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The Deeper Truths in Bible Stories

The more I study Scripture the more amazed I am of how intricate God's Word really is. We often tend to look at the Bible as 66 books filled with many Sunday School stories to teach a lesson and to point to Christ. This is true but within these stories lies a deeper understanding of God's plan.

Scripture begins with Genesis and creation where we see who we are, how we came to be, why we are here, where we are going and how we are going to get there. Though the primary purpose of Scripture is to point us to Christ, (the way to heaven), there is much more recorded for our benefit and for God's order and plan. It is this orderliness and plan that we are going to examine in hopes of answering the often asked question of "why did God do this?" Before we begin, it is important to realize that God's Word does speak for itself and we must be careful not to get too carried away with allegorizing etc. Most of the allegories we will discuss can be backed in the New Testament. Those not found in the New Test. are not necessarily false, but we cannot say with 100% assurance that God had intended them to be allegories. They are only meant to help make a connection with your personal faith walk. Let us begin!

Shortly after the creation of the world, man fell into sin and thus had a need for the Savior. The desire for this Savior however, was not as quickly developed. The world became wicked causing God to destroy every living creature except the eight people and the animals spared in the Ark. Soon after the Ark landed, people began to settle again at Babel where God again intervened and scattered people around the world. It is here where our story begins.

Once people had been scattered, God chose a nation to be blessed and that nation would descend through Abraham. Abraham was given the promise of many offspring and a promised child. Now as one thinks about this story, he must let his mind go beyond the face value of what is being said. Abraham (meaning father of many nations) may represent God, our father. Isaac, the promised son will then represent Christ, the son of God.

Not long after the birth of Isaac, Abraham was told to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Though Isaac was spared, the parallels between Christ and Isaac are astounding. Indeed Isaac was a “type” of Christ foreshadowing what was to come. We read, “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ” (Gal 3:16). Let us look at the similarities. "Father" Abraham was about to show his love to God by offering his “one and only son” (Gen 22:2; Heb 11:17) as a sacrifice but, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). Isaac carried his own wood on his back (Gen 22:6) and Christ, “Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)” (John 19:17). Genesis 22:6 shows Isaac and his father went on together as did God the Father and God the Son. Isaac willingly went up the hill and Christ says, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again” (John 10:17). Isaac was about to be crucified on Mount Moriah. This is where the Dome of the

Rock is today and where the old Temple of Solomon was. It is here that many sacrifices were to be made years later in the Temple (2 Chronicles 3:1), all foreshadowing the Sacrifice to come, Christ our Savior would die not far from here. In Hebrews we read how “figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death” (Heb 11:19). Once Abraham set out to go to Mount Moriah, his son was “figuratively” dead until God saved him. Note in Genesis 22:4 it took three days to get to the mountain just as Christ was dead three days and rose again thereafter, this must also foreshadow the resurrection. Both took long journeys away from home. Isaac spoke up to his father (22:7), just as Jesus spoke up to His Father many times in prayer (Luke 4:42; 6:12; Matt 26:36). Isaac was the promised son as was Jesus the promised Messiah. Isaac was bound (v. 9) as was Jesus (Matt 27:2). Isaac was conceived and born miraculously as was Jesus (Luke 1:35). Isaac was given a name by God before birth (Gen 17:19) as was Christ (Matt 1:21).

On the way up the hill, Isaac asks his father where the sacrifice is. Abraham responds with, “God will provide.” What a deep truth lies within this statement. Though the LORD does provide a ram in place of Isaac (22:13), the Lamb that WILL BE provided was yet to come. Christ was our Passover Lamb which is why when John saw Jesus coming he said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). These are just a few examples of the many times Christ is found in the Old Testament. What a beautiful picture of God’s love for us that was provided near that very mountain.

