

Hymns: 26 Trust and Obey, 15 It Is Well with My Soul  
Scripture: Psalm 139:7-12 or 16

Good morning. The **point of no return** – it has an ominous sound, doesn't it? – especially as the tragic news of EgyptAir Flight 804 fills the airwaves. Today, we're going to consider that issue, and travel to Egypt no less, as we continue our study of the Dispensation of Promise.

To set the stage, let's start with a real-life drama on **this** continent. It's about a boy named Roger, who was born just three years after me – a baby boomer – perhaps the age of some of your children. The story also includes his sister, and a family friend.

The year was 1960. The date was July 9<sup>th</sup>. Early on a clear, calm, Saturday afternoon, James Honeycutt, a 40-year-old contractor with the Niagara Parks Commission hydroelectric project, from none other than **Raleigh, North Carolina**, took seven-year old Roger Woodward and his **seventeen**-year-old sister Deanne on a boat ride down the upper Niagara River. Little did James and his passengers know what tragedy lay ahead for them that fateful day.

This was one of many times that James Honeycutt had taken the Woodward children out for a ride in his 12-foot aluminum fishing boat with a seven-and-a-half-horsepower outboard motor. Mr. and Mrs. Woodward trusted their friend implicitly as the threesome started out five miles upstream of Horseshoe Falls.

All went well until they passed under the Grand Island Bridge a mile before the falls – **the point of no return**. James ventured a little farther than usual to give the children a good view of the rapids before turning the boat around. Then tragedy struck. The propeller pin of the outboard motor failed as it hit a rock while Roger steered the boat -- rendering the outboard motor useless.

Honeycutt knew he was in grave danger. Roger was wearing his life preserver. James ordered Deanne to put on the other one while he grabbed the oars and **frantically** rowed to shore. With each passing second, the current quickened and the rapids built as the boat sped toward the falls. Then it happened, the boat capsized.

James grabbed Roger. Deanne held on to the boat. The rapids tore Deanne's grip from the boat as she drifted ever so swiftly toward the falls. Onlookers on Goat Island at Terrapin Point saw Deanne and rushed to the water's edge to try to rescue her. One courageous man grabbed her by her fingers less than **twenty feet from the falls** and with the help of another, pulled her to safety.

As James and Roger together approached the 167-foot drop to a 180-foot-deep pool of water below, Roger thought to himself, "We're going to die." Then, the rapids separated James from Roger. The violent waters tossed Roger above and below the surface. He wondered whether each breath would be his last. He thought of his dog, his few toys, and his parents.

Suddenly, violent turbulence gave way to peace. Roger was in what is called "the cloud." He was on his way down the misty avalanche of the falls. When he reached the bottom, his life-preserver brought him to the surface. He saw a tour boat nearby and screamed. A crewman saw Roger's bright-orange life jacket and told the captain. The captain maneuvered the boat near enough to him and on the third try Roger clutched a life ring and the crew dragged him to safety.

James Honeycutt too went over the falls. His lifeless body was found floating in the water four days later. Miraculously, Roger did not die, and his injuries were only incidental. He was the first known person to ever go over the falls and live.

Today, we're going to see how Israel drifted to that point of no return and try to answer the question why they faced such harsh judgment. Last time, we **paused** in our study to look at a highlight in the Bible -- Abraham's sacrifice of his only son Isaac. We then considered the significance of the Lamb in scripture. Today, we're going to move with lightening speed through the rest of the book of Genesis and into Exodus to pick out key points to help us understand **what went so wrong** that would cause such severe judgment from God – **four hundred years of slavery** the Israelites endured in land of Egypt.

To start, let's recap a few things we've already learned from our previous studies in this dispensation:

Recall that in Genesis 12 Abram went down to Egypt to avoid famine right after God promised him the **land** of Canaan. (Remember the threefold promise: land, seed, blessing.) After a short stay there, Pharaoh asked him to leave. Abram returned to the Promised Land.

