

Exod 03-03-30a

For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 68. Psalm 68. We'll pause for just a moment at the outset to fall back and regroup, to clear our minds and prepare our hearts.

Set aside the distractions and the cares and the issues that weigh heavily on our minds. Lay all of that aside and focus our attention on the Word of God, on the ministry of God's Spirit. As we look together at God's Word, shall we pray? Father, we thank you for the fact that it is your strength that sustains us.

It is your grace that preserves us. It is your faithfulness that ensures that we will make it through this life and be prepared for the next. We thank you for the fact that we are not left to our own devices.

It is not our talent or our ability or our wisdom or our perspicacity that you have left us to rely on, but you have given us your grace and your wisdom and your strength through your Word and through your Spirit. We thank you for the country in which we live. Our foreign policy currently requires us to be in conflict with another nation in warfare and many other nations philosophically and politically.

We pray for our leadership. We pray for President Bush and for the Congress. We pray for all of our military leaders, especially those who are actively engaged in making operational decisions.

We pray that you will be with each one. Be especially with each believer in our armed forces and in our government. Help them to see clearly the issues that are at stake, that their faith will not fail and that they will be able to adhere to what they know to be right from your Word.

We pray a special blessing on those who are not able to worship in their church and with their families and with their fellow believers of like mind. We pray that you will grant them a sanctuary in the soul and remind them of the truth that is stored there. Give them a special sermon in the heart this morning that will uplift them and encourage them and strengthen them for what lies ahead.

We ask your blessing on us now as we study in fellowship together. We pray that the spiritual gift you have granted to each one of us will be in evidence and will provide a blessing for all of those gathered here. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Turning, as I said, to Psalm 68. This is a song of triumph and glory.

That is how it is so subtitled in the New King James. The Hebrew says that it is to the chief musician a psalm of David. Psalm 68.

Anytime you see a dedication like this to the chief musician, it is a reminder that these were orchestrated. There would many times be a refrain. There might be a solo part and then a refrain that is sung by a chorus.

It would have been given to the singers in Israel who were responsible for the music portion of their worship. So David authored this and sent it over to the choir director and said, Arrange this for voices. Arrange it for those who will minister these lyrics supported by a tune and by harmony.

It is a reminder that music is and has been a part of worship ever since the dawn of time. God enjoys music. Music appears to be unique to the human race.

One of the more interesting investigations you might try sometime is see if you can find a reference anywhere in the Bible to angels doing any form of singing. And you will search in vain. There are no passages in the Bible, to my knowledge.

If you find one, be sure and let me know. But in my investigations, I have yet to find a single passage that refers to angels singing. They didn't sing on the night of the Annunciation to the shepherds of Christ's birth.

They don't sing Holy, Holy, Holy. There is no reference anywhere in the Scripture. Music seems to be something that God has given to us as human beings.

And we have that hymn in our hymnal here that talks about glory, glory is what the angels sing. Well, that's possible, but it's not documented in Scripture. But I like the rest of the sentiment in that song.

When we begin to sing about salvation's story, the angels will fold their wings because angels never felt the joy that our salvation brings. And we have cause for celebration and cause for singing. And that's the nature of this psalm, Psalm 68.

It is a song of triumph and glory. Let God arise. Let his enemies be scattered.

Let also who hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

But let the righteous be glad. Let them rejoice before God. Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.

Sing to God, sing praises to his name. Extol him who rides on the clouds by his name, Yah, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy habitation.

God sets the solitary in families. He brings out those who are bound into prosperity. But the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth shook. The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God. Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, whereby you confirmed your inheritance when it was weary.

Your congregation dwelt in it. You, O God, provided from your goodness for the poor.

The Lord gave the word. Great was the company of those who proclaimed it. You can't read those words if you've heard Handel's Messiah very often without remembering that section of the oratorio there.

Kings of armies flee. They flee, and she who remains at home divides the spoil. Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.

When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Zalman. A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan. A mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan.

Why do you fume with envy, you mountains of many peaks? This is the mountain which God desires to dwell in. Yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands.

The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive.

You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell there. Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation. Selah Our God is the God of salvation, and to God the Lord the long escapes from death.

But God will wound the head of his enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, that your foot may crush them in blood, and the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies. They have seen your procession, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.

The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after. Among them were the maidens playing timbrels. Bless God in the congregations, the Lord from the fountain of Israel.

