

January

You can find the schedule we use for reading through the Bible in a year on our South Georgia bishop's web page, www.sgaumc.com/bishop

January 1

Genesis 1-3

Ancient peoples considered the seas the same as chaos. Before the first day, all was chaos, but God's Spirit 'hovered over' it, keeping chaos under control. God created a magnificent order out of chaos.

The 'dome' or separation between waters in verse 1:3 we see is not the point at which our atmosphere is separated from outer space; rather, it is the separation between the heavenly and the earthly. Humans cannot just walk or fly into heaven.

God rested on the seventh day and made it holy. This does not mean God was tired, nor that he went back to work on the eighth day. We discover as we continue reading through the Bible that the Sabbath is a day of refocusing on the holy as a way to regenerate our lives, a time to reflect on God and all he has done. Even church workers can practice a real Sabbath in this way, though Sunday can often be a physically tiring day. (Pastors often take another day or two off each week for physical rest.)

Genesis 1 and 2 seem to have different stories of creation that are at odds in some details. In our way of thinking, one has to be right and the other wrong. We must keep in mind that the Bible was not meant to be an exact history, but a spiritual history of man's relationship to God through time. Don't let your faith in God hinge on the Bible's agreement with exact dates and time.

"Their eyes were opened," (3:7), to the possibility of choosing to be disobedient to God's will. This left them "naked", on their own.

January 2

Genesis 4-6

The Bible is not exact on why Cain's offering was not acceptable to God. Later on in the Old Testament, we find that God is displeased when the heart is not involved in a gift to him. Empty ritual is detestable to God.

It's a mystery as to how the earth was populated. Did Adam and Eve have many more children that the Bible doesn't mention? Could be, because the ancients

didn't consider women very important, and largely left them out of any family records.

Descendants of Adam lived to incredible ages. Notice how these numbers decrease after the Flood, to the point that in Psalms, the age at which persons died of 'old age' seems to be about 70.

The "sons of God" mentioned in 6:1-4 were not angels, but men of tall stature, heroes of that day. Note the sin mentioned in 6:2---men married any women they chose. God seems angry with this. God wants the best for us, so it makes sense that God has chosen someone already to be your lifelong mate, your husband or wife. We'd rather choose our own. Is it any wonder that we often make the wrong choice?

Judging by the dimensions of the ark, it would be impossible to include two of *every* animal that presently exists on our earth. There are just too many kinds. Obviously, some species were created after Noah's day. What does this indicate – evolution? No matter how they were created, it was God's design.

January 3

Genesis 7-9

It may occur to you to check as to whether Noah's father escaped the flood. Yes. He died just five years before that catastrophe.

Noah obviously built the ark well. For 120 years, he had worked on this boat, never cutting corners but always faithfully believing the flood would come. In a similar way, we faithfully work to bring sinners to Christ, faithfully believing that a judgment day will come.

Humans had stuck with a vegetarian diet before the flood. Now, God allows meat to be eaten. What has changed? Evidently, this is a necessary shift in the balance of nature, making humans more dominant. God adds accountability for taking a human life, in contrast to God's protection of Cain in 4:15.

January 4

Genesis 10-12

Chapter 10 gives us a good idea of how quickly the population can increase! People lived a long time, and had many children. Keep in mind that daughters are not usually listed in these old genealogies, since it was a patriarchal society (women weren't considered important).

Verses 10:5, 20, and 31 speak of many clans and languages. How does that mesh with 11:1? (Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.) Evidently the Tower of Babel incident was what *caused* the many languages.

The builders at Babel (11:3) had invented a new building material---brick. You can imagine how much faster bricks could be made than stone could be mined. It was now possible to build many houses close together (cities). God saw the danger in building a great tower: They could "make a name for themselves" and begin to rely on their own ability rather than God.

Terah set out for Canaan, long before his son Abram was called by God to go there. Terah only lived 205 years; chapter 11 chronicles the decreasing longevity of people, due to the gradual influence of sin on the earth.

Chapter 12 begins with the three-fold promise to Abram: God will give him a land, his descendants will be as numerous as the grains of sand on the beach, and through him (one of his descendants) all the world would be blessed. Abram's only special quality for which God chose him seems to be that he would be obedient to God. The Bible does not hide his other flaws from us.

