

# *From Moses To John*

## **A Brief history of Israel**

By Tom Stephens

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Goshen, we can almost imagine the flush of honest pride on his face, mingled with a sense of profound humility, because he had been chosen by God to lead such a great deliverance from Egypt. Later, when the entire encampment around the Tabernacle was established, the Israelites numbered approximately 2.5 to 3 million; and as seen from above, covered an area of about 12 square miles—not that many when considering the Israelites spent over 400 years in Egypt. God delivered the Israelite nation out of Egypt, not because they were such a worthy people but because He loved them and was faithful to His covenant with them (Deut. 7:7-10). Though Pharaoh fought to keep Israel slaves in Egypt, through the death of the firstborn, God delivered them. The Israelites were saved through the Passover, God's blood covenant; and *today* His love and grace has made you and I to be partakers of His wonderful salvation *without the Law!* (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-5)

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:8-10—emphasis on verse 10)

God's character is shown in His dealing with His people Israel. My intent is to show His faithfulness to the *better covenant* with all believers during this time of grace—not to the gentiles alone—but to all who will come to Him through the Church Age. Simply put, I believe we can walk in His Spirit every day, forsake sin and find divine protection from the 7-year tribulation period as we pray always to be accounted worthy to *escape all* these things designed for the devil and his angels (Lk. 21:35, 36; Rev. 3:9, 10).

Jacob, the father of the sons listed in Exodus 1: 2-6, is also called “Israel” (Gen.32:28); and Jacob's descendants became known as Israelites. The Passover was to be “the first month of the year” (Exodus 1-14; 21-28). These celebrations were based on the historical events of the first Passover at the time of the exodus from Egypt, in chapters 12-14.

**1. Bondage:** There was no tabernacle, and no glory cloud. This period was *typical* of the unconverted sinner, slaves, without God. Yet He loved Israel, and, faithful to His promise, He redeemed them (Exodus 1-11). Exodus begins with Jacob's descendants suffering oppression, slavery, and infanticide in Egypt; and ends with God's presence, power, and glory manifested (*Tabernacling*) in the midst of His liberated people in the wilderness. Exodus is characterized by 1) Israel's birth as a nation; 2) God's law and righteous requirements for His people, 3) It is the foremost Old Testament book describing God's redemptive grace and power. And 4) emphasizes the worship which should necessarily follow God's redemption of His people then, and now.

**2. Redemption:** Israel's birth date and redemption are a *type* of the spilled blood of Jesus (Exodus 12). The entire Old Testament records truths concerning the precious blood of Jesus looking forward to the day He would be the last Lamb that would have to be slain.

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”* (John 14:6, 7)

**3. Separation unto God:** The Red Sea opened to release them from Egypt's power, and closed behind them to keep them out of it forever. Note the fact God allowed every Egyptian warrior to enter into the Red Sea—before He dropped the wall of the sea back into place. How awesome is that! It was in this place, far from Egypt's altars and gods, the true God came down to dwell with His people. It was here, near Sinai, that the Tabernacle was pitched. (Exodus 14).

No believer tarries in Egypt. If he does, he can never expect to comprehend the typological teaching of the Tabernacle. As long as the child of God is ruled by the world's doctrines and mixed up in its abominations, he can have *little or no* communion with God. The promise "I will dwell in them," is closely followed by the precept, "Come out from among them" (II Cor. 6:16,17).

If a person has no fellowship with the Lord's redeemed encamped around the Tabernacle (Temple of the Holy Spirit), then he should heed the call, "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, saith the Lord.*"

God's message to the Israelites upon arrival at Sinai: "*...Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel....*" (Exodus 19:4-6)

*"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1Peter 2:9; II Cor. 5:17).

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badger' skins, and shittim wood, Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate, and let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:1-6)

#### **ACHEN'S TRESPASS:**

In Joshua 6:17, God instructed the children of Israel not to take anything from the accursed city of Jericho for themselves, lest they be accursed, and make Israel accursed also. And the silver, gold, and vessels of brass and iron were to be consecrated and placed in the treasury of the Lord.

But in the next chapter, the children of Israel committed that very trespass. Achen, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. Now Israel was facing another enemy in the city of A'i. Joshua sent men from Jericho to A'i to spy on the country. They returned to Joshua saying, "*Don't send the whole army. 2,000 to 3,000 will be enough to smite A'I*". The following events took place because of the sin of Achen:

**1)** The men of A'i smote the Israel army of 3,000, killing about 36 men and chasing the remainder of them from the city gates to the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. **2)** The people's hearts melted and became like water; and **3)** Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth face down before the ark, as did the elders, until evening and put dust on their heads (A sign of frustration).

*"Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil"* (Joel 2:12,13).

To the Israelites, "renting clothes" meant the *most intense* of all disastrous events: "*And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O LORD God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would*

*to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O LORD, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! (Joshua 7:6-8)*

*The Lord reprimanded Joshua saying, “And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up: Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.” (Joshua 7:10-11)*

What Do You Think? The children of Israel (as a single unit) were guilty of sin? Yes, Achen’s sin became entangled among the rest of the body! Was God unjust when He judged them all guilty—so the entire body would suffer? No, The Lord was not unjust because the Israelites at the time walked under the law, and not under Grace. Concerning the Church today, are our sins similar in nature to Achen’s?