There is little Benjamin, their leader, the princes of Judah and their company, the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali. Your God has commanded your strength. Strengthen, O God, what you have done for us.

Because of your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to you. Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples, till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver. Scatter the peoples who delight in war.

Envoys will come out of Egypt. Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God. Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth.

O sing praises to the Lord. Selah. To him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which were of old, indeed he sends out his voice, a mighty voice.

Ascribe strength to God. His excellence is over Israel and his strength is in the clouds. O God, you are more awesome than your holy places.

The God of Israel is he who gives strength and power to his people. Blessed be God. Well, this is a terrific psalm.

You could do a series on it. You could just take like six sessions and cover the different sections in this psalm. The great stanzas.

There are four great stanzas here. But the main idea, as you no doubt can tell, is that there is a conflict. The mountains of Bashan have many peaks.

The mountains of Bashan represent evil and represent the nations and conflict and the source of evil power. And it seems strong. And there are many mountain peaks in Bashan.

And sometimes we look and we think we're hemmed in on every side. Here are the forces of the enemy. And it's this mountain, it's this range of mountains that seems to block our progress and prevent a solution to our problems.

But God says these mountain peaks are fuming with envy because God has chosen to dwell in a modest mountain. Mount Zion isn't particularly tall. It isn't particularly picturesque.

It wasn't particularly noteworthy until God chose to put his presence there. And that is often the case with us. Not many mighty are called.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. And you often see that God's strength is made manifest in our weakness. So it should not surprise us that we seem to be opposed and seem to be oppressed and seem to be confronted with great obstacles and great enemies and great conflicts.

And yet it is the presence of God that makes the difference. If God be for us, who can be against us? And it's illustrated here in the history of Israel, in the situation of Israel. Little Benjamin, the youngest of the sons of Jacob, is leading the congregations of the Lord as they march forth.

And it reminds us that you don't have to be the strongest. You don't have to be the eldest. You don't have to have talent or great wisdom or great ability to figure out the great elegant solution to a problem.

All we need is the presence of God. God is the one who has the thousands upon thousands of chariots. And the victory does not depend on us.

It depends on Him, His strength, His provision. He is the one that leads captivity captive and distributes gifts among men, even among the rebellious. And it tells us that there are those in the family of God and in the ranks of the saved who are yet rebellious.

And yet there is common grace, there is a salvation package that applies no matter how

reprobate we become. But verse 19 is right at the center of the psalm. Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our deliverance.

And that's followed by Selah, something to pause and reflect on. What do we choose to dwell on? Do we dwell on the enemy and his strengths, his great high mountain peaks, his plots and schemes, the seeming impossibility of a solution? Or do we dwell on the Lord who loads us daily with benefits? Verse 20 says, Our God is the God of deliverance. To God the Lord belong escapes from death.

Death is the scariest thing we face. Death takes away everything you have, takes away all of your future. There are individuals looking death in the eye over the sights on their M-16s right now.

And yet everything is in God's hands. We live exactly as long as God decides we will live. And it's a reminder that we can have confidence, we can have peace even in the midst of a storm.

It doesn't mean that our ship is not tossing or that our sails are not flapping, but it does mean that we're not washed overboard and we will not be defeated. We will not be drowned. In this regard, I'd like to read you something.

We are, of course, very proud of our armed forces. Those of us that have been members of the Naval Service are proud of the Navy, and those of us that have been members of the Marine Corps are proud of the Marine Corps. But there are many great individuals involved in the current conflict.

And I'd like to read you the speech that was given by a lieutenant colonel of the Royal Irish Battle Group about a week ago, just before their forces moved out as a part of the coalition to go north toward Baghdad. His name is Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins. He's 42 years old.

And as he stood out there in his helmet with his battle gear on and had his troops range down in front of him, this is what he said. The enemy should be in no doubt that we are his nemesis and that we are bringing about his rightful destruction. There are many regional commanders who have stains on their souls, and they are stoking the fires of hell for Saddam.

As they die, they will know their deeds have brought them to this place. Show them no pity. But those who do not wish to go on that journey, we will not send.

As for the others, I expect you to rock their world. We go to liberate, not to conquer. We will not fly our flags in their country.

We are entering Iraq to free a people, and the only flag that will be flown in that ancient land is their own. Don't treat them as refugees, for they are in their own country. I know men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts.

