

KL = Kendra LeGrand

JM = Joel Muddamalle

Kendra LeGrand: Hey, First 5 friends. My name is Kendra LeGrand and it's an honor to welcome you to our weekend teaching. We just finished Week 3 of *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament* in the First 5 app. We have Joel Muddamalle, co-author of *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament* with us today. Joel, how are you doing?

Joel Muddamalle: I'm doing well Kendra, thanks for having me.

KL: Yes, we're excited to learn from you. But before we do, I will go over this week's Major Moments.

- 2 Samuel 24:1-14 | The place you feel empty is an exact appointment to experience true living water.
- Genesis 37 | God's plan never derails from eventual good.
- Deuteronomy 32:10-11 | Even when we don't feel it, God's presence is always present.
- Judges 6:11-24 | God is in the business of bringing great things to life from less than situations.
- Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 4:2-6; Isaiah 11:1 | Even through human rebellion, God faithfully institutes divine order.

Joel, we're excited to hear what you have for us today.

JM: Well, thanks so much, Kendra. You know, as I was preparing for this week's teaching, one of the things that really struck me about this week is that the larger overall theme of rising and falling, you know, this, this pattern that we seem to see consistently in Scripture, and so, this weekend, we're going to do something a little bit unique, but I think it's going to be super fun and exciting. I want us to look at three different passages of scripture. So, for all my note-takers and outline people, I know y'all are eager to find out what those are, so you can properly take notes. And so, the first one is going to be Genesis 11, we're going to talk about the Tower of Babel, then we're going to talk about John 3:13 and what Jesus says about Himself. And then we're going to talk about Isaiah 60:1-3. And I think all of these are going to be really helpful as we really consider this biblical pattern that we see over and over, of rising and falling.

But Kendra, first, I have a question for you. When was the last time you were on a roller coaster?

KL: Oh, Joel, it's been years because I do not like them.

JM: And why do you not like them?

KL: I like control first and foremost. And also, I don't like that stomach feeling you get, you know, when you go down the first big hill. I can't handle it. [All laughing]

JM: Yes. So, I think what you just said is so amazing. Just so that everybody knows, we did not plan that. I totally caught Kendra off guard by asking that question. But you know, roller coasters have this, like, I have this love-hate relationship with them, because they're equal parts exhilarating and equal parts terrifying, you know? And I really appreciate what you just said for all of us that, that you like to have control.

A roller coaster is one of those moments where you kind of recognize, “My goodness, I really hope that the engineers who put this thing together and did the mathematical equations and the safety checks and all of that, like, I really hope that they didn't take a mental break at any moment of their planning process, because my life is hanging by a, you know, a little bar and a seatbelt, if we're lucky here, you know.” And one of the things, and you have mentioned it, about a roller coaster that is so intriguing is that typically the beginning of every roller coaster has this rising sensation, there's this rising and then there's always a falling. And you had mentioned the stomach feel on the way down, but I have a little bit of a different thing. Mine is the anticipation on the way up, and almost every roller coaster that I've ever been on, on the way up, there are these little clicks, you know, like your click, click, click, and it's almost like every click is a reminder that that's going to be equal to a split second on my stomach, no longer in my stomach, but like up in my throat. You know, on the way down. And I think that this sensation and this anticipation in this reality of a cycle of rising and falling and how we feel in the midst of it are just feelings of reality, of insecurity, lack of control, anxiety. Maybe some fear, but then also maybe some excitement for what's going to happen and the experience that's going to take place.

And I think what's actually happening often in Scripture is that there's this similar pattern. There's a pattern of excitement but then there's also a pattern of fear. There's a pattern of exhilaration but there's also a pattern of anxiety. And we can't get past the first couple pages of Scripture before we see this pattern, especially rising and falling right off the bat in Genesis Chapter 11. And some of you might be wondering, “Joel, how in the world do you get this language or this idea, or this pattern of rising and falling from the story of the Tower of Babel?”

Well, go ahead and open up your Bibles to Genesis Chapter 11. We're going to start in verse four. And, you know, at this point, the whole earth has one language, that's what verse one had said,

and all the people had gathered together in a plain, and the plain is called Shinar, and they all settled there.

One of the things that we have to remind ourselves is that in the ancient Near Eastern world, Mesopotamia, Babylon, Egypt, to all of these types of locations, there was this basic fundamental belief that the way that people engaged with God was at high places. And so, mountain tops were very important. That's why throughout the Old Testament, we have this constant reference to Mount Zion, or, you know, that the temple would be on a mountain. The Garden of Eden was on a mountain in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. And so the mountain, this top, the height of the mountain, was the meeting place between God and His people.

