

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 5th July 2020

God Plans Long Term and Keeps Promises

Good morning and welcome to this time as we worship the Lord and seek encouragement through prayer and the study of the Word of Truth.

Ps 36: 5 “Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.”

Song: I will give thanks to Thee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSyt6uOGyA>

Prayer:

Loving Father we thank you for the gift of a new day and that You give us life in all its fullness through our relationship with your Son Jesus Christ. We praise you that you are the creator of the universe and that you are Sovereign Lord who reigns over this world. We rejoice that in these uncertain times we can put our trust in you and you know the plans you have for each one of us. We praise you for your faithfulness and indeed we want to exalt you even though we are not worshiping together. We pray for forgiveness as we confess that so often our lives fail to show the love of Christ; that we seek our own way. We commit this time to you that you will be glorified in the name of Jesus. Amen

Song: What a friend we have in Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTpUQO0aryw>

Intercessory Prayer:

It is indeed a privilege to pray for others and at this time it is even more important that we pray for one another as people are facing such difficult situations.

But what should we pray for? We have an example of a prayer of Paul's in Philippians 1: 9 – 11 and this can encourage us as we bring our petitions and requests to the Lord.

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so you may be able to discern what is best and pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.”

Song: He will hold me fast
It is blessing to know that He will hold us fast.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=936BapRFHaQ>

Readings: Genesis 46: 1 – 4, 26 – 27. Exodus 12: 37 – 42

Genesis 46: 1 So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, “Jacob! Jacob!” “Here I am,” he replied. 3 “I am God, the God of your father,” he said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there, 4 I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.”

26 All those who went to Egypt with Jacob – those who were his direct descendants, not counting his son’s wives – numbered sixty-six persons. 27 With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.

Exodus 12: 37 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. 38 Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. 39 With the dough they had bought from Egypt, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves. 40 Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. 41 At the end of 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord’s divisions left Egypt. 42 Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honour the Lord for the generations to come.

Prayer: Father as we study Your Word come by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak to us so that we might grow in our knowledge of your glory, majesty and power and to be more aware of the way you lead and guide your people. To recognise your faithfulness in the way you fulfil your promises. We ask this in the Name of Jesus. Amen

The theme this week is: God plans long term and keeps promises.

The Old Testament tells us the wonderful story of the children of Israel. They are a chosen people with a special relationship with God. In looking at this relationship we see that plans for the growth of this nation are revealed to them by God.

God on two occasions reveals to Abram the plans he has for the children of Israel.

Genesis 12: 2 “I **will** make you 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.”

Can you see the sevenfold aspect of God’s plan based on His will for the nation? Take a few moments to reflect on each of the ‘wills’. What amazing plans God has for His people and this is an encouragement for us for as believers in the Lord Jesus, we too are His chosen people.

When we look at the nation of Israel today we see a relatively small nation having a disproportionate influence on world affairs. It has also enriched the world because the Jews have had many creative and talented people who have been a blessing. So we see God fulfilling His promises to Abram in modern times.

Genesis 15: 5 “He took him (Abram) outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.’ Then He said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’

That plan has been fulfilled as the dispersed Jewish nation has populated many other nations around the world. All this has been the fulfilment of scripture and is a great encouragement for us today as it confirms the truth of the Bible. It is the Word of God.

In Genesis 28 1 – 4 we see God confirming to Jacob this time, the plans He has for Israel. Note that Jacob is available to receive the vision that is to be given to him. Do we say to the Lord, “here I am?” Available to do His will.

There is confirmation again that Israel will be a great nation. The instruction is to go to Egypt with the promise that they will be brought back again. So we see in verses 26 and 27 that a small group of direct descendants and a few others numbering 70 left for Egypt.

This raises the question, how can such a small group become a great nation?

This is where the reading from Exodus 12: 37 – 42 can help us see the fulfilment of God's plans for the growth of the nation. It shows that over the 430 years the nation has grown in size from the original 70 to 1,800,000 (this is the estimate from Matthew Henry's commentary). This is also the start of the fulfilling of the promise that they would be brought back as they leave Egypt. As mentioned in Genesis 46 verse 4.

As we read the stories of God's dealings with His people we acknowledge His hand upon those He has chosen and this is wonderfully shown in the familiar passage from Jeremiah 29: 11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

We have to be careful when we take a single verse of scripture because we need to place it in the context of the passage overall. However this verse has been a great source of comfort to believers and none more so in these uncertain times when people simply wonder what the future will be like. God has a plan for each one of us who has put their trust in Him, just as He is fulfilling the plans He has for the children of Israel. It is important that we watch world events relating to the nation of Israel because God is keeping His promises to His people thus fulfilling the plans given to Abram and Jacob. They are indeed long term plans that are being revealed even in our day.

So we can be encouraged that God plans long term and keeps promises.

Prayer:

Father we thank you that in these passages of scripture we have seen that you are indeed the Sovereign Lord that plans the future of nations. That what is written in the Bible is being fulfilled as year succeeds to year as you keep your promises. This is a great encouragement to those who trust in you and we give you thanks in the Name of Jesus. Amen

Song: I do not know what lies ahead

In the chorus it says “with God things don’t just happen, everything by Him is planned”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgA4UlkB1N8>

Blessing

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen

An optional extra song is one I believe has only been written recently and is sung by people in a lockdown environment. I know folk at Woodley Baptist have been blessed as they listen to it.

Is He Worthy?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs7Kah6wnY8>