They live with the mark of Cain upon them. If someone surrenders to you, then remember, they

have that right in international law and ensure that one day they go home to their family. The ones who wish to fight, well, we aim to please.

If there are casualties of war, then remember, when they woke up and got dressed in the morning, they did not plan to die this day. Allow them dignity in death. Bury them properly and mark their graves.

You will be shunned unless your conduct is of the highest, for your deeds will follow you down history. Iraq is steeped in history. It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the great flood, and the birth of Abraham.

Tread lightly there. You will have to go a long way to find a more decent, generous, and upright people than the Iraqis. You will be embarrassed by their hospitality, even though they have nothing.

And in conclusion, he said, there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign. We will put them in their sleeping bags and send them back. There will be no time for sorrow.

Let's leave Iraq a better place for us having been there. Our business now is north. I think when you contrast the attitude and the focus on the objective that our troops have and the British troops have, compared with the response on the other side, it goes a long way toward explaining why the war is necessary, why the potential for wreaking havoc has to be quelled, and the folks who are engaged in that effort certainly need our prayers.

Well, let's turn now to our study in Exodus chapter 6. And we have been looking at the return of Moses to Egypt with his brother Aaron. We saw a little episode on the byway where God had to remind Moses, after having given him a clue about the firstborn, Israel is my firstborn, God says. Tell Pharaoh that his firstborn is under threat of death unless God's firstborn is set free.

But Moses doesn't take the hint. And as he attempts to come back into the land, God confronts him and is ready to execute him for disobedience. What is that disobedience? His firstborn son has not been circumcised.

Zipporah is with him. And during this conflict, in which we are not given very much detail, she circumcises her son and in that way removes the threat. I wanted to give you one more detail on that and one more view.

Sometimes as I move forward, I find out things that I didn't know at the time that we covered a particular passage. And I want to pass this particular thing on to you. This has to do with the two sons.

And I had a question this past week from the tape lady about the fact that the Scripture says that Moses and his sons and Zipporah were going back to Egypt. Well, why is there only one that needs to be circumcised? And it's a good question. And I wrestled with it at the time and

could not really find a good answer except that the firstborn son was in view.

And I still believe that to be the case. But I did a little bit more investigation on this after the question arose. And I had still had some lingering questions in my mind.

And one of the things I discovered is that there is some dispute about the way the Hebrew should be pointed when it says that Moses put his wife and his sons on a donkey to return to Egypt. The Masoretes have pointed B'nai, or B'naiav, as a plural. But it can be, without doing any violence to the text, it can also be a singular.

And if you think about the fact that there's only one donkey mentioned, did he really put his wife and two boys on a single donkey? And people have said, well, that doesn't really sound possible. So maybe they each had their own donkey. But it doesn't say donkeys.

It says a single donkey. And they say, well, this is just supposed to be symbolic of Moses' humble return and maybe foreshadow something about the Lord. But I think it's far more likely that at this time, there was only one son that had been born.

You think, well, my goodness, Moses is 80 years old. He's been living with Zipporah for 40 years. Is he just now having his family? But the clue, because I had gone that far in my thinking before, and I didn't find it compelling enough to think, well, there must only be one son if there's only one circumcision involved.

But the clue came to me as I was looking ahead. And if you'll go forward with me to Exodus chapter 18, it says, Now Jethro the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel, his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah after he had sent her away and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.

The other was named Eleazar, for he said, the God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. Now, at the time that Moses' firstborn comes into the world, he says, I am a sojourner, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land. And it seems like something of a great afterthought to say, well, I'm going to name my second son for the fact that a long time ago, I didn't get caught and killed for the murder of the taskmaster, I was delivered from the sword of Pharaoh.

This is far more likely to be a birth that has taken place after Moses' return to Egypt. And very near, this is a very young child at this point, who Moses names and says, God delivered me through this confrontation with Pharaoh, through the ten plagues and through the deliverance across the Red Sea and so forth. And that the reason Zipporah was not with Moses and was with Jethro and he sent her back to her is that she was with child.

And went back to be with people who could care for her and weren't in the midst of coming out of slavery in Egypt. So the combination of factors, for what it's worth, there's not a great point of life application in it, but these details nag at me and bother me until I can resolve them. And I

think that the reason Moses names his second son Eliezer, Elie is my God, remember Jesus on the cross.