January 5

Genesis 13-15

Through Abram's deception of Pharaoh in chapter 12, it seems that his nephew Lot has also become rich. We know little about Lot. When given a choice of land (13:11), he chose the area that looked obviously better, rather than leaving the best for his uncle. I don't know that this indicates greed, since Abraham gave Lot a free choice.

We see Abram take on huge armies with just 318 men, trained more as farmers than soldiers. With God's obvious help, they rout the enemy. Remember the number! Later on, in the book of Judges, Gideon has the same kind of overwhelming victory with just 300 men.

Melchizedek shows up out of nowhere (14:18), a priest of God in a pagan land. Abram shows gratitude for God's help in battle, by giving Melchizedek a tithe of all he had won back in battle. Notice that Abram tithes for all the kings for whom he won back possessions in the battle; it wasn't just his own stuff!

Verse 15:9 is worth memorizing: "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Recognize the implications! First, Abram is our father in faith, and will be in heaven with us, for God credited him with righteousness (right-standing with God). Second, God has not yet given Abram anything, yet Abram considers that it's 'in the pipeline', as good as his already.

January 6

Genesis 16-18

God had promised Abram offspring, and descendants too numerous to count. Could this be God's plan, for Abram's descendants to be provided by a servant girl? God had not said, at this point, that Abram's offspring would be by Sarai, his wife. Verse 16:10 has God telling Hagar that she would have descendants too numerous to count. From God's description of Ishmael's character, though, we have to doubt he will foster a line that fulfills God's other promise, that through one of Abram's descendants all the world will be blessed.

Thirteen years after Ishmael's birth, God makes it clear to Abram that he will have innumerable descendants through Sarai. This was the first concrete evidence that Abram and Sarai's scheme to give him descendants through Hagar was a mistake.

God's got a sense of humor. Abraham laughed at the idea that he and Sarah could have children this late in life, so God said that the name of their son would be Isaac, which means "he laughs". Maybe the kid will grow up with a sunny disposition.

I'll bet there was grumbling among the men folk when Abraham told them they all had to be circumcised.

When Abraham bargained with the Lord on behalf of the righteous people of Sodom, we know that his main concern was his nephew, Lot, and his family. We have no evidence that Abraham had been to Sodom, or had seen Lot since he settled in Sodom. God knew what Abraham's concern was.

January 7

Genesis 19-21

Lot's future sons-in-law were among the men who came to his door seeking to have sex with Lot's two male guests---19:4 says "all the men from every part of the city of Sodom" were included in the mob. They would have been spared from destruction, though, if they had been willing to turn their backs on sinful Sodom. They didn't take Lot's news seriously, and were lost in the blaze.

When Abraham saw the smoke from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he had to know that the Lord had not found even 10 righteous inhabitants. He'd have to assume that Lot is now dead.

What a mess Lot's family has become. His daughters lost their fiancés, who were bisexual or homosexual, and now they get pregnant by their father. Their descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites, won't have much good said about them.

Back in 17:17, we learned that Sarah was ten years younger than Abraham. I find it hard to comprehend her beauty, for kings still desired her at age ninety!

Don't take the references in 21:32 -34 to mean that the Philistines dwelled in the land at that time. They moved to the region several hundred years later. The author mentioned the Philistines so we would know the land being referred to.

January 8

Genesis 22-24

It seems more should be said about Abraham's feelings when he is told to sacrifice his only son, but that would just cloud the point being made: Abraham was the model of obedience to God.

Abraham never doubted he would return with Isaac, even though God said he was to sacrifice the boy. God would not go back on his covenant made with Abraham concerning offspring from Isaac.

Abraham buys his first piece of property, in the land that God has promised would one day all belong to his descendants, to bury Sarah. It's not much but it's a foothold. Abraham was 137 when his wife died.

Abraham sends his servant to get a wife for Isaac from among his kin. The servant prays many times to God that his errand will be successful, always praying to the "God of my master Abraham." Abraham's devotion to God had impressed this servant where the power was!

January 9

Genesis 25-27

I remember that Abraham had thought it laughable that he could have a son (Isaac) when he was 100 years old. Well, he was at least 137 when he married his second wife (Keturah), and proceeded to father six more sons! (Isaac was much younger when twins Jacob and Esau were born, only 60.) God spoke personally to Isaac after his dad died, to make it plain that the covenant continued. God made Isaac richer by great harvests. Abimelech thought it prudent to make a treaty with Isaac, since God was so obviously on Isaac's side.