We also see from Galatians that Abraham's wife Sarah represented the new covenant while Hagar the old covenant. Isaac (Sarah's son) therefore, represents Christ and Ishmael (Hagar's son), represents the Law of Mount Sinai: “Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be

taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: 'Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.' Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise" (Gal 4:22-28). As Hagar was a slave woman, she represents the law of Mt. Sinai where she dwelled and the earthly Jerusalem. Ishmael, the offspring of the slave woman is natural or ordinary just as the law is naturally in our hearts and therefore we become slaves to the law (Rom 2:15). Isaac was born by a promise and he represents freedom of the law. Sarah likewise, represents the New Jerusalem of heaven (Rev 3:12; 21:2) of which all believers are to receive since we are "children of the promise."

Isaac then leads us to Jacob who takes us to Joseph. Joseph then brings the Israelites to Egypt where they become slaves for 400 years. This slavery represents our daily bondage to sin in the flesh. We, like the Israelites, needed a Savior. Enter Moses, who could represent the Spirit of God who leads us to that Savior. Though Isaac was a type of Christ, we must remember that Christ is coming again, but this time in full glory.

Through a number of events, Moses leads us out of bondage where we are brought into the "glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). How was this done? Through the crossing of the Red Sea which for us is Baptism. The Red Sea crossing did in fact point to Baptism wherein we become God's children through the Holy Spirit and the Word. We read, "They all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:1-2). Israel's deliverance from bondage symbolizes our deliverance through baptism.

Once the Israelites crossed the Red Sea the promised land was in sight but they were unable to enter right away. We too, after becoming children of God, have heaven in focus as we, "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2).

Next came the 40 year wilderness wanderings. This represents our life. The goal of the Israelites was to get into the promised land just as our goal is to get to our promised land - heaven. While in the desert they ate manna from heaven and drank water from the Rock. This clearly represented our communion with Christ today. Paul writes, "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did" (1 Cor 10:3-6). Regarding the manna we read in John, "Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:49-51).

Just as through the 40 years, our lives are full of trials and temptations all with the goal of strengthening our faith and building our trust in the LORD. In addition, when the Israelites complained, God sent the poisonous snakes to bite them. "Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived" (Num 21:9). This was the only way to be saved. Likewise, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross" (Heb 12:2). I find it ironic how when reading the stories of the wilderness wanderings we are often judgmental of the Israelites for their non belief. One need only look at our lives to see the same pattern. God blesses, we take it for granted. Troubles come. We

complain rather than trust in God's deliverance.

Just as the Israelites had the ten commandments, we have a law today. Though it is not the law that motivates us to do good, it still applies for all who willingly do evil. We read in Romans, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (Rom 3:28-31). And, "through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:2-4).

The Israelites also had the ark of the covenant with them in the wilderness. This ark represented God's presence among them. We also have God's presence among and in us today. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me" (John 6:56-57).

Many other parallels can be found connecting the 40 years to our daily lives but for the sake of room we must move on.

Finally, at the end of the 40 years they crossed the Jordan River where Jericho was the first city destroyed and thus the first official entrance into the promised land. Jericho fell only after the seventh trumpet had blown. This too is when we will finally inherit our promised land. "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep,

but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Cor 15:51-52). We read in Revelation 10:7 "But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

Once in the promised land, Israel reigned with David as their king just as we shall reign with Christ, our king.

In summary we see how God's plan serves as a model for our lives today. God (Abraham) is the father of all nations. He gave his one and only son, Jesus (Isaac) to die for us. Though we were born into sin (Slavery in Egypt) God provided a deliverer, the Holy Spirit (Moses) who leads us out of bondage through Baptism (Red Sea). After this we see the promise land ahead (Joshua and Caleb spying out the promised land) but must go through our lives (40 years in desert) keeping the faith. Christ gives us a law of righteousness (10 commandments) and lives in us (Ark of the covenant) through the sacraments. All who look to him (Bronze snake) shall be saved. When the seventh trumpet blows (Jericho) we will enter the eternal paradise when we will reign with Christ (Promised Land and the United Kingdom) eternally. So for now, "if we hope for what we do not yet have we wait for it patiently" (Rom 8:25).