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Bible 101, Part IV

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Hi everyone, it's Katie Patrizio again, and I am with you today for our last video session together. We've talked a lot, you know, we've gone through a lot of scripture together. We've talked about covenant, how important covenant is, we've talked about creation, Adam, The Fall, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David. And I promised last time that when we pick up in this session that we'll touch a little bit on Solomon, then we'll get to the situation in which Jesus came on the scene, and then we'll talk about Jesus Himself. And remember, all of this is for the sake of trying to conjure up a sort of holy longing that the Israelite people themselves had for the Messiah, but hopefully we can have as well, especially in this time of Advent. So before we get any more deeper into the content, let's go ahead and open with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our God, we praise You and thank You for the time that we have been able to share together, and for the wisdom that You have imparted to us. We ask that You would allow this wisdom to take hold in our lives, and to lead us to greater love and desire for You. We ask Lord also that this love and desire for You might spill over and become love and desire to help our neighbor, not only in their physical needs, but also in their spiritual needs. That, Lord, Your gift to us of Yourself might inspire us to want others to receive the same, and to share that gift with them. We ask that in this last time together, in this last video session that I have, that we might see the amazing way in which You have chosen to become incarnate and to give Yourself to us, and that during this time of Advent we might see that gift as beautiful and great and, again, desire to share that gift with others. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So like I said, we've talked about a lot. But where we left off was the story of David. And previous to that, we looked at the covenants with Adam and with Noah, and then we saw in particular how God kind of took a different strategy with Abraham. God made 3 promises to Abraham: That Abraham's descendants would be a great nation, a great name, and that the world would be blessed through them. I want to circle around to this because sometimes as we get into the nitty-gritty of the covenants, we can forget the primary reason for them. So ever since The Fall, salvation history has been God trying to remake the covenant with us. And so Abraham's descendants have an integral role in that. Remember, the third promise

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is that the rest of the world would be drawn back to God and will receive blessing from God through Abraham's descendants, through the Israelite people.

So God said that he would have descendants, Abraham I mean would have descendants, and that they would be a great nation, a great name, and that blessing would come through them to the whole world, universal blessing. We saw how Moses, leading the people out of Egypt, helped to fulfill this first promise that the Israelite people would be a great nation. And then we saw that in the person of David, who is royalty, we have this fulfillment of the promise that the Israelite people would be a great name, which in ancient Near-Eastern culture means royalty. So that last covenant that we've left with, that last covenant with Abraham, that last promise is the promise of universal blessing. It takes a lot though, there's a lot that happens in the scriptures and in the story before we really get to that fulfillment.

So we left off at David, let's pick up with him. Where we left David and where we left the Israelite kingdom was fairly secure. I said that David was securing the borders, and he was just generally establishing stability for the Israelite people. David's son Solomon is going to do this even more. In fact, Solomon's name comes from that Hebrew word "Shalom," which means peace. Solomon is known as the prince of peace. We see him, for example, riding not upon a horse, but upon a donkey. And they say that a donkey is not an animal of war. If you've ever ridden on a donkey, you know that they can't run. My uncle had mules, which is a cross between a horse and a donkey. I remember being a kid and trying to get those things to run. They don't run. You don't want to be caught on a donkey or a mule in the middle of war.

And so, in many ways, Solomon is a figure of peace. He's further established the kingdom in peace, he's extended the borders. In fact, we see Solomon not just in a role of king, but kind of in a role of emperor. So if we read through the scriptures, we see that other kings and queens come to him, giving him gifts, giving him homage, which means that he's likely an emperor, which means that he's a king over kings, a king of kings. And these titles should sound familiar - prince of peace, king of kings - especially in this time of year, in this liturgical season of Advent. And so we're already kind of starting to see how Jesus is going to fulfill a lot of what Solomon did.

Jesus is going to do some things different though than Solomon did. Solomon was a great king, he was a great figure, but at the end of his life he turned away from God. In Deuteronomy, Moses gave 3 rules for the future king of Israel. They were very simple. Moses said that the future king of Israel should not multiply gold, he should not multiply horses, and he should not multiply wives. When we read about

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Solomon at the end of his life, the scriptures specifically tell us that Solomon multiplied all 3 of these things. He had an enormous amount of gold, he had an enormous amount of horses, and he had an enormous amount of wives. It's a little bit scandalous.

