

Ephraim was like a faulty bow turned back on the day of battle. What are you going to do? Are you learning? Faithfulness, trust, obedience. Okay. And it's unfinished. I don't know whether you noticed, but it's quite a feature of it. It ends up, verse 72, with David. In a moment we'll look at a timeline, but David was a long time ago. The psalm stops at a period of history and it invites, well, where does it go from there? And that's a good question. How will it end? How does it play out today? And you will also have noticed as a feature of this psalm, the way it changes gear in verse 65. So we do...

Then the Lord awoke us from sleep. And you go, whoa, where did that come from? And so there's a change of gear in the final section. And if you want to say revival, you'd say, it was the Lord who was revived.

[6 : 02] The Lord awoke us from sleep. Which is an interesting thing to say, isn't it? It's quite a bold thing to say. Anyway, that's our first impressions of the psalm. My plan this week, God willing, we'll look at the history.

Try and get the history straight. Next week, we'll look at the theology. The following week, Chris is preaching. And the week after that, we'll look at that gear change right at the end.

That's my plan. As it stands at the moment. Okay, let's look at the history in a chart. So here's a timeline going from past forwards in time.

And it begins with Israel being in captivity, in slavery and oppression in Egypt. That's where the psalm begins.

So here is Israel, slaves in Egypt. And then there is the story of the Exodus. Exodus, Exodus means departure, where they leave Egypt.

[7 : 03] They depart from Egypt. And this is a mighty act of rescue. This shows God as a rescuer and a redeemer, a deliverer, a saviour.

So all those words come into play. Then, having been redeemed from Egypt, they go across the desert to the promised land. So they go across the desert.

And the desert is a place where God does some distinctive things. He guides them so that they know where they're going. He provides for them because they can't do farming in the desert.

Okay, leading across the desert, entering the promised land of rest. So God says, I'm going to take you from slavery and get you a home. They enter the promised land of rest, which is a home of peace and safety.

That's what it's meant to be. And that clicking is in the wrong place. Yeah. Okay, let's go back. The next thing that the psalm talks about is this big step change of David.

[8 : 09] So I put along there, whoo, big step change up there. A big advance when David becomes king. And the psalmist says, you know, this is a big thing.

A big new thing. That's where he stops. So I put that line there to say that he stops there. But after that, of course, things happened.

The nation went into exile 400 years later. They went into exile. First, the northern kingdom went into exile. Assyria took them, the big kingdom of Assyria.

Then later, the Babylonian soldiers took them captive, took the southern kingdom captive and took them to Babylon. So that's that line down there. After David, the kingdom splits.

The north was unfaithful to God. They got taken into exile first. And then the, what do I put there? The northern kingdom to Assyria.

[9 : 07] The southern kingdom to Babylonia. So we go back to a captivity situation. There they are like that. And there is just another huge advance that the psalmist doesn't tell us about, which was when Jesus came as the son of David.

That's a significant title for Jesus. He brings the kingdom that David didn't manage to get them to. He brings it deeply and fully.

And that kingdom goes whoosh off, stratospheric, like that. And he's still doing this because he hasn't finished that. And one day he will finish that work of bringing in his kingdom.

And we're in this bit here, where everything is still to play for. So that question of how will you respond in our bit of the timeline. Okay, that's the history chart.

In case you weren't familiar with that, that's the history that he's referring to. So before we look at some specific items in the history, let me say again how important this history is.

[10 : 16] So I used three words there, which may or may not be helpful. Revelatory, definitive, and canonical. So the telling of the history.

I'm going to do exactly that. Yep. Patience. The history is not told in simple sequence. So there are rewinds and flashbacks. You will have noticed that.

But it is not just any old history. I thought about putting in the word old, because of course all history is old, isn't it? But it's not just any old history. He couldn't have just taken any old history.

This history is special. It is his story. This is the bit of history where God specifically reveals who he is.

