

Bible Stories for Adults

God's Purpose for Israel

Acts 7; Romans 9-11

Opening

Gathering: Give an example of a situation where someone may have felt left out when others were actually planning or preparing something that included or benefited them.

Today's Focus: God did not choose the Jews in exclusion of the rest of the world, but in order to include the whole world in His plan by the promises and revelations He made through them.

Key Verses: *And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed."* Acts 3:25

It is too small a thing for you to be My servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. Isaiah 49:6

Opening Prayer

Lesson

God's Plan to Bring a Savior (Acts 7:1-8)

From what point did Stephen begin his story of God's plan to bring a Savior for the world?

Acts 7:1-4 = God called Abraham to leave and to follow Him

Was God just looking to bless Abraham or was this part of a greater plan?

Acts 7:5-8 = Promises not realized for many generations – Perfect timing of God's eternal plan

How could Abraham and the patriarchs deal with promises they would never see fulfilled?

Hebrews 11:13-16 = They trusted God's plan in faith – they would see fulfilled in eternity

A Time of Preparation (Acts 7:9-16)

What had God planned before He would reveal more of His plan to/through Abraham's descendants?

Genesis 15:13-16 = Build them into a nation ready to follow and reveal Him

Did Abraham's descendants just happen to move to a foreign country or did God get involved?

Acts 7:9-10 = God worked through Joseph's life to prepare the way

How did placing Joseph in a high position in Egypt get these people to move?

Acts 7:11-15 = God allowed a famine and controlled events so they would move

Did they recognize this as their new home or just as a temporary residence?

Acts 7:16 = They remembered God's plan for Canaan as their permanent home

Time to Go (Acts 7:17-19)

What was part of God's reason for this people to spend 400 years in Egypt?

Acts 7:17 = To grow the family of 75 into a nation

How did God bless these chosen people during this time of preparation?

Genesis 47:5-6 = He settled them in Goshen – the best part of the land of Egypt

How would God get them to leave such a great place that was their home for 400 years?

Acts 7:18-19 = He let them become enslaved and treated bitterly

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Preparing a Rescuer (Acts 7:20-29)

How could someone among these slaves stand up to Egypt and rescue these people?

Acts 7:20-22 = He prepared Moses by having him educated in Egyptian ways for 40 years

How would God get this slave-turned-royalty to leave his lush home and family in the palace?

Acts 7:23-29 = Led him to stand up for the Israelites, became a fugitive

How would God prepare this pagan to lead His people in faith?

Exodus 2:15-16, 21 = He sent Moses to live with a priest of Midian to learn about Him

Ruler and Deliverer (Acts 7:30-38)

How did God get this prepared leader to leave his comfortable home and go rescue His people?

Acts 7:30-34 = Came to him after 40 years in Midian and sent him to Egypt

How did God further help Moses lead and deliver His new nation from Egypt?

Acts 7:35-36 = He revealed His power through Moses

Did Moses view his role as the completion of God's plan or just a part of it?

Acts 7:37 = Recognized that he was just a part of God's greater plan to send a Savior

How did God reveal much more of His plan and will to His new nation through Moses?

Acts 7:38 = Revealed "living words" to them on Mount Sinai

The People Respond (Acts 7:39-43)

How excited were these people to finally receive these great revelations of God's plan and will?

Acts 7:39-41 = They rejected the revelations and they rejected God

How did God respond to their reaction to His great plan?

Acts 7:42 = He gave them free choice to follow or reject Him

By giving them over to their desires, did God give up on His plan for this chosen people?

Nehemiah 9:29-31 = No, He kept calling them through prophets & revealing more of His plan

What did God eventually do to get their attention?

Acts 7:43 = He exiled them in Babylon for 70 years to consider their calling

God's Presence Among His People (Acts 7:44-50)

What did God use to visually remind these people of His presence and plan?

Acts 7:44-45 = Gave them the Tent of Tabernacle to carry with them

How did God change this after the nation was settled and organized?

Acts 7:46-47 = God had Solomon build a temple for His presence

How did the people confuse the purpose of God's temple?

Jeremiah 7:3-4, 8-11 = They trusted in it as a sign that God would protect them no matter what

But wasn't the temple God's home and a sign that the Israelites were special?

Acts 7:48-50 = No, it was a sign of God's presence – God lives everywhere

The Purpose of Israel (Genesis 12:1-3)

Weren't the Israelites specially chosen by God to be the people He would save?

Isaiah 49:6 = No, they were called to reveal Him and His plan to the world

Why hadn't God made this clear to them? = All peoples on earth blessed through them

Genesis 12:1-3 = He had from the very beginning – Blessed to be a blessing

Maybe the problem was that God didn't keep this purpose clear to them?

Acts 3:24-26 = He reminded them frequently through His prophets

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Man's Rejection Can't Stop God (*Acts 7:51-8:4*)

Why didn't the people understand the reminders of the prophets?

Acts 7:51-52a = They rejected the message of the Holy Spirit sent through the prophets

How could Stephen accuse them as being as bad as their forefathers who rejected the prophets?

Acts 7:52-53 = They went further and even killed the Righteous One – Jesus the Messiah

How did these Jewish leaders respond to the accusations that Stephen directed at them?