Eloi, Eloi, that's the Aramaic form of Elie, which is my God. And then Ezer is the word for help. You have Eben Ezer or Ebenezer.

Eben is stone and Ezer is help, the stone of help that was erected in remembrance of a great deliverance by God. So anyway, Eliezer, my God is help or help comes from my God, is his name. And he says, I named him that because the God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.

And I think this is the Pharaoh of the Exodus, not necessarily the Pharaoh of Moses' younger days when he departed. So, just a little free, no extra charge, review there of earlier things. Secondly now, as we go back to Exodus chapter 6, another thing that was kind of nagging me and I wasn't satisfied with our coverage is this genealogy.

Genealogies have been much maligned and much abused and have become a truism and a source of boredom to many. And I was curious because this is a real odd place for a genealogy to be inserted here at Exodus 6.14 and following. You're right on the verge of this great confrontation, Moses and Aaron versus Pharaoh and his magicians and the advisors in the land.

God is about to bring Israel out with a mighty hand. But here in verse 14, the action pauses right after reassurance, the Lord speaking to Moses and Aaron and giving them this charge for the sons of Israel and for Pharaoh the king of Egypt to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Then, we cut away to this administrative sort of detail.

So, I was scratching my head about that and we went through it. But let me just give you a few details. And there is a point of life application in this.

So, if you'll bear with me, I think you'll find this not only interesting but also a good illustration of an important biblical principle. Exodus 6.14 says, These are the heads of their fathers' households, the sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, Hanach and Palu, Hezron and Carmi. These are the families of Reuben.

The sons of Simeon, Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin, is how you have it here in English, and Zohar and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. These are the families of Simeon. Then, you have the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations, Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

The length of Levi's life is given. Well, why don't we just go to Levi? We're talking about Moses and Aaron and the focus of attention here is really Aaron. But, why do we start at the top of the list and work our way down? This is the question I ask myself.

So, I went back and I said, well, let's do like we have done in some of the other genealogical passages and take a closer look at the circumstances and at the names themselves. So, let's

begin with Reuben. You will remember Reuben is Jacob's firstborn.

If you go back to Genesis chapter 49 and verse 3, the deathbed blessings and predictions that Jacob makes about his sons are given in chapter 49. What did he say about Reuben? Well, turn back to Genesis 49 verse 3. Genesis 49 verse 3. Jacob called his sons and said, Gather together that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days. Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.

Of course, this has been the plea of fathers all down through history. Listen to your father. A lot more pleading than actual compliance in that regard.

Listen to Israel your father. Then he says in verse 3, Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel because you went up to your father's bed and you defiled it.

He went up to my couch. And you'll remember that Jacob had the two wives, Leah and Rachel, and the two concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. And Reuben, who was a son of Leah, went in to Bilhah, who was the concubine.

And this was a bid for power. He wasn't just in a crazy mood one day. These ladies were literally old enough to be his mother.

But much as Absalom will do later on in the time of David, to take the concubine of one's father is to seize control. This is why Adonijah wanted Abishag in David's final days. Abishag was just his nurse, his caretaker, his companion in his final days.

As Solomon was designated to be the next king, Adonijah was older and felt that the throne belonged to him. So he made a bid. He went to Solomon's mother and said, Will you plead and allow me to have Abishag? This would be a sign of taking on the father's role.

This is a lot of what was going on with Reuben. Well, what does this have to do with the genealogy over in Exodus 6, verse 14 and following? Well, think about those concepts. He is the firstborn.

He is the mite. This is the Hebrew word kokh, K-O-C-H. And he says, You are the beginning of my strength.

The beginning is rosh. It's from the same word in the beginning. Barashit.

Rosh is the word that means head or beginning. And then he says, You are the preeminence of dignity and the preeminence of power. Jacob's hope and expectation was that Reuben would be the sum of these attributes.

He would be the high point, the preeminence of dignity and the preeminence of power. Well, of course, he disqualified himself from receiving all of the inheritance that belongs to the firstborn

because of this error in judgment, an error in action by going into his father's concubine, if you will. But Reuben had sons.

His firstborn was Chanok, C-H-A-N-O-C-H. This means trained or dedicated. Well, I'm not quite sure why they vocalize it this way or translate it this way in English because Chanok is the identical same name that you find back in Genesis 5, verse 18.

Enoch. Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him. Enoch, the father of Methuselah.