And that's what God does. He says, I want you to know what sort of God I am, what I am capable of, what I characteristically do, and I will choose of all the bits of history, of all the nations, this nation, this bit of history, to imprint who I am.

[11:19] That's why I put revelatory. This specifically reveals who God is. And it is the Lord God showing exactly who he is. So he's sort of setting the limits and the boundaries of this and say, this is, these are the sort of things I do.

And you won't find me doing any other sort of things, actually. These are the things I do. So that's why I put canonical, meaning it sets the rule. It sets the rule. It sets the rule.

And the sort of rule that it sets is the way God speaks. So he says things. So he's a God who is known through his speech. And he acts. The praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.

So we pause and take breath. If we want to know what he is like, if we want to know what sort of God Jesus has brought us to, who he is, defining who he is, then he says, you look at that history, meditate on that, drink that in, because that's who I am.

And that's for us. And of course, there's one more piece of history that completes the revelation. It's not a whole different thing. It's a completion and a fulfillment.

[12:38] And that's the event of Jesus Christ, where the God of Israel steps down into history personally, takes charge of it personally, lives human life, dies on the cross redemptively, and rises again from the dead into a new life, a new sphere.

And one day, he will come back to complete that work. So there's the whole span of history, if you like, right up to the end. Okay?

Let's look at the history. Oh, before I pass on, let me just say, this, for Christians, is our defining history too.

The Jewish scrolls lived in the synagogue, and the first Christians, in effect, said, those scrolls don't just belong to you, they belong to us.

We're taking them with us. This is our Bible. This is the Christians' Bible. These are scriptures, and a history that we are grafted into. It's our history.

[13:57] And I just want to issue this challenge. What history determines your life? Because you might say, oh, well, such and such happened to me. Such and such else happened to me.

That's my history. That sets who I am. And I want to challenge that and say, the Bible says, this is your history. This defines who you are. This defines the relationships that really matter.

That you know a God who redeems, and leads people across the desert, and forgives his people time and time again. That's the history that ought to mould each of us definitively, over and above, whatever else history that we have.

So I'll just make that point. This is our defining history. Now, my plan was to look at some little snatches of this, and that's what we'll do.

If we run out of time, I'll just hold it over till another time. So item one of the history. The people were in deep slavery in Egypt.

[15:03] So would you like to look at this? Verse 12b. He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan.

Verse 42. They did not remember his power the day he redeemed them from the oppressor.

The day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt. I just want to go off script for a moment and say this word redeem is a wonderful word.

A redeemer is somebody who comes into the situation when you're stuck, when you're helpless, perhaps financially, perhaps powerless, maybe you're a slave, and a redeemer comes in and says, I'll sort that out for you.

I'll take you out of slavery. I'll pay the price. I'll do what's necessary. And often in ancient Israel, it'll be a family member. It'll be rich uncle so-and-so.

[16:05] You'd say, we've got into terrible debt. And rich uncle Jacob, do you think you could help us? And he'll say, yeah, of course. I'll be your goel, your redeemer. I'll step in and sort you out.

And God says, I'm the redeemer of my people. That's a very important thing. Anyway, I went off script there. They're redeemed from the oppressor. And how did God do this?

Verse 51. He struck down all the firstborn in Egypt. He did it in a mighty way. Now, they were slaves. They were treated as Pharaoh's property. They were made to work inhumanly hard. The boy babies were killed. And they were amongst the gods of Egypt, not free to worship the Lord. That was the slavery that they were in. And I want to take that thought and enlarge it and say, it sort of, well, actually depicts the human condition.

That all human beings are born into a worse captivity than this. Because human beings, by nature, by birth, are in the chains of sin.

[17 : 14] Jesus himself said, anyone who sins is a slave to sin. They had to serve Pharaoh, building pyramids.

Human beings, serve their enemy and their adversary. Paul says in Ephesians 2, verse 2, we followed the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the children of disobedience.

