon and release from sin. It is a precursor of the work of the Lord Jesus who offered Himself as a substitute, bearing our sin, being raised from the dead and ensuring new life, not just for a year but for eternity.

That transforming experience has implications. One is to live a holy life, distinctive, marked by abstention from the old practices common among the other nations and evidencing a new way of living inspired by divine instruction. Secondly, that new existence is to be celebrated in corporate expression, hence the Feasts, each of which relates to an experience and communicates its message. The third is to exercise social responsibility in the form of the Year of Jubilee with its opportunity to make a fresh start.

What is significant about these three features is that they have to be done by the people: God does not do it for them.

That leads to the final message of this book: choice. Obedience leads to blessing but refusal only to a curse.

That, too, has its NT and contemporary application. The access to God and His forgiveness and regeneration are all done totally by God Himself through Christ and the Holy Spirit. But, as Philippians reminds us, it has to be practised by us. “*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works within you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*”.

That transformation applies not only to religious activities but to the whole of life, and ‘moving on, as will be seen in Numbers.