God restated, guaranteed, and expanded upon His promise to Abram in Genesis 15. But tucked away in the middle of that dialog, God told Abram of the time of judgment coming:

Genesis 15

*[13] ...Know of a surety that thy seed shall be  
a stranger in a land that is not theirs,  
and shall serve them;  
and they shall afflict them four hundred years;*

*[16] But in the **fourth generation** they shall come hither again:*

*[why?] for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

Notice the correlated phrases **four hundred years and fourth generation**. We're going to encounter them again in a few minutes. Here we have **one explicit reason** for the four hundred years, but that doesn't help us understand why it involved such suffering of the Israelites. It simply says that God was waiting for the Amorites (in Canaan) to complete their full measure of sin before the long-suffering God stepped in and judged them.

You recall, in Genesis 16:1-11 Sarai gave to Abram her **Egyptian** handmaid Hagar to wife and bear them offspring **in defiance of God's second promise: seed**. When Hagar conceived, she hated Sarai. Sarai responded by treating her *harshly* -- the same word used in Exodus 1:11-12 to describe the *harsh* treatment by the **Egyptian taskmasters** of the **Israelite slaves**.

Sarah bore a son to Abraham named Isaac. From Isaac came Jacob who was tricked into marrying Leah before marrying Leah's beautiful sister his true love Rachel. Jacob was a trickster as was his father-in-law Laban. Jacob and Rachel fled Laban, and Rachel secretly **stole her father's gods**. In Genesis 31 we learn that Laban caught up with Jacob and confronted him. When he did, he accused Jacob of stealing his gods. Laban searched with Jacob's approval.

Genesis 31

*[33] ... [then Laban] entered into Rachel's tent.*

*[34] Now **Rachel had taken the images**, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.*

So we have **idols** in Jacob's own house, but more than that:

Genesis 35

*[2] Then Jacob said unto **his household**,  
and to **all that were with him**,  
**Put away the strange gods** that are among you, and be clean ...*

We're told that Jacob gathered them up and disposed of them.

Now let's jump ahead to the next dispensation to pick up two more clues on this issue of having false gods:

Exodus 20

*[1] And God spake all these words, saying,  
[2] I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee **out of the land of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage.*

[First commandment]

*[3] **Thou shalt have no other gods before me.***

[Second commandment]

*[4] **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image**, ...*

*[5] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a **jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the **third and fourth generation** of them that hate me;*

Do you see all of these pieces fitting together in a five-verse passage? It starts out with Israel's **slavery** in **Egypt** and ends with God's **judgment** lasting into the **fourth generation**. We just heard about those exact two events in Genesis 15.

We know the Egyptians worshiped other gods. We'll see that more next time. We saw that Jacob had family problems related to having other gods. And the first two of the Ten Commandments relate to **other gods** and **worshipping idols**. While this is not conclusive evidence, it presents a very strong case for why the Israelites faced such a harsh judgment.

Recall one more incident. While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law the Lord said to Moses:

Exodus 32

*[8] They [speaking of Israel] have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them:  
they have made them a molten calf,  
and have worshipped it,  
and have sacrificed thereunto,  
and said, **These be thy gods**, O Israel,  
which have **brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.***

It's incredible that after seeing the power of the true God, the Israelites so quickly attribute His works to a man-made god. Beyond this issue of idol worship, we also have more regarding slavery.

Remember how Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, wanted to kill him, but decided instead to sell him into **slavery**. They **lied** to their father Jacob, renamed *Israel*, that his favorite son, Joseph, was killed by an animal. Jacob mourned the death of his son for many years. Then, as Jacob was nearing death, he was given a different story from his son's who were forced to go to Egypt to buy food.

Genesis 45

*[25] And they [Joseph's brothers] went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, [26] And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's **heart fainted**, for he believed them not.*

Neither Jacob nor these sons like him were particularly trustworthy.