Now, if you happen to find yourself in a desert, or in a plain that has no mountains, it poses a problem, right? There's this question like how in the world are we supposed to relate to and interact with God. And so, the people are here, and they and they have this issue because we know from Genesis 1 and 2, and even later chapters with Noah, that God's command to the people was to spread and to go out into the ends of the earth and to multiply the glory of God on to the ends of the earth. And yet, what we find here is really rebellion, the people decide not to do what God tells them to do. And instead, they have this thought that if they could come together and use bricks, and burn them, they could make the tools necessary, the material necessary to build a massive tower.

So, this is what verse four says, "*Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city...' — and now catch this — '... with a tower, with its top in the heavens...' And then they say, "Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."*" And so right here, we find the very first or one of the very first indications that the people want to rise. They want to go up to the top of the heavens, but why is it that they want to go up to the top of the heavens?

In the sense what they're doing is they're trying to twist God's arm, to force Him to come down to meet them at the top of the temple. How do we know this? Because the Hebrew word here for "tower" is actually the same word that is used of a temple tower called a ziggurat. This was a pyramid, think of a pyramid type of building. And the way that the Babylonians have built these tower pyramids was with a house, kind of a room, at the very peak, at the very top of this pyramid. And in the dream, they thought that, well, God would come down and meet with His people.

But look at the context of what's happening around this rising; the context is actually an incredible amount of pride. It's an incredible amount of ego. It's an incredible amount of disregard for the wisdom and the vision that God has for His people. And so, what actually

happens is in response to the people's attempt to rise, God actually does come down. There is a falling that takes place. But as we read further in verse seven, this is what happens: God says, "OK, come let us come down and therefore confuse their language that they might not understand one another's speech." So, the Lord dispersed them from there, over where? All over the face of the earth — and catch this — they left off building the city. So, on their way up, in this like desire to achieve or rise in ego and pride, the people are met with God on the way down, and in that they experience judgment. And they actually have to go out and go into the ends of the earth.

And so, here's what we have, I think, here's this pattern. The rising goal for humanity was humanity's glory. But the falling reality that takes place as God comes down is actually to achieve God's glory. And so, I think there's a real kind of caution and warning that we should kind of think through. What is it that we long for? Why do we want to achieve a rise, or maybe platform, or achievement or all those types of things? Like, what is the impulse there? And how does it relate to what God desires for His people? Now, here is a kind of insane, exciting, I don't know, a reversal that takes place. What we find here, a picture in Genesis Chapter 11, is actually referred to and pictured and imaged in John 3:13. Remember, the people are going up and the desire for God to come down. But as the people rise, as they go up, God judges them, because it's all about their pride and their ego. It's not about what God desires. But God always does desire to be with His people. That is an impulse for God. And so how does this actually take place? Well, John 3:13, this is Jesus Himself and this is what Jesus says. He says, in verse 13, "*No one has ascended into heaven...*" — so that's the rising — "*No one has ascended into heaven, except he who descends from heaven, the Son of Man.*" And then He gives this example just "*As Moses lifted up the serpent...*" — that's rising — "*... in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ...*" — and that's the cross. That's what happens with Jesus, ultimately, Jesus is risen on the cross. But what exactly is taking place over here?

Well, what we find is this theological term called the Incarnation, and in the Incarnation, it's Jesus's entrance into humanity. And in that what Jesus Himself says is that there is a falling, that Jesus actually comes down out of heaven, He descends onto Earth. And this is pretty amazing! Another theological term, the idea that Jesus condescends from heaven, down to earth, and what we find is that Jesus does this for a purpose. He does this, He enters into humanity, to deal with the issue of sin, to deal with the issue of humanity's pride, to deal with all of these things that have actually created a deep separation, and a divide between the people of God and between humanity.

And so, as Jesus comes down, He is lifted again, He is raised again. And this is actually the assumption, this is in Ephesians 1:20, and this is what the Apostle Paul says, that "*...he who worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead* — this is Jesus — "*...he raised from the*

dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, and power and dominion, and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come."