Acts 7:54, 57-58 = They were furious and stoned him to death to shut him up

How did God use their rejection to spread His good news?

Acts 8:1, 4 = A persecution broke out and Christians spread out, taking the gospel with them

Not All Israel Are Israel (*Romans 9*)

How did this Saul (Paul) later feel about his Jewish brothers rejecting the Righteous One?

Romans 9:2-3 = It pained him greatly and he wished he could give them his salvation

In what ways had God blessed these chosen people? = ancestry of the Savior

Romans 9:4-5 = Sonship, God's glory, covenants, law, temple, worship, promises, patriarchs

Had God failed by calling the Jews and saying He would bless them to be a blessing?

Romans 9:6-8 = No, only the children of the promise are true Israelites

Does this mean that many Gentiles (non-Israelites) will be saved while many Israelites will not?

Romans 9:30-33 = Those who pursue righteousness by faith will be saved, not those of works

Zealous Israelites (*Romans 10:1-11*)

Did God reject the Israelites because they weren't zealous for Him?

Romans 10:1-2 = No, they had great zeal, but in the wrong thing

How was their zeal wrong? = Jesus is the end (completion, fulfillment) of the law – Next week's topic

Romans 10:3-4 = They didn't know Christ's righteousness so they made up their own

Note: Pharisees made a hedge of laws around God's laws so no one would break God's laws

What did Jesus say about the laws of the Pharisees?

Matthew 23:1-4, 13 = They made it impossible for people to be saved

What is the righteousness of Christ that the Israelites missed that would save them?

Romans 10:8-11 = Trust in Christ's salvation and confess your faith

Saving the Israelites (*Romans 10:12-21*)

Aren't God's rules different for the Jew than for the Gentile?

Romans 10:12-13 = No, same rules for all – Saved by faith in Christ

What is needed before someone can believe in Jesus and be saved?

Romans 10:14-15 = They have to hear the good news

What was the Israelites' problem?

Romans 10:16-17 = Not all of the Israelites accepted the good news

Maybe they didn't believe because no one told them clearly?

Romans 10:18-21 = No, they were told but refused to understand

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Rejected Israelites (*Romans 11:1-10*)

Did God then reject the Israelites and change His focus to the Gentiles?

Romans 11:1-4 = No, a faithful remnant of Israelites would be saved

Why would this remnant be saved? Because they were the most obedient?

Romans 11:5-6 = No, but because they were faithful and God would extend His grace

What was the result of Israelites rejecting God's faith in order to pursue righteousness by obedience?

Romans 11:7-10 = God left them to their own devices and let them lead themselves astray

The True Family Tree (*Romans 11:11-24*)

Is any hope left for these Israelites who have rejected God's grace?

Romans 11:11-12 = No, unless they join the faithful in the fullness of God's grace

If Paul was so concerned about his Israelite brothers, then why did he focus his work on the Gentiles?

Romans 11:13-15 = God sent him to the Gentiles, Jews might envy and come to the gospel

How did Paul describe the Gentiles' relation to the righteous family tree of Abraham?

Romans 11:16-21 = They're grafted in & supported by God's promises, like natural branches

Is there now any difference between the blessings and curses to the natural vs. grafted branches?

Romans 11:22-24 = No, both can be equally saved or cut off

We All Need His Mercy (*Romans 11:25-36*)

What did Paul say about Gentiles who looked down on Israelites who rejected Christ?

Romans 11:25-27 = Their rejection is temporary and many Israelites will become of Israel

Is it possible that God has revoked His call to Israelites since they rejected His Savior?

Romans 11:28-29 = No, His promises and call are irrevocable

How is Israel's situation now like that of the Gentiles' past?

Romans 11:30-32 = They need God's mercy

How else can Paul explain this confusing mystery?

Romans 11:33-36 = He can't - God's wisdom and plan are beyond our understanding

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. What events in your life can God use to fulfill His calling to you?
(*Acts 7:1-8, 9-19, 20-36; 16:1-3; 18:1-4, 18-19, 24-28; 26:4-29; Esther 4:14; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Samuel 1:20, 27-28; 2:11, 21, 26; 3:19-4:1a*)
2. How have you responded to the calling God has given to you?
(*Acts 7:3-4, 30-34, 51-53; 9:1-31; Romans 10:1-3; Exodus 3:1-17; Isaiah 6:8; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Luke 5:27-32*)
3. What spiritual blessings have you received from your ancestors?
(*Romans 9:4-5; 11:25-36; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-9; Joshua 24:2-3, 14-15; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17; Philippians 3:3-7; 2 Timothy 1:5*)
4. How has God reached you with His good news through other people?
(*Romans 9:6-8, 22-24; 10:14-18; 11:11-32; Mark 1:1-8; John 1:35-42, 43-46; Ephesians 1:13-17; 3:1-19; Hebrews 2:1-4*)
5. What stumbling blocks have you encountered in your walk with God?
(*Romans 9:30-33; Ez 14:7; Hosea 5:4-5; Mark 9:42-50; James 3:2; 1 Peter 2:4-8; 1 John 2:9-11*)