That's what human beings are in. Slavery, serving an evil, tyrant, master. And death is part of that. Human beings, by nature, are under the fear of death. As Hebrews 2, 15 says, they were held in slavery by their fear of death. It's a sorry condition to be in.

And as the ancient Israelites were kept from and incapable of serving the Lord, so too, people without Jesus Christ, those in the flesh, says Paul in Romans 8, 8, cannot please God.

[18 : 24] And the Bible takes this idea of captivity and says, it is really the situation of every human being. That's the pickle they're in.

That's the sad condition that they're in. Now, it ought to make us weep, really, shouldn't it? That, that's the condition that so many people are in.

It ought to make us rejoice. That's what we've been redeemed from. That's what we've been redeemed from. So, number one, lessons about slavery. Number two, deliverance.

God delivered them by a mighty hand. The oppressor, Pharaoh, was warned, then judged, and defeated.

This is characteristically what God does to his enemies. So, 12a, which we read, he did wonders in the sight of their fathers. Verses 44 and onwards, it says what God did.

[19 : 27] It actually lists them. He turned their rivers to blood so they could not drink from their streams. Pardon me. He sent swarms that devoured them, frogs that devastated them.

He gave their crops to the grasshopper, their produce to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, their sycamore figs with sleet. He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning.

He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation, and hostility. A band of destroying angels. He prepared a path for his anger. He did not spare them from death, but gave them over to the plague.

He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt. So, here is this increasing, ramping up catalogue of plagues turning water to blood. Jesus turned water to wine, didn't he?

Flies, frogs, locusts, hail, via angels. just as a side observation in the book of Revelation, all of those thoughts are used to say how God deals with his current world.

[20 : 39] Sending warnings, judgments, in advance of the final finishing act. And in the finishing act, in this case, was the death of the firstborn of Egypt.

Egypt. What a catastrophic thing to bring on Egypt. His final act that he would slay the firstborn. Except in the Israelite camp where there was a substitute, where a lamb died instead of the firstborn.

And the lamb's blood was painted on the doorposts, and through the death of the lamb, the nation was saved. Interesting pattern to set, isn't it?

The firstborn of Egypt died, and God's firstborn was set free. Israel is my firstborn son, let my people go, said Moses, on behalf of the Lord to Pharaoh.

And in this action, the Lord hits the Egyptian ecosystem systematically and progressively. And if we come to the way the book of the Revelation works, it says actually that's a key to understanding why our world is as it is.

[21 : 52] Why is there famines and sickness and illness and destruction in our world? Well, it's the same thing. God is showing and warning, showing his wrath on our world.

Let my people go, turn back to me. So catastrophe, illness, war, inhumanity are there because we're in a world that has been split off, ruptured from its maker. And our world as we look around it is like a computer with flashing warning lights saying something's wrong. And the something that's wrong is that our world is called back to repent, to turn to the Lord.

world. Okay, history number two, God delivered them from Egypt by a mighty hand. Number three, when they got out of Egypt, what happened when they got out of Egypt?

God provides, guides them and provides for them through the desert. So let's just look at these verses. Verse 13, he divided the sea and led them through.

[23 : 03] He made the water stand firm like a wall. The sea returned, verse 53, he guided them safely, they were unafraid, but the sea engulfed their enemies.

He guided them through the desert, verse 14, he guided them with the cloud by day and the night from the fire all night. Verse 52, he led them like sheep through the desert, by cloud and fire.

He provided water for them in the desert. Of course, you need water, don't you, in the desert. Verse 15, he split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas.

He brought streams out of a rocky crag. He made the waters flow down like rivers. Verse 20, the rock was struck, water gushed out and streams flowed abundantly.

And he says, this is what I did in the desert. Don't forget it. See, the men of Ephraim turned back on the battle day. Why did they turn back?

[24 : 13] Because they forgot this stuff. They forgot what God had done and therefore they never lived for him because they forgot what he had done and who he was.