Yes. *All* unforgiven disobedience will be judged today, including the sins named in Galatians 5:19-21:

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

God adds this in Joshua, verse 12:

*“Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you take away the accursed thing among you.”*

#### **THE JEZEBEL SPIRIT VERSUS THE ELIJAH SPIRIT (Rev 2:20-23)**

The battle lines are being drawn for the next skirmish of the greatest war in history. On one side is the adversary, a demonic spirit that seeks to destroy the family, morality, integrity, and every element of a Godly society. Its goal is to neutralize rightful leadership and veil our eyes to the One True God. On the other side is the army of Jesus (King of kings), or the Church which is anointed by the grace of God and endowed by the Holy Spirit with His power and authority. This Church is the absolute enemy to the spirit of Jezebel. As Elijah and Jezebel were enemies, so is the Church the absolute enemy of Satan’s kingdom.

Today, a major power of evil continually hovers over all nations. It ignores religions, age, sex, and desires to prevail over mankind through every possible means, including governments, Hollywood, music, schools that teach our children, entertainment, media, cults, and sexual perversions. Many of the universities in our nation have become Satan’s penthouse, teaching what their own father has already taught them.

#### **JOHN, THE GREATEST PROPHET**

*“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:12,13). (See also Matthew 17:21)*

When John the Baptist was in the dungeon, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to learn whether Jesus is the One, or if he should look for another. When the disciples approached Jesus with John’s question, *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matthew 11:4-6).*

*And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft*

*raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 11:7-15)*

As soon as John's disciples departed with Jesus' words of reassurance, the Lord turned to the multitude with words of glowing praise for the Baptist. This same crowd had flocked to the desert where John was preaching. Why? To see some weak, vacillating reed of a man, shaken by every passing wind of human opinion? Certainly not! John was a fearless preacher, an embodied conscience, who would rather suffer than be silent, and rather die than lie. Had they gone out to see a well-dressed palace courtier, luxuriating in comfort? Certainly not! John was a simple man of God whose austere life was a rebuke to the enormous worldliness of the people. Had they gone out to see a prophet? Well, John was a prophet, the greatest of the prophets; and the Lord did not imply here that he (John) was greater as to his personal character, eloquence, or persuasiveness; he was greater because of his position as forerunner of the Messiah-King.

This is made clear in verse 10; John was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (3:1) the messenger who would precede the Lord and prepare the people for His coming. Other men had prophesied the Coming of Christ, but John was the one chosen to announce His actual arrival. It has been well said, John opened the way for Christ and then he stepped down, already knowing he must *decrease* while Christ must *increase*.

The statement, "*he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*", proves that Jesus was speaking of John's privilege, not his character. A person who is least in the kingdom of heaven does not necessarily have a better character than John, but he does have greater privilege. To be a citizen of the kingdom is greater than to announce its arrival. John's privilege was great in preparing the way for the Lord, but he did not live to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom.

For about four centuries in the time between the testaments, there was great darkness upon the earth, with no record of any great prophets. The Pharisees and Sadducees were some of the leaders of God's people. You need only to read of these leaders in the gospels to discern where Israel was spiritually. They needed a savior "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death".

The devil was probably on vacation somewhere, so little threat did he feel from mankind at this juncture in history. But, to this dark world was sent the mightiest prophet of all time, John the Baptist, filled with the Spirit, living a fasting life on locusts and honey, hidden away in the wilderness till the time of "his showing unto Israel." But, when once his voice "crying in the wilderness" was at last heard in Israel, Satan's vacation abruptly came to an end, as he began his counterattack to the launching of God's eternal plan of deliverance for His people. "God's Kingdom" began "suffering violence".

Some believe the 400 years between the Testaments were "dead" years; but the forces of evil began to shake with fear when both Jesus and John the Baptist presented to man the new message of peace. The enemy began a time of warfare affecting the entire earth. The Pharisees and scribes had vigorously opposed it. Herod the king had done his part to buffet the kingdom by destroying it; and the *violent take it by force*.

This statement has two interpretations. First, the foes of the kingdom did their best to take the kingdom in order to destroy it. Their rejection of John foreshadowed the rejection of the King Himself and thus of the kingdom. But it most likely means that those who were ready for the King's advent responded vigorously to

the announcement and strained every muscle to enter. This is likely the meaning in Luke 16:16: The law and the prophets were until John.

Since that time “*the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it,*” indicates a huge revival of souls into God’s kingdom, which is pictured as a besieged city, with all classes of men hammering at it from the outside, trying to get in. A spiritual violence is necessary. Whichever meaning one adopts, the thought is that John’s preaching touched off a violent reaction, with widespread and deep effects.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. The entire volume from Genesis to Malachi predicted the coming of the Messiah. When John stepped out on the stage of history, his unique role was not just prophecy; it was announcing the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning Christ’s First Advent.

Malachi had predicted that before Messiah’s appearance, Elijah would come as a forerunner (Mal. 4:5, 6). If the people had been willing to receive Jesus as Messiah, John would have filled the role of Elijah. John was not Elijah reincarnated. He disclaimed being Elijah in John 1:21. But he went before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17).

Not everyone appreciated John the Baptist or understood the deep significance of his ministry. Therefore the Lord added, He who has ears to hear, let him hear! In other words, pay heed. Don’t miss the significance of what you are hearing. If John fulfilled the prophecy concerning Elijah, then Jesus was the promised Messiah! In thus accrediting John the Baptist, Jesus was reaffirming His claim to be the Christ of God. To accept one would lead to acceptance of the other.

—Blessings from Tom and Linda Stephens—

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**Bibliography:**

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