The worst part about it though is that the scripture tells us that Solomon's many wives turned his heart from God. And at the end of his life, Solomon started practicing pagan worship. He started offering sacrifice to false gods, which is horribly horrific. It's kind of redundant, but that's how bad it was. Horribly horrific. Not good. And this ended up having repercussions that outlived him. Solomon's son who takes over, is not as well-known as Solomon. His name is Rehoboam. Rehoboam seems to have inherited all of the bad practices of Solomon, and we see this early on in his reign.

Solomon, in addition to not following the laws of Moses and worshipping pagan gods, we're also told that Solomon imposed a lot of building projects on the Israelite people at the end of his life. So at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign, it tells us that the Israelite people come to Rehoboam and they make a simple request of him. They say "Can you lighten our load? In other words, can you reduce some of the servitude that your father pressed us into? Can you let us have a little bit of a break here?" It tells us that Rehoboam goes and consults not the wise men of his father's court, but his own friends. And his friends tell him to not only refuse the request of the Israelite people, but actually to increase the building projects and the service of the Israelite people.

That's what Rehoboam does. And when he announces that to the people of Israel, the people of Israel say something very sad. They say "Look to your own house, Judah," and that's in reference to the tribe of Judah, which is what the Davidic king was from, "Look to your own house, Judah, and we will look to ours." And so what that ends up triggering or signaling is, what is called by theologians and historians and biblical scholars, the beginning of the divided kingdom.

So Israel, the nation of Israel is made up of 12 tribes, and when the kingdom divides the 10 northern tribes form their own country. And they even raise up their own king in competition to the true king, Davidic king Rehoboam. And the 2 southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, they've basically assimilated into one nation that comes to be called Judah, okay. So this is where we actually start to refer to the Israelite people not necessarily as Israelites, but possibly as Jews. So Jews are Israelites of the tribe of Judah.

There's a lot more detail that we could go into, but essentially what ends up happening is that because that kingdom is divided, these now 2 separate nations are more susceptible to foreign powers. And so what happens, unfortunately, is the

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country of Assyria comes and takes the 10 northern tribes into exile and never brings them back again. The leader of the Babylonians come and they take the tribes of Judah and Benjamin into exile.

Thankfully, many years after they've been in exile, there's a righteous king named Cyrus who is inspired to allow the Jewish people to return to their home. So he frees them from exile, and they return once more to the promised land. They're not yet their own sovereign nation though. They don't have a Davidic king over them and, in fact, they end up being ruled by 4 nations consecutively ruling over them. The most famous nation that rules over them is the Roman empire, okay, and this is the situation into which Jesus is born.

Let me add a whole other layer of excitement of a thriller here if you will, suspense maybe: There is a prophecy given to the prophet Daniel that was able to be interpreted by the Jews so specifically that the Jewish people knew that four nations would oppress them after they returned from Exile. And they were also able to interpret the prophecy so specifically that they knew that the fourth nation was the Roman empire. So the prophecy goes that after this fourth nation, the Israelite people, the Jewish people would be freed from oppression, and that they would be allowed to become once more their own sovereign nation.

Again, this is the situation into which Jesus comes, a situation that I like to say is full of messianic fervor, okay. What do I mean when I say messianic fervor? I mean that the people were just waiting, they were just poised for the Messiah to come. Who is the Messiah? Well, you've probably heard this term a lot. In Hebrew, it just means "The anointed one." But most often, it referred to the Davidic king, because the Davidic king was himself anointed when he was coroneted king. So the Israelite people are awaiting the reestablishment of the nation of Israel, the reestablishment of the Davidic king, and they began... they had begun to see the beginnings of blessing to the whole world in the reign of Solomon. For example, like I noted, other kings and queens were coming to Solomon, and he was giving wisdom, right, if you remember those stories of the wisdom of Solomon.

So universal blessing had started to come forth from the Israelite people in the reign of Solomon. But all 3 of those aspects after the exile are no longer there. And so the Jewish people, the Israelite people are longing and they're waiting and they're praying for God to be faithful to His covenant promises to Abraham. And they trust God, and they know that God has to reestablish the covenants, because God is faithful. So they're just waiting and hoping and praying and longing. And this is the scene onto which Jesus is born.

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Jesus is expected, but in many ways He's totally unexpected. What do I mean by that? Well, the Messiah is expected to come, he's expected to be the son of David, but he's not necessarily expected to be quite what Jesus was. Jesus perhaps didn't seem as concerned with the Roman occupation as some of the Jews would have hoped. Maybe the Jewish sect of the zealots who wanted to violently throw off the Roman Empire. Jesus also said things that, as Jewish people would observe, only God could say. Now, I really want to drive this home for you: The Jewish people did not necessarily expect that the Messiah would be God. This was the greatest blessing and the greatest unexpectedness, in a way, of Jesus becoming the incarnate. It's amazing really.

