



THE
PROMISE
PART 1

Old Testament Bible Survey

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BIBLE COLLEGE

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE SURVEY: INTRODUCTION

A Bible Survey is an attempt to overview in one sweep, the contents of the entire Bible. It aims to introduce you to all of scripture. It does this by giving the student the following elements to each division and each book of the Bible:

- The historical background
- The outline and structure
- Interpretative keys such as main themes, key concepts & literary features

A Bible Survey is therefore not a Bible Study or a series of Bible Studies, as there would be insufficient time for such detailed study of biblical passages and themes, whether for doctrinal or devotional purposes. Neither is a Bible Survey the same as Biblical Studies, which is a more academic exercise that focuses on the origins and reliability of the text.

A Bible Survey can be frustrating in that it involves skimming over countless rich veins of Scripture that beg for deeper excavation. But if the effect of the Survey is to inspire people to do some excavating, then it has succeeded!

This Old Testament Bible Survey is not a run-of-the-mill survey. Although you will get a panoramic view of the Old Testament and specifics to unlocking each of the books, our aim is to concentrate on some of the major events and characters to give you a comprehensive grasp of the message and historical flow of the Old Testament.

The aim of this course is to:

- Appreciate the chronological flow of Biblical history
- Understand how God reveals Himself progressively throughout the Old Testament, culminating in the advent of His Son, Jesus Christ
- See God's plan of redemption and the role that Israel plays in being His chosen people for the display of His glory in the earth
- Understanding the various types and shadows in the Old Testament that find their fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus Christ
- See how the whole of God's revelation, in both the Old and New Covenants, hold together to form a complete revelation of God's plan for mankind
- Show how an understanding of the Old Testament can strengthen the platform of Biblical revelation when studying sections of the New Testament

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INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT AS HISTORY AND DRAMA

"In beginning the study of a book it is well to take a forward glance over its entire contents, as we look over the map of a country or district we are about to explore, to get the lay of the land, or from a mountain-top to get a survey of the entire horizon." Dr A.T. Pierson

1.1 The Life Story of Israel

The story of the Old Testament spans four thousand years. It is a kaleidoscope of dramatic activity as God gathers a people for Himself who will be the instrument of declaring His purpose of redemption to the world. It is also the story of how God reveals Himself to the nations of the world.

It is a book of profound encounters with God and His people. In all these encounters, God progressively reveals who He is and what His plans are for all mankind.

It is not merely a history book, although it does take us through the history of the Israelites. Neither must the Old Testament be seen in isolation from the New Testament. (We will be discussing that in a future study unit).

You may know many of the outstanding stories of the Old Testament. In this study you will be able to place these stories in their context and see how they are woven together to form a whole wonderful tapestry of 'God's story' and His dealings with His people, bringing them ever closer to a fuller understanding of His call and purpose for all of mankind.

The section below is an excerpt taken from Bernhard W. Anderson's book, "The Living World of the Old Testament". Take note of the flow of history and drama in the Old Testament.

The object of this exercise is to give you the gist of the flow of the History of the Israelites and hopefully begin to prepare a platform for your studies of the Old Testament.

"The most distinctive feature of the Jewish people is their sense of history. In many respects, the Jews have always been diverse - in theology, in culture, and even in racial characteristics. But Judaism is the religion of a people who have a unique memory that reaches back through the centuries to the stirring events of their Bible, events that formed them as a people with a sense of identity and vocation. Whenever the Passover is celebrated, whenever the Law is read in the synagogue, whenever a parent instructs his child in the tradition, this memory is kept alive. Indeed, if historical memory were destroyed, the Jewish community would soon dissolve. The Christian faith may be expressed in many forms, but in the last analysis there is no substitute for retelling what Christians call —"the story of our life" — that is, the history to which the Old and New Testaments bear witness."

Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation

1.2 The Theatre of God's Activity

The first eleven chapters of Genesis gives a biblical history.

A brief summary

Shortly after the turn of the second millennium B.C., Israel's ancestor, Abraham, migrated from Mesopotamia into the land of Canaan.

The patriarchs, or founding fathers of Israel, moved about in the hill country of