Chapter 26 calls Abimelech the king of the Philistines. Actually, this tribe was relatively weak; the big migration of the "sea people" from elsewhere around the

Mediterranean (most likely Crete and Cyprus) would occur around 1400 BC, still several hundred years distant. They would be proficient in the use of iron, and renowned artisans, and bitter enemies to many Israelite kings.

Jacob's true character is plainly told, that of a deceiver. Still, God determines that the promises made to Abraham would continue in him. Even today, God uses some very unlikely people to accomplish His purposes.

January 10

Genesis 28-30

At the start of chapter 30, Isaac seems very forgiving of this son that just tricked him. Isaac mistakenly gave Jacob the blessing intended for the first born, Isaac's favorite, Esau. Isaac is resigned to accepting God's will and trusting the outcome to God.

In the "Jacob's ladder" vision, God renews the covenant with Jacob, just as He had done with Isaac. It wasn't enough that father would tell the promises to his sons; God chose to speak to each participant individually. In the same way, we participate in the "new covenant" through Jesus Christ, and God speaks to us individually. You can't enter the Kingdom of God on your father's or mother's faith.

Rachel was a shepherd! As David described it later, a shepherd's life was tough. They protected their animals against lions and other wild animals. We'd best not picture her as dainty and fragile. For Jacob, it was love at first sight.

Is it any surprise that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah? He had spent seven years thinking about his future with her, but sister Leah was a surprise, so Jacob was at least seven years behind in learning to love Leah as he loved Rachel.

After Jacob's wives and their maidservants bear him twelve children, Jacob strikes a deal with his father-in-law for establishing his own herd of sheep. Jacob is to have all the non-white sheep and goats. However, Laban secretly hides these animals before Jacob can cull them out, so Jacob starts with nothing, and no prospects. (What chance is there of white males and females producing non-white offspring? None.) God blesses Jacob by the weirdest case of genetic engineering in all of history!

January 11

Genesis 31-33

Jacob could tell that it was time to leave; Laban, his father-in-law was not as kind to him, and the servants were speaking against him. Jacob took his wives Rachel and Leah into the fields to talk frankly with them--- who knew the ears that might hear inside the camp? It seems the wives had felt the same thing, and God was calling Jacob back to Canaan. They planned their escape. Laban was so focused on money and possessions that he was about to lose something of greater value- his daughters and grandchildren.

After a tense goodbye after Laban catches the escaping crowd, Jacob must set his mind on his twin brother Esau. When Jacob left Canaan, his dad was on his death bed, and Esau made a vow that as soon as Dad died, he would kill Jacob.

Of course, twenty years later it was safe to assume Isaac was dead, and now Jacob must face his penalty for earlier deceptions of Esau. A man like Esau never broke a vow!

There was another vow: When Jacob left, he had a vision at Bethel, and promised God (28:20-22) that if he returned in peace he would tithe all he had and serve God. It was time.

Jacob needed to wrestle, but the “man” he wrestled with needed to leave a reminder of the event. Jacob needed to be a different man when he crossed into Canaan. He was---new name, a limp, and now leading his family instead of following.

January 12

Genesis 34-36

The rape of Dinah enraged her brothers, especially Simeon and Levi. In their patriarchal society, her life might as well have been over, for now she was “damaged property” and would not be able to marry or produce children. Simeon and Levi may have already had their eye on her to marry one of their sons. However, God could have been called on to revenge this evil. It showed lack of respect for the holy symbol of circumcision and of God to use this as a weapon of war.

In 35:2, part of the preparation for going to worship at Bethel (“house of God”) is to put on fresh clothes. Maybe this was the first case of wearing “Sunday best” out of respect for God.

It’s surprising that Isaac is still alive! Jacob and Esau had struggled to be the one to receive his “final” blessing twenty years before.

January 13

Genesis 37-39

Back in 15:13, God had revealed to Abraham that his descendants would be strangers and slaves in a foreign land for 400 years. How would that happen? Joseph sold as a slave begins the chain of events that will eventually lead to the migration of Jacob's family to Egypt.