So in the desert, the rock was hit. So I use smitten, meaning hit, past tense. He smites the rock, the rock is smitten and this smitten rock pours out streams and streams of water for them in the desert. What a wonderful provision. So we see here, let's just reflect on these praiseworthy deeds of the Lord. We think of the power of God.

He is a powerful God for whom nothing is impossible. He splits the sea at His command. The sea moves. We think of the kindness of His guiding because here are these people in the desert and with the faintest idea where to go and God says, I will lead you like a shepherd.

I will take you from one situation to another. The lambs I will carry in my arms, those that are with young I will look after carefully and my job as the shepherd is to make sure you don't die, to make sure you get to your destination, to make sure you're kept safe on the way.

[25 : 31] Does that ring any bells? And in the desert He gives life, He's the life giving God who makes streams of water flow from the rock that was hit.

Doesn't it remind us of Jesus who is the fulfilment, the very image of this God? The Jesus who could say to the wind and the waves, shh, and they do what He says.

The Jesus who can walk on the water in the storm. The Jesus who says, actually, I am the good shepherd and I am tasked with looking after you lot.

I am tasked with looking after you lot and as you go through something desert-like, please be assured, I have you in my arms, I will not let you go, you can trust in me.

And the Jesus who said at the Feast of Tabernacles on the last and greatest day of the feast, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink, and out of his inside will flow streams of living water.

[26 : 48] the Jesus who said to the woman at the well, if you'd known who you were talking to, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water, such that you will never thirst again.

There's a song, isn't there, that says, never thirst again? No, never thirst again. What? Never thirst again? No, never thirst again. He who drinks will never, never thirst again.

What a wonderful promise about life from Jesus Christ, come to him and you will never die. Isn't that what everybody wants?

Come to him and he gives living water so that you will never thirst and die. Fourth thing, now this time picking up on the history of the people, the liberated people show characteristically that they are stubborn and rebellious.

Verse 8, are stubborn and rebellious generation Israel whose hearts were not loyal to God. Let me just do an aside here. When we're looking at Israel, Israel is two things.

[27 : 59] It's a type of the church. It's also a type of the world. In other words, it shows us the pattern of the things for God's redeemed people in the New Testament.

It also shows us the pattern of how sin works in people's hearts all over the world. That was an aside. Let's just come back here. There is a focus on the event about the quails.

I don't know whether you know this event, whether you can think back to it. Grumbling about meat and it's what's there in verses 23, 24, 25. He gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of heaven.

He rained down manna for the people to eat. He gave them grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels. God provided for his people in the desert.

This is a very precious thing, isn't it? A desert is a difficult place to survive. God knows this. He gives them what they needed. He gave it to them a day at a time. That's an important point.

[29 : 02] He didn't give them a whole suitcase full of food and say that will last you a month. He gave them enough a day at a time. That's characteristically how God works. He gave them bread from heaven.

This is the manner. But they were not satisfied. And they grumbled. Now does it say grumble in this text?

Maybe not. It talks about them deceiving and flattering. In Exodus it uses this word they grumbled. They grumbled. God's given us what we need day by day.

He's redeemed us from captivity but they grumble. It's not good enough. It's not what we want.

Interestingly in the bread of life section where Jesus is interacting with this matter of the manner it says about the Jews in Jesus day they grumbled.

They grumbled about Jesus. He's not good enough. He doesn't give us what we really want. He's not the sort of saviour we want. Etc. So there's a warning here about a grumbling reaction.

[30 : 16] Isn't there? There's a warning here about the characteristic human sin of grumbling. And they said what we really want. Forget this manna stuff. We'd really like a nice beef burger.

Kentucky fried chicken. We want some real food. food. And so verse 18. They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved.

And I notice this word crave because it implies something we have a deep need for beef burgers. And it says the same thing in verse 29.

He had given them what they craved before they turned from the food they craved. That's an interesting comment on human motivation isn't it?