So Jesus doesn't necessarily fit quite the mold they're expected, but really He gives them so much more. When He begins His public ministry, He goes out into the desert and He is tempted 3 times. Each of these 3 times He's tempted in a way very similar to the manner in which Solomon fell. Solomon fell multiplying gold, horses, and wives. I wish I could go into more detail, but Jesus really, in His overcoming the threefold temptation, also overcomes the sinfulness of Solomon and reestablishes Himself as a just, righteous king. Jesus also says things to the people like "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." This is very different from what Rehoboam said to the people of Israel. He in fact said "I will make your burden greater." And so when Jesus says "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light," I really think He's referencing Rehoboam, and He's trying to draw Israelite people back to Himself. He's trying to make up for the sins of Solomon and Rehoboam.

He continues in His public ministry, preaching and teaching the things that we're so familiar with, but He chooses to overthrow the power of oppression in a way that the Israelite people didn't necessarily expect. In a way that the Jewish people didn't necessarily expect. So what do I mean by that? Well, sure, Rome was oppressing the Jewish people. But even more than that, what was the greatest oppression of not just the Jewish people, but the human race in general? It was the oppression that began in the garden with The Fall, and it's the oppression of Satan and the oppression of sin. So when Jesus takes His place on the throne of the Davidic king, He takes His place unexpectedly and in a manner that wasn't necessarily foreseen.

Jesus comes into Jerusalem victoriously, in a way, on Palm Sunday. He has... He's greeted in a way that Solomon himself was greeted after his coronation. But unlike Solomon, who goes and mounts his throne in his palace after his coronation, Jesus mounts His throne, but His throne is very different than the throne of most kings. Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly and mounts the throne of the cross. But it is the throne of the cross that's going to redeem the world from the true oppression,

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which is the oppression of sin. This is very, very powerful and, again, we have the fulfillment of even the prophecy of Abraham that God Himself will provide the lamb of sacrifice. I wish I had so much more time to go into more detail with you. There are so many things we could talk about but we're running out of time even in this video.

I want, though, all of this time to have some personal meaning and application to your life. I'm sure it already does at this point, but I want to run this home for you: The fact that God did not come and become incarnate and die on the cross just for the Jewish people. In fact, He established the church, and He established the sacraments. And in the sacrament of baptism, we have Jesus reestablishing the covenant with us individual. At baptism, God makes us His family once more. He makes us sons and daughters of Him. This is why baptism is so powerful.

Remember I said a covenant really can make 2 people who aren't related into family. The beautiful thing, somehow even more beautiful than baptism, though, is that God, Jesus, is not satisfied with simply that while we were on earth, while we are on earth. Jesus wants intimacy and closeness with us right now. He doesn't want to wait until heaven. And so He has given us this other beautiful sacrament, which is the sacrament of the Eucharist. And in the Eucharist, God literally gives Himself to us. We have more intimacy with our Lord in the Eucharist than even a married couple have in their own practice of intimacy.

Jesus, in the form of bread, comes inside of us to be physically united with us. This is how much our Lord wants to be close to us. And arguably this is why all of salvation history, this is why all of the bible came about, for you to be able to receive God, Jesus, into your very being and be close to Him, in this life and in the next. It's possible that Jesus - well, not possible, it's very likely - that Jesus had this in mind from the very beginning. From the very beginning not only of the story of salvation, but of His very life.

How do I know that Jesus had the Eucharist in mind at the beginning of His earthly life? Well, we have the detail at the beginning of the gospels that Jesus was born in a particular town. He was born in Bethlehem as the city of David, of course, but I think there's another reason He was born there. You see, Bethlehem in Hebrew means "House of bread." Jesus, the incarnate God, became man, and was born in a town called "House of Bread," and was laid in a manger, which is just a fancy word for a feeding trough. In other words, arguably, Jesus became man for the sake of us being able to receive Him, body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist, and be closer and more intimate with Him than ever before.

Everything we've talked about so far has been for this, has been for our own sake. Very, very personal and beautiful intimacy that God wants with us in the Eucharist.

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I really enjoyed making these videos with you and our time together, even though it's been online. Thank you so much for listening, and I wish you a blessed Advent and a very merry Christmas. God bless.