And so, it's almost like, what happens with Jesus' own life and ministry, it's a response to, it's a reflection of, it's an echo that takes us all the way back to Genesis 11 that says, gosh, the people desire to be with God, but they did it through all the wrong ways. They allowed their pride in their ego to come in. And it wasn't that God didn't want to be with His people. But it had to be done in the right way and the right timing. And in John 3:13, Jesus out of His own lips, out of His own words says, actually, Jesus came down to earth, He fell from heaven onto Earth. And then He also went back into heaven, to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Now, we may ask a question right now. And some of you are wondering this, well Joel, this is really cool but how does this help me today? Like, how does this work itself out to give me any sense of hope, or any sense of encouragement in the middle of the challenges that I'm facing, and the darkness that I'm experiencing, in the hardships that are taking place in my life? Like, how does this rising and falling meet me in the middle of my mess today?

Well, turn to Isaiah 60:1-3, this is what the prophet Isaiah says, and he's anticipating really what we know has taken place in Jesus, and this is what Isaiah says, *"Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you, and nations shall come to your light and the kings to the brightness of your rising."* Like this is pretty amazing. I actually really love a translation from an Old Testament scholar, John Golden Gate, and this is how John Golden Gate kind of translates or paraphrases the Hebrew here, he says, "Get up and be a light, because your light has come." And we know, you and I know today, that that light was Jesus Himself. And then Golden Gate says, "Yahweh's splendor has shone forth upon you. Because there is darkness, the dust covers the earth, pitch dark that covers the peoples, but upon you, the people of God, Yahweh will shine forth, his splendor will appear upon you, and nations will walk to your light kings to your shining brightness."

You know, this is so hopeful, this is so encouraging because what the prophet does is he doesn't undermine the reality of darkness and hurt and harm and tragedy and turmoil in our human experience. But what he does say is that in the midst of all of that, in the reality of all that sin has done to plague humanity in to create disruption and division, not just amongst people and people, but ultimately between people and God, that the answer is Jesus Himself, who is the Light of the world. And that light has shone upon us, it shines on us so that we could be a light that shines out in the darkness to others.

And so, the beautiful tension that's present here is that you and I, because we have experienced the light of Jesus, in the midst of our darkness in the midst of our pain, we actually can emulate, reflect and shine that exact same light back out to everybody else. Why? Because Jesus is a good King, who would not leave His people in a total, in total despair. There's an ancient church father, Athanasius, who wrote an incredible book on the Incarnation. And here's how he describes what Jesus did and how incredible it is. He says, "Moreover, a king, being human, does not permit the lands established under him to pass to and to serve others, nor does he abandon them to others. But he reminds them with letters and often enjoins them with friends. And if need be, comes himself," what he's saying is like a good king won't let his people just be in the middle of all that pain, like he's gonna send letters, if the letters don't work, he's gonna send his own friends as emissaries. And if that doesn't work, we can be confidently assured that he himself will show up.

And the story of scripture from the tragedy that took place to Genesis Chapter 11, with the division of humanity in the rebellion of humanity, God did send letters, God did send prophets, God did send His own people, and ultimately, God Himself came as Jesus, the suffering servant. And today in the middle of our own pain, in the middle of our own rising and falling experiences, and in the unseen places, that it feels like, gosh, nobody else really understands the depth of what I'm going through, we can have this confident assurance that Jesus has always been there. And we can look back and say, OK, you still came down, there was a falling, He came out of heaven, in the Incarnation, then He rose again. And right now, He's seated at the right hand of the father, and His light shines on us. And we can know, with confidence, that we have His presence now, and that He will return again.

And so, I hope that this is an encouragement for any of us that are sitting in the middle of this reality, that we would take assurance that Jesus is with us, He is that good King, that wouldn't just leave it to letters or to people, but He Himself would come and He would meet us right in the middle of that anxiety, feeling of rising and falling.

KL: Joel, thank you so much. I love the way that you connected the whole idea of rising and falling and showing that pattern throughout scripture, and just reminding us that Jesus, He showed up, and He will continue to show up for us and whatever we may be experiencing. And so, thank you for that teaching and that reminder, and I would love to close us in prayer. So, let's go ahead and pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for this time that we've had together to learn and glean from Genesis 11, John 3 and Isaiah 60. God, I thank You that You are a very intentional God, that You are a very purposeful God, and that You sent Your Son that ultimately will create a way for us to be with You, Lord. And so, I thank You that You show up. I thank You for Your Word that reminds us of when You have shown up before and knowing that You will show up again. And so, Lord,

we thank You that Jesus is our light and that ultimately your splendor will prevail God. We thank You for Joel and his word. And Lord, we just, we lift this time up to You. It's in Your Son's name that we pray, Amen.