And it tells you what the potential could be for the firstborn son of the firstborn son in Israel, Chanok. And I'm sure that Reuben had great hopes for his son who was born before they came down to Egypt, you'll recall. And probably before the indiscretion with his father's mistress.

Enoch is also the name of another individual in Genesis. Genesis chapter 4, verse 17. What was the name of the firstborn son of Cain? Enoch.

Cain, the eldest son, and the eldest son of the eldest son was Enoch. So in the same way that you have the firstborn of Adam and the firstborn of Cain named Enoch, you have Jacob's firstborn named Enoch. And in Genesis 4, verse 17, it tells us, Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch and he built a city and called the name of the city Enoch after the name of his son.

So Cain built this city, tried to have a perpetual remembrance of himself and named it Enoch after his son. Well, this same Enoch, if you trace down from Cain through Enoch, the fourth generation son is Lamech. L-A-M-E-C-H.

Remember, Lamech is the one that had the two wives. And he said, let me sing you a little song here, Zillah. That was over in Genesis 4, 23 and 24.

He says, if Cain is avenged sevenfold, I have killed two men, so I should be avenged 77-fold. You have this hubris and this outdoing of the father idea, outdoing of the ancestor. That's what got Reuben in trouble, was this excessive ambition and wanting to take something before its time.

And he winds up losing his inheritance and his firstborn blessing. So the name Enoch is a reminder that we have these great options. You can be the Enoch that gets a heavenly inheritance and walks with God so closely that he doesn't even go through death, but is translated.

Or you can be the Enoch who builds a great city on this earth and names it after himself, or his father does, and his descendants wind up with this hubris. Well, if granddaddy is avenged sevenfold, then I've killed two men, so let's have it 77-fold. Well, that's Enoch, the firstborn of Reuben.

The secondborn is Palu, P-A-L-U, and it is from the verb Pala, which means to distinguish or set

apart. Well, what's our English word that comes from the New Testament theology about being set apart? We talk about sanctification, we talk about the priests who were set apart, the things that are dedicated to God. Well, here's Palu, but it's not Palu-ya or Palu-el, set apart to God or set apart to the Lord.

It's just Palu, set apart and distinguished. There are many different ways we can distinguish ourselves. Some people are distinguished in a very negative way.

But Palu, this verb from which his name is derived, is used in Exodus chapter 8 and verse 8 talking about the distinction that God makes between His people and the people of Egypt. In truth, the Lord, Pharaoh says, that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go so that they may sacrifice to the Lord. And you go on down, and God says, I will make a distinction between my people and the people of Egypt.

And I'm not sure my verse is right on that. It's in chapter 8. It doesn't look like verse 8. But in the account, as we will soon see, God makes a distinction. And the plagues fall on the Egyptians and not on the land of Goshen, not on the Israelites.

And the word used for distinguishing, God says, I will make a distinction between my people and the people of Egypt. It is this Pala from which Palu comes. You also find it in Exodus 33.16. Well, this is a potential.

And the second son seems to be the best of these four in the sense that we don't have a negative association with him. Set apart and distinguished. And you say, well, is he going to be set apart and distinguished? Many times in Scripture, we have the elder serving the younger.

And it is the younger son who winds up superseding the elder. And Palu has the best chance of the sons of Reuben of making a difference and of being set apart to the Lord rather than set apart as an example of a reprobate. His third son is Hetzron.

C-H-E-T-S-R-O-N is a literal transliteration, if you will, or Hezron as they put it here in English. But Hetzron, this is the word that means a settlement or village. And this goes back to the Enoch idea that I'm going to build a city, I'm going to have a heritage and make a mark that will last, have a monument to myself.

And so Hetzron means of the village or of the settlement. It also has a same sounding verb that means to be narrow or stretched, to form a tube, and it comes to be used for reeds. Ketzor is used for something that is narrow or tube-like.

Well, not only is Ketzron the name of Reuben's third son, but it was also the name of a grandson of Judah. Judah had a son named Perez who had a son named Ketzron. Well, what do we know about Perez? How did Judah come to have this son? You remember the story of Judah's sons.

He had Ur, Onan, and Shelah. And Ur was married to Tamar and died. And so Onan, Leveret

Law, and then Onan wouldn't father a child with Tamar, and so God killed him.

So Judah has two sons down, and Tamar says, well, the next son should be mine because there's still no heir. And Judah says, I'm not giving you Shelah. And so Tamar dresses herself up, and in the disguise of a prostitute, Judah is going down to visit some business interests.

And as he's going along the way, he's feeling like he needs a little bit of physical refreshment, and so he goes into this prostitute, which happens to be his daughter-in-law, and she gets pregnant and has two sons. And they are twins, and they struggle in the womb. And the first one sticks out his hand and so the midwife ties a string around it to make sure they know which one's the firstborn because they come out, and if they're identical, how would you know which is the firstborn? So as soon as his hand comes out, they tie a red string on.

Well, his hand went back in, and the other brother maneuvered around and got out first, and that was Perez. And so you have Perez and Zerah are those two sons. And Zerah would have been the firstborn if he had come on out, but he pulled his hand back in and Perez came out.

And Perez means to break through. And you have this idea of an upset, of a last-minute upset, a defeat snatched from the jaws of victory there. And this is all in the line of Hetzron.

He is the son of Perez. And then the last son to be mentioned here of Reuben is named Carmi. Carmi, anytime you see the I ending on something, it's the possessive.

It means my something. Here it means my vineyard, or possibly my vinekeeper, but I think it's my vineyard. And Carmi will later be the name of another individual, just a generation hence.

In the tribe of Judah, there will be a man named Carmi, and his distinction in the Bible is that he is the father of Achan. And Achan is the one who went into Jericho and took the silks and the gold and buried it in his tent. And Israel lost the next battle, and the lots are cast.

He's identified, and he and his whole family are stoned with stones and all of the loot. Somewhere in the region of Jericho, if the looters haven't found it, there's a giant pile of stones with Achan and his family underneath it and all the loot that they were complicit in stealing against God's command from the town of Jericho. So all of these individuals, when you look at the names and you look at the associations and the resonances of these names, there is great potential and there's great ambition on the part of Reuben.

What was lacking? What kept Reuben and his sons and his grandsons from fulfilling their potential? Lack of obedience. Lack of obedience. All of the men who bore this name that we know anything about, the stories where there's something associated with these names, there is a lack of obedience.

Reuben himself did not respect the marriage of his father. He didn't respect the household of his father and the authority of his father. And it came back to take away his inheritance.

And each of these sons has a name that is a reminder of lost potential through disobedience. When you get to Simeon, and you remember that Simeon and Levi were brothers and they are the ones who committed the great act of carnage because of the maltreatment of their sister, Dinah. And his sons, we could go through their names as well.

Yamin, the second son there, the right hand, Ochad, which most likely comes from Echad, which means first or number one. And Jemuel there has the idea of a great sea. Yam, like Yam Suf, the Sea of Reeds.

Well, Yamuel is the Sea of God, which was a superlative that means a great sea. The Sea of God would be like the noise of God or the wind of God is this great and mighty wind. So it's a reference to a great and mighty sea.

Well, Simeon was a ne'er-do-well from the outset. And his firstborn son is the great sea. The Bible tells us in Isaiah, the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

And you get the idea that he could have been the Sea of God, but it winds up being the great sea that becomes a representation of chaotic forces of evil. Yamin, right hand, Jacob named his youngest son Benjamin, son of the right hand. And there is potential in all of these names.

Ochad could have been first. Jachin or Yachin as you would find it in the Hebrew has the idea of strength and support. It was the name of one of the pillars in the temple.

You remember Jachin and Boaz are the two pillars that are in each side of the temple door. Of course, Shaul, that's going to be the name of the first king of Israel who has great potential and doesn't fulfill it. So all of these names resonate with lost potential for various reasons.

I could do a series on these names and go in detail on the fate of their descendants and what happened in Israel. But just to give you a taste of what these mean. The son of a Canaanite woman.

What is Simeon doing intermarrying with a Canaanite woman? This is an illicit son named Shaul. All of these have the idea of lost potential. And the reason they are here is we work our way down to the sons of Levi.

We have Gershon, Kohath, Merari. And the sons of Gershon are Livni and Shimei. The sons of Kohath are Amram, Ishar, Hebron and Uziel.

The pattern and the preference that God has is that blessing and opportunity and responsibility go to the firstborn. Anytime you see it devolving to someone other than the firstborn, it speaks of failure. It speaks of missed opportunity through disobedience, through faithlessness.