That we human beings seem to have a need for things that God says you don't need that. It's not good for you. I've given you enough already.

[31 : 17] But there's still a powerful thing inside human beings which says no that's not good enough. Well they desired meat. And in their desire they questioned two things.

Number one God's genuine concern for them. If God really cared about us he'd give us that. But what's flagged up here is that God can't be all that powerful because he can't give us what we want. Do you notice how it's put? They willfully put God to the test demanding the food they crave. This is verse 18. They spoke against God saying can God spread a table in the desert when he struck the rock water gushed out but can he also give us meat?

Well we've seen God do this but he won't be able to do that. It's a sort of limitation on the almighty isn't it? It's saying this is within his capacity but that isn't.

And that's a wrong thing to do. Now God may or may not choose to give them beef burgers but he's able to do it if he so wishes.

[32 : 36] There's an important distinction there isn't there? He is able to do it but just because I want him to do it doesn't mean he has to do it. And it says they put him they tested him.

Verse 18 they willfully put God to the test. And we learn something again to warn us about what human beings are like. They like to put God under pressure. They test him.

And if I remember correctly the sort of test they put was to say to God look we've decided we've got a delegation here we've got a petition and we demand that you give us meat.

Here's Moses if you don't give us meat we're going to stone him to death. Right. Clock is ticking. Come on. Yeah. That's the sort of thing they do.

And this is saying to God I demand you do what I want in the way and at the time I want it.

Otherwise Moses gets it. So I've made it sound comical but it's a real sin isn't it to say to God I want you to do what I want.

[33 : 45] I demand you do that. God how can we demand God to do something and then at the end of the prayer say if it be thy will. So there's a thing here isn't there of grumbling and belittling God disbelieving God testing God tempting testing God you remember when Jesus was invited by Satan to throw himself off the high point was it the high point of the temple in the thought that come on God you better step in otherwise I get crunched on the ground you don't want that do you here we go like that and Jesus said I'm not going to do that because it says you shall not test the Lord your God very important thing about our relationship with God now what did God do in this quail business now according to Alec Mateer the commentator a Bible commentator they actually find themselves on the flight path of migrating quail and this is one of

God's providences the quail little birds come across here every year same sort of time and they happen to come across here just at this time God sends them and all of a sudden they've got fried quail coming out of their ears I don't know whether it's Kentucky fried quail but the place is just full of quail they all land the thousands of them land and the camp is full of these little birds and faster than they can eat them so God gives them what they ask for but it does them no good in verse 35 it says before they turned from the food they craved while it was still in their mouths God's anger rose against them and he put to death the sturdiest among them cutting down the young men of Israel and if I remember the story correctly this is saying that even as they eat it they died it's a solemn thing isn't it they said to God we demand you do this and

God says I've actually been kind to you and given you what you need but you ask for this I'll let you have it did them no good at all be careful what you wish for be careful what you pray!

for and this is a story of human sin human rebellion human unbelief and it stands as a warning to us so we learn warnings from this as well as glories from this here's a warning don't try to control God prayer is not controlling God prayer is seeking God's will and seeking to be part of his plan it's not telling God what he's going to do as if he needed us to work that sort of thing out don't try to control God and don't disbelieve God don't disbelieve his goodness don't disbelieve his almightiness it may not be God's plan to do things the way you want but he could if he wanted to very important isn't it as we plan our lives as we plan our look ahead as we examine the pressures that we're under not to say well

God can't do this he can't the question is is that his way at this point so looking at history that was number four I'm going to carry on for number five the story says that he brings people into a land of rest God is the God who brings his people home verse 54 it says he brought them to the borders of his holy land to the hill country his right hand had taken he drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to their inheritance he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes this is characteristically what God does he takes the people who are in slavery he brings them through the desert and he brings them home every human being wants to be at home don't we we want to be in the place of security the place of familiarity the place where we feel at home and