Joseph comes to check on his brothers as they shepherd the flock at Dothan. They plot to kill him and throw him in a pit, but Reuben persuades them not to kill him, just give him a scare. Although they're not fully dissuaded from their murderous thoughts, they go along with Reuben. When Reuben is not there, they sell the boy for 20 silver coins (2 shekels each- Reuben wasn't present).

Jesus' genealogy is in Judah's line. In chapter 38, we are reminded that it is far from ideal. Besides this instance of incest, we'll later see a prostitute and a foreigner from Moab as important parts of His lineage.

Joseph is blessed by God in Egypt. Everything he does works out well. Have you missed noticing some of God's blessings because you just thought everything "happened" to go right? Potiphar didn't miss it. Though he wasn't inclined to worship Joseph's God, he sure enjoyed the blessings!

January 14

Genesis 40-42

Joseph could interpret dreams; God gave him the explanations. I suppose this means he knew what his own dreams had meant, when the sheaves of grain and stars in the sky bowed down to his own sheaf and star. He knew that one day his own family would bow down to him.

Joseph takes no time to pray for God's interpretation of each dream. God gives him the knowledge immediately. Joseph is very confident he had heard from God. Imagine the consequences for him if Pharaoh's dream had been followed immediately by a year or two of famine!

I don't really think Joseph was applying for the job when he said Pharaoh needed to find a wise and discerning second-in-command. God got the job for him. Joseph didn't back off from it, though, for God had given him the ability to handle any job he was placed in.

When Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to trade, he treats them harshly. Some of this is to teach them a lesson, and some is a ruse to bring his brother Benjamin to Egypt. (Only Benjamin had the same mother as Joseph.) It still bothers me that Joseph sought a kind of revenge.

January 15

Genesis 43-45

When the brothers of Joseph need to return to Egypt to buy more food, Jacob does not want Benjamin to go with them. However, Judah points out that this is required, and the only way “the man” (Joseph) will sell them any more food. When Judah offers to be personally responsible for Benjamin’s return, Jacob relents. Judah says, “If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.” This is a pretty serious promise, for the three brothers older than him have deeply offended Jacob at other times(34:30 and 35:22), making Judah the oldest favored son, and now in line to receive Jacob’s blessing at his death.

I’m amazed at how easily the brothers make a vow in 44:9, concerning the theft of “the man’s” silver cup. Haven’t they already seen that silver mysteriously appears in their grain sacks at times? How can they promise to die and/or become slaves if the silver cup is found in their sacks? This won’t be nearly the last time an Israelite makes a rash vow in the Old Testament.

Joseph continues to have amusement at his brothers’ expense, making them worry and squirm. However, when the fun threatens the life of his dad, Joseph bursts into tears and reveals his identity to his brothers. He invites them all to live in Egypt with him, sending for Dad and the rest of the clan. Note Joseph’s instructions as they leave: “don’t quarrel along the way!” He knows these men well, and suspects they’ll start blaming each other for all that has happened as soon as they get beyond Joseph’s hearing.

January 16

Genesis 46-48

We’ve already been told that Hebrews are detestable to the Egyptians (43:32), and now Joseph states that shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians. It sounds like a problem looking for a time to explode, as all the known Hebrews in the world come to settle in Egypt with their herds of sheep.

Now Joseph’s identity as a Hebrew is known. However, the Egyptians make an exception for him in their racial prejudice. He had kept the whole country alive through three severe years of famine, and there are four more years of famine yet to come.

Joseph is totally loyal to Pharaoh, and does much to build up his household. By the end of the famine, Pharaoh has acquired all the livestock and land that Egyptians possessed, and Joseph has made them all slaves to Pharaoh. I guess I’m

surprised that Joseph didn't show a little more mercy! At least they are allowed to remain on their former homesteads and plant crops.

God promised Jacob that he would return to Canaan (46:4), but didn't reveal that it would be as a dead man. Jacob has a conference with Joseph before his death and makes him promise to bury him in Canaan. He also reveals to Joseph that Joseph's two boys will receive an inheritance from him along with Joseph's brothers, therefore doubling Joseph's portion equal to that of a firstborn son.

January 17

Genesis 49-50, Exodus 1

In ancient times, people invested power in a father's last words. More likely, the dying man's words became a "mission statement" for the sons; they lived into his pronouncements.

