

1. The Story (all year you have heard me make reference to this—The Story of the Bible—how God worked through generations of events, people and nations to achieve his ultimate goal for us—redemption—salvation in Christ Jesus. Our Bible reading texts of the past week encompass this story—The Story—in a revealing way through a narrative that runs almost through the entirety of the Bible. We are going to do a little history again—and it is my deepest hope that somehow through all of this that, The Story is making a connection in a way it has not before; to see in these readings just how deep and wide the love of God is for you and for all of his children. Let's start in)
2. Deuteronomy 12 (We are going way back to before Israel enters the Promise Land—to a text which is prepping them for their eventual inhabitation of this incredible gift of God. This is a crucial part of The Story—God's coveted people realizing his gift of land in order to establish themselves as a nation—but not just any nation—one that belongs uniquely to the God of heaven. Yahweh's people—a light to other nations—from which would emerge the light of the world. Their job was to honor God in all—so God tells them)
 - a. Destroy the idols completely—12: 2-3 (demolish them)
 - b. Do not worship God "their way"—12:4, 31
 - c. Do not do as everyone sees fit—12:8
 - d. Obey God and do right so all will go well—12:28 (S just imagine the scene as they eventually entered the land; all new and exciting—surely they would embrace the instruction, provision, guidance, warning and promise of God—and they did for a while living out The Story faithfully, but slowly things changed—The Story became less urgent. The commands of God less important. Others things were prioritized—the idols were not completely destroyed; they ended up worshipping God in their own way; doing as they saw fit and not obeying—so as God promised, things did not go so well—so we have)
3. The Prophet Joel (proclaiming God's Word to pre-exilic Judah—before Babylon crushes them—later in history seeing the consequences of God's people not living out their part of The Story)
 - a. The "Day of the Lord" is the reckoning—2:1 (like a locust invasion)
 - b. Yet God still yearns for his people—2:12-13 (return to him, he is gracious and compassionate—even at his late date)
 - c. However hope remains—2:28—32 (even though God's people rejected him, God did not totally reject his people. In the midst of judgment hope remains—The Story would continue and it does)
4. Acts 2 (We move to another text at another point in The Story. A time of a new covenant; a new people; a fresh beginning—which everything else in The Story has been leading up to—from Deut. to Joel to Peter after the resurrection of Christ standing before a crowd of people proclaiming that Christ as the Messiah. It is no mistake he quotes Joel—for God was pouring out his Spirit at that moment in a new anointing. The Story comes alive like no other time in history. Christ now reigns! Sons and daughters are prophesying! People are convicted. History brought us to this exact point! People realized it. Men and brethren what must we do? That is a question that continues to echo into our part of the story—the echoes reverberate though from way back—back to Israel as they entered the Promise Land; back from Joel's day of the Lord. They say—destroy the idols in your heart; tear down whatever is holding you back; worship God only; do not allow your self-will to lead you astray; obey and do what is right and all will go well with you; return to God—he is compassionate and forgiving; Another day of the Lord is coming. Repent and be baptized. Times have changed, but the essentials of The Story remain the same. Will we learn from history?)