*[27] And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him [likely an impressive caravan of royal vehicles], the spirit of Jacob their father **revived**: [28] And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

Genesis 46

*[6] And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:*

*[27] ... **all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.***

Genesis 47

*[5] And Pharaoh sp[o]ke unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: [6] The **land** of Egypt is before thee;*

*Land* is a keyword that occurs 33 times in this chapter.

***in the best of the land** make thy father and brethren to dwell; **in the land of Goshen let them dwell:***

*[11] And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and **gave them a possession in the land** of Egypt, **in the best of the land**, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. [12] And Joseph **nourished** his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.*

*[13] And there was no bread in all the **land**; for the famine was very sore, so that the **land** of Egypt and all the **land** of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.*

The Egyptians sold everything to Joseph to pay for food. Their last act of desperation was to sell their land and themselves into slavery.

*[19] ... **buy us and our land** for bread, and **we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh**: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the **land** be not desolate.*

*[23] Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your **land** for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the **land**.*

*[25] And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and **we will be Pharaoh's servants**.*

*[27] And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.*

Joseph, an Israelite, made the Egyptians slaves to Pharaoh and by proxy to him. They owned no land. By contrast, the Israelites were given land in the Nile delta area, the “best land” in Egypt, called the land of Goshen, were nourished by Joseph, and were not slaves.

Exodus 1

*[6] ... **Joseph died**, .*

*[8] Now there arose up a **new king** over Egypt, **which knew not Joseph**.*

[Israel had reached the point of no return.]

*[9] And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more*

*and mightier than we:*

[He decides to make them slaves.]

*[11] Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to **afflict** them with their burdens.*

Clearly, Israel overstayed their welcome. They should have left Goshen and returned to the Promised Land when Joseph died and before they were swept into bondage. Instead, they became too comfortable in the place and idolatrous culture in which they lived. They had no need for God nor His promises.

Why did Israel spend 400 years in slavery? Remember God said He's a **jealous God** who will visit the sins of the father's to the **fourth generation**. Here are some of Israel's sins.

1. They did not believe God would provide an heir:
  - Sarai gave Abram Hagar to bear them the child God had withheld
  - Abram told God that Ishmael should be his heir

- Both Sarai and Abram laughed at the suggestion that they would bear a son in their old age.
- 2. They worshiped other gods
  - Rachel stole her father's idols
  - Jacob had to purge his whole house of them
- 3. Abram left the land that God had promised him in time of famine
- 4. Before the Israelites were enslaved by Egypt, the Egyptians were enslaved by them.
  - Sarai treated her slave Hagar harshly
  - Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery
  - Joseph enslaved all of the Egyptians during the seven years of famine

With that, we have answered the question of why the Israelites faced such harsh judgment in Egypt. But perhaps you have one more question.

### Application

What ever happened to Roger Woodward the boy who survived going over the falls? He's still alive?

From the Deseret News

Title: 50 years later, survivor recalls accidental plunge over Niagara Falls

Subtitle: 7-year-old went over brink in 1960 after a boating accident

By Carolyn Thompson

### Associated Press

Published: Saturday, **July 17 2010** 7:00 p.m. MDT

*Woodward said he heard countless times that "God had his hand on you that day" or "God must have some important mission for you to accomplish in life." But it wasn't until 20 years later that the boy who had not regularly attended church was encouraged by a friend to go after finding himself troubled by nagging "why am I here?" questions.*

*"From that day forward I was able to answer that one huge question," he said, "and the answer to the question was this: God saved me that day, July 9, 1960, because he knew at age 27 that I would come to know him as my savior."*

Why had God preserved you for all of these years? Do you know His son the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? We're all headed for that point of no return. We need to be sure when we lift off into that cloud of death that we will land in the loving arms of our Savior.

### Benediction

*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,  
Unto him be glory  
in the church  
by Christ Jesus*

*throughout all ages,  
world without end.  
Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)*

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