Jacob's dying words are not just blessings. He tells the sons what he thinks of their character and traits.

Judah's blessing is especially prophetic. So much of this section (49:8-12) speaks of the coming Messiah, who will be descended from Judah's family line, especially verse 10: "the scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and obedience of nations is his."

Joseph died and was embalmed (and hundreds of years later will be buried in Canaan). It is not said if any of his brothers preceded him in death.

Circumstances for the Israelites (Hebrews) changed dramatically when Joseph's good deeds were "buried by the sand of time". The Egyptians made slaves of the Hebrews, mainly out of fear that they would eventually revolt and join an enemy in overthrowing the Egyptian government. They also feared the Hebrews would move out, and take with them the blessings of their God.

January 18

Exodus 2-4

The distinction between "Hebrews" and "Israelites" depends on whom is being spoken to. The term "Israelites" was used between persons of that race, while "Hebrew" was the name by which they were known to foreigners (Smith's Bible Dictionary, Nelson Publishers, 1986)

Moses' mother obeyed the law, "every boy that is born you must throw into the river." I suppose his family would have brought food to the little boy every day, except that God stepped in with a plan for Moses to be legally raised by his mom.

When Moses was old enough, she took him to be raised by Pharaoh's daughter, which would put him in the position to know all about the Egyptian government workings and to receive probably the best education in the world.

In chapter 3, Horeh is another name used for Mount Sinai. God had found His man- Israelite, well-educated, familiar with the Egyptian government, a 40 year resident of the Sinai Desert. Now He just had to work on Moses' faith in himself and in God. He had his brother, Aaron, help for awhile, but eventually God had another calling for Aaron.

January 19

Exodus 5-7

Moses requests that Pharaoh let the Hebrews go, so that they can go into the desert to worship God. He never says they will come back, but it wouldn't be surprising if Pharaoh thought they just wanted a short vacation. Pharaoh decided they wanted time off because they had idle time to think about it, so he stepped up their workload. The Hebrews were upset with Moses and Aaron, understandably so, because their request to Pharaoh has brought tougher work.

Now Moses returns to Pharaoh, again with the request that Pharaoh let the Hebrews go. When Pharaoh refuses, God sends the first of many judgments. At first, the evil magicians of Pharaoh can match what God does, giving the impression to Pharaoh that these plagues are no big deal. It'll get worse!

This is a pretty important test of Pharaoh's leadership. He has a lot of building projects going on, and I imagine the hundred of thousands of workers made great progress each day. Wasn't he taking a big chance, though, to work directly against a God that has proved incredibly powerful? If Pharaoh had chosen, instead, to please this God and let the Hebrew slaves go, might he be abundantly blessed?

January 20

Exodus 8-10

We begin to see God send plagues to show His power to Pharaoh. They begin as inconveniences, but gradually become more tragic, threatening the basics of life.

Several things are left unsaid. For instance, the first blood (turning the water into blood) never gets undone, but seems to have abated on its own after seven days. Take a minute to ponder the relationship between Moses turning the water of the Nile into blood and Jesus turning the water into wine at the Cana wedding. The plague was part of the process of setting the captives free; the wine miracle was a sign reflecting how Jesus' blood would turn the ordinary (water) into extraordinary (wine).

Though Pharaoh's magicians, through Satan's power, could make frogs come up on the land of Egypt, they couldn't get rid of them! Also, Southerners understand what incredible nuisance gnats are; it's interesting that the magicians admitted, through the plague of gnats, that God is all-powerful. Gnats are good for something!!!

There is some discrepancy in the absolute here. In 9:6, a plague wiped out "all" the livestock of the Egyptians, but a week or so later in 9:19 there are livestock to shelter from the hail storm.

We've seen a change in Moses. At first, he was such a stammerer that brother Aaron spoke to Pharaoh in his place. By somewhere in chapter 8, Moses becomes the speaker and Aaron becomes his assistant, handling no speaking duties.

The plague of darkness is the most amazing plague to me. In Goshen, there was light, but there was none in the rest of Egypt. How did God keep light from Goshen from relieving the darkness a little in the rest of the land?

January 21

Exodus 11-13

Pharaoh knew by now that letting the Hebrews leave to worship God in the desert would be the end of their presence in Egypt. The Egyptians couldn't live with these plagues, yet how would they survive the loss of all that slave labor?

The plague on the first born was as personal and tragic as it could get, without destroying the entire population. The symbolism speaks loudly of Jesus, our Passover lamb, who died that sin might not destroy us. Not a one who claims that blood will die an eternal death, but will instead find eternal life.

The Passover suddenly marked the beginning of a new calendar. Whatever was the first month before is now something else. Passover is not the first of that new month, but the fourteenth!

No bone of the Passover lamb was broken, nor was any bone of Jesus broken when He was crucified. Jesus died at the same hour Passover lambs were being killed all over Judea.

God told Moses and the people to commemorate that day, which means to make it an annual day of remembrance. We do this with days that mark turning points in our national history, like July 4 or Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. This first Passover day would be a turning point in the history of the nation, when God brought them from slavery to freedom.

January 22

Exodus 14-16

Moses shows great faith in following God's commands, though God gives him little to go by. First, God says to camp at Pi Hahiroth, and the Egyptians will pursue them. Then He tells Moses to divide the sea, and the Egyptians will follow them. Finally, once the people have gotten across on dry land and the Egyptians were following just a little behind, Moses was instructed to allow the Red Sea to regain its natural shape, which drowned the pursuing Egyptians.

There is a lot of symbolism here that foreshadows the saving power of Jesus Christ. In brief, Satan pursues us, but Christ saves us by making a path to safety in the midst of our troubles. We're often shown just the next step of obedience, and must trust Christ that He is leading us in the right direction.

In the desert, the people cry out for water, then meat, then bread, and God each time supplies their need. The manna will appear each day except the Sabbath; they are to gather a double portion on the day before. Some tried to work on the Sabbath by gathering extra manna, but it wasn't there. God was upset at this, because He had given them a day of rest as a gift, but some would rather get an advantage over their neighbors instead of accepting God's gift.

January 23

Exodus 17-19

The people cry out for water again (after all, it's a desert), and God instructs Moses to bring forth a stream of water from a rock by striking it with his rod. Moses invites elders of the people to follow him and, without even a word, strikes the rock, resulting in plenty of water for all.

After the defeat of the Amalekites, God tells Moses to make sure Joshua hears that He will eventually wipe out the entire race of the Amalekites. That's a good indication that Joshua will be an important future leader.

Moses follows Jethro's advice to delegate authority for judging disputes. The elders Moses chose already had the wisdom, only lacking Moses' permission to use it!

When God appears to the people as promised at Mt. Sinai, they never actually see Him. They hear God's voice, and feel the tremendous trembling of the earth, but only Moses is allowed to actually have a personal audience with God on the holy mountain. I'm sure that's okay with the people! After the display of thunder, lightning, smoke, and earthquake, they are likely shaking in their sandals.

January 24

Exodus 20-22

As God speaks the Ten Commandments, He is putting forth the terms of a covenant. This is what is meant when God says, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.”

After the commandments come a volume of guidelines for community living. Some of these guidelines are for another time and place; for instance, we don’t have slavery in our country. In spite of that, it is possible to understand the mind of God through these, His compassion and idea of what is fair.

The Israelites have emerged from many years of slavery in the Egyptian culture. God is forming them into a new people, with stricter moral standards. For some, being God’s people will require major change.

January 25

Exodus 23-25

Chapter 23 starts with commands to do what is right even when you can get away with wrong. God will always see, so it honors God to show this respect.

The Sabbath is a time for refreshment by focusing on God. People and animals also need a physical rest once a week. God also commanded they let the land replenish itself every seven years. Good evidence suggests that the Israelites ignored the seventh-year agricultural Sabbath.

We forget that 70 elders, Aaron, and his two eldest sons actually saw God (24:10), though they may have just seen God’s feet.

The materials for the tabernacle were of the highest quality—and probably entirely departing gifts from the Egyptian people. God gives exact specifications; Moses heard it all and remembered. (Since he was brought up in Pharaoh’s court, he had the most educated mind around.)

January 26

Exodus 26-28

The next few chapters are very hard to read, because of the detail. Moses must have pictured it in his mind very well. We need to notice that this will be an elaborate and costly portable structure, worthy of God’s name.

As you read, you’ll get an idea of the great skill required for this project. God provided the craftsmen necessary. Think of this, though: Pharaoh lost some incredibly skilled slaves when the Hebrews departed! There is no way of knowing

what magnificent projects went undone in Egypt.

Hopefully, your Bible has some kind of drawing of this great Tabernacle. It's kind of hard to visualize it otherwise.

Everything is to be made portable, yet must also be as sturdy when erected as if it were permanent.

The priestly garments are very impressive, with fine linen and plenty of jewels. The "Urim and Thummin" are never precisely described; they were used to cast lots, so must have had several sides, like a pair of dice.

January 27

Exodus 29-31

Not only are the building components and garments described in detail, but now even the consecration ceremony is exactly prescribed. The animal sacrifices will no longer be haphazard, but must be done exactly according to God's plan. Attention to detail is a way of bringing worship to God.

Moses, then, must tell the two craftsmen in charge of the project, Bezalel and Oholrab, every intricate detail that God told him. They, in turn, will tell the many craftsmen working for them.

The penalty for not observing the Sabbath was death! That would get people to attend church!

January 28

Exodus 32-34

Even after Aaron, his two eldest sons, and 70 elders had seen God (at least his feet), they are still willing to turn from God to worship an inanimate idol. The people proclaim that these idols are the gods that brought them out of Egypt!

God tells Moses, "The people you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt." So, the people have not given God credit for bringing them out of Egypt, and God has disavowed credit. Moses then asks God, "Why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt?"

The Israelites will need a lot of training. They don't know what it's like to serve a living God. They are more used to idols, where worship is just a mind game, allowing your reason to be set aside to imagine power for these things made by human hands. God was very insulted that the people would choose worthless idols over Him.

Notice the difference in leadership between Aaron and Moses. Aaron was swayed by popular opinion, while Moses stood firm on principles.

The “tent of meeting” in 33:7-11 is temporary. Moses used this for his encounters with God (prayer). It will become obsolete when the Tabernacle is built.

Throughout these three chapter, we see Moses verbally wrestling with God. Moses insists these “stiff-necked” people are God’s own, but God describes them as Moses’ people. In 33:13-17, it seems Moses has finally won.

When Moses went up on Mount Sinai for replacement copies of the Ten Commandments, I wondered if He or God would cut short the visit, since the people were prone to turn away from God if Moses was out of their presence for a long time. However, this trip took forty days. God took care of His people, since He had accepted responsibility for them.

January 29

Exodus 35-37

Moses calls for an offering, of materials to build the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Much of the gold and silver had been departure gifts to the people from their neighbors in Egypt. I’m curious about the wood: Why would families have long wooden poles lying around extra?

Bezalel, who God had chosen to be construction foreman, was filled with the Holy Spirit, in the same way God gave the Spirit to the prophets. How else could he accomplish such a huge task and meet God’s exacting standards? Even though it had now been months since Moses had received the detailed instructions from God, Bezalel and his top assistant, Oholiab, got the plans from Moses and passed them on to the craftsmen they trained in exact detail. That is most of the reason all the boring details are laid out for us to read again; even after the elapsed time and all that had happened, God’s will was done.

January 30

Exodus 38-39

The basin for washing (30:8) was made from mirrors. Why this highly-polished bronze? When the priests would wash their hands and feet before ministering it would be a time for self-reflection!

Even the tent pegs were solid bronze! What an elaborate place!

The priestly garments were extremely costly, fitting right in with all the gold and silver and bronze of the Tabernacle. The jewels themselves were worth a small

fortune. Is anything we offer too good for honoring God? No!!!

Centuries later, we know the Tabernacle's tent finally just wore out. I wonder whatever became of the priestly garments and all their jewels?

January 31

Exodus 40

The timing was amazing. The Tabernacle and all that went with it was completed just in time for the anniversary of their departure from Egypt. It wasn't the kind of project they could hurry, because all must be built to exacting specifications.

The anointing and consecration of all the components (and priests) was meticulously done. After all, just the day before, all this was somewhat ordinary in that it all could be seen and touched. Forever after, only priests could see the thing in the Holy Place, and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, behind the veil where the Ark resided, only once each year.

God approved of the construction, as witnessed by 40:34: "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle". God had promised Moses He would go with them.---He kept His promise. The cloud by day and the fire by night always traveled with them.