[38 : 14] God says that's what I do I bring people to my holy place to the hill his right hand had taken the holy hill of God giving lands as an inheritance it says verse 55 settle them in a home and this is the God who says this is who I am I want my people to have a permanent settled home where they can be safe and happy that purpose hasn't changed the home is a better home than the land that Israel got do you remember it talks about entering his rest God has a rest for the people of God if Joshua had given them rest when they entered that land then it wouldn't be anything further to go on with but there is let us make every effort to enter into his rest there is a rest for the people of God and Jesus spoke of this when he said in my father's house there are many places many rooms many settlements many places to rest in my father's house there are many places and

I go there says Jesus to prepare a place for you and if I do that I will come back and I will take you to be with me so that you may be where I am but Jesus is sort of finishing the work that God started here I want you to have a home my going to the cross into the tomb rising from the dead all of that prepares a place for you and I want you to be there we could respectfully say Jesus won't be completely happy until we've got to that final resting place to the home in the world to come I'll take you to be there he says that's a glorious thing isn't it and all true Christians have this heart's hope in the home bringing God God teaches us to look forward to that home and actually never ever to be completely at home in this world this world is not our home

I think there's a song says we're just a passing through we're heading for the place where Jesus Christ is well let's just quickly do the sixth one which is the way God disciplines his people as a caring father and they spent 40 years in the desert the 40 years in the desert were times of wrath

and mercy anger and patience where he exercised a firm loving discipline for his adopted people and we don't know which of them was which but some of the people that he kept in his love through the desert like Caleb and Joshua and some people who God rejected in the desert and his wrath was not mixed with mercy they were rebellious people it says in verse 31 he put to death the sturdiest among them cutting down the young miserable but it also says concerning the nation he did not stir up his full wrath that's in verse 38 he was merciful he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them

God is a patient God and a merciful God we need to grab hold of that the nation he temporarily abandoned and in verse 61 he sent into captivity maybe the psalmist is actually writing much later on and thinking about the Babylonian captivity or certainly the people who sung it would have been in Babylonian captivity they would have sung this song an interesting spiritual question if you were in exile in Babylon if you were one of those Jewish people all those years ago how would you regard this history what would you draw from it what would we draw from it as Christians so let's just say a couple of things before we finish number one true Christians do not come under God's wrath because

God's wrath is completely expended on Jesus Christ Christ took all God's wrath for Christians but a loving father may indeed discipline his children with strictness because he loves us not because he has rejected us but because he loves us and Hebrews 12 is a classic passage it says don't despise the discipline of the Lord if things are tough in your life if you're facing challenges in your life interpret it this way it's not because the Lord hates me it's because he loves me and he wants me to learn things that I would not learn if my life was smooth and straightforward please take that and believe it we have to live our Christian lives by faith the men of Ephraim turned back they forgot what God has done they didn't trust him let's not be like that when there are difficult things in our lives let's trust what he says

[43 : 49] I'm doing this because I love you I want in due time the Lord disciplines those he loves for our good and that professing Christians may come under God's heavy hand so God might be stern with which church was it was it Laodicea in Revelation those I love I rebuke and chasten so be earnest and repent God gets tough with us he's saying come back to me do it really seriously so thank you for your patience we've looked at this history number one God's people were in deep slavery tells us about the condition of slavery number two God delivered them from Egypt by a mighty hand tells us that the Lord God is a redeeming delivering saving God God provides guides and provides them in the hostile desert

God is a keeping shepherding providing God on a day by day basis that's the God he was then that's the God he is now for us the liberated people show that they are stubborn and rebellious there's a warning don't respond the way those people did God God God is a God who brings his people home that's a glorious thing that's what he was then he said same God now don't forget the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord and God disciplines and develops his people on the way as a caring father through the Lord Jesus Christ and that's where we are so let!

us be believing obedient not forgetful of the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord not ungrateful not rebellious and he'll bring us home Amen