And the point here is the firstborn son was to receive the double portion of his father's inheritance. He was to inherit the family priesthood. Before the Levitical priesthood was

instituted at Mount Sinai, it was a family priesthood.

And the eldest son would take over those duties and offer sacrifices and lead worship for his family and his extended family throughout his lifetime until he passed that on to his eldest son. You find Job doing this in the book of Job. It's one of the ways we know that his time frame is prior to the Exodus.

And yet, why do we have all of these names? Every single one of these individuals had the potential to be the father of the priesthood in Israel. It started with the firstborn son and with his firstborn. Each one of these men disqualified himself in some way and so it's like a pachinko machine.

It tries to go in the first place and it gets bumped. And it tries to go in the second place and it gets bumped. And that marvel called priesthood in Israel by right and by opportunity first went to Reuben and to Reuben's sons.

And each of Reuben's sons disqualified themselves. And so then it moves to the second son, to Simeon. Simeon is disqualified and his sons are disqualified.

And then it goes to Levi, the third son. But you remember Simeon and Levi were complicit and so it goes to Levi's sons complicit in the murdering that took place with reference to their sister Dinah. And so then Gershon had the opportunity.

And the sons of Gershon, Libni and Shimei, but the priesthood does not go to them. It comes down through Kohath to Amram and through Amram down to Aaron. Now depending on your view of the filial relationship between Moses and Aaron, you can see this as an opportunity for the priesthood to have also gone to Moses.

And yet Moses himself does not take on the priestly duties. And perhaps because of his objections at the bush, perhaps because of his problems when he's trying to re-enter Egypt, but for whatever reason, Moses does not receive the nod for being the head of the priesthood. Instead, the responsibility for priesthood goes to Aaron and Aaron's sons.

And this is going to be the inception of the Levitical priesthood. And so it's a reminder. What is the practical point of application here? The point is that God painted this picture for us through these names and through these generations knowing ahead of time who would be in what generation, who would descend from whom, what their reactions and responses would be, what their level of faith and obedience would be, and left the naming of these sons up to the individual families and the individual fathers.

And yet, it weaves together in God's plan to form this lesson. And it's a reminder to us of two things. There are two principles that come out of this.

First of all, it is a reminder that God orchestrates the details of our lives. God brings about every detail. He decides when and where we're going to be born, what family we're going to be born

into, what children we're going to have.

All of that is foreknown by God. And He weaves together the free will decisions that each of us make to accomplish His purpose. So, we should not rail against things that are beyond our control because they are not beyond God's control.

They are part and parcel of God's control. God either intended or allowed every circumstance that we face. And these individuals cannot go back and say, well, but if things had only been different.

They are where they are because of the free will decisions that are made by each individual. It doesn't matter if their father malfunctioned, their son could have picked up the baton and carried on. And if he does not, it will go to his brother.

God will keep looking until He finds the man of faith. In the sons of Jesse, he had to go through all of the first seven sons before he gets down to David out in the field. But He finds him and gives him that opportunity because he is the one exercising faith.

God's strength, God's blessing, God's gift of opportunity, gift of inheritance, gift of fulfilling potential will go to anyone who exercises faith. It doesn't matter if their circumstances seem to preclude any opportunity for distinction, any opportunity for accomplishment, any opportunity for advance and usefulness in God's plan. All that we need to qualify us for the greatest opportunities and the greatest blessings is faith.

God will find the man or woman of faith and God will give them the opportunities. He will give them the strength and provision. He will make their life a success and something that counts both in this life and in the next.

And secondly, it is a reminder of the fact that there is a time and there is a place and a purpose that God has for each one of us and no one will stand in the way. Not only does it depend on our being people of faith, but it does not depend on other people at all. It is entirely in God's hands.

So by looking to the Lord, by remembering what we saw in our psalm this morning, it is God who delivers. It is God who will make our mountain, however small it may be, the one in which He places His presence and in which He glorifies with His presence. The peaks of Bashan were more impressive and more numerous than Mount Zion, but that is not where God put His presence.

It is in Zion, this modest mountain, where He chose to dwell. That is because that is where His people are. That is where He was received with faith.

As long as they received Him with faith and as long as they were obedient, He remained there. When they became faithless and disobedient, God removed His presence. It is entirely up to us what becomes of our lives in the context of God's plan.

This is a good place to pause and take our break. When we return, we will move a little bit further forward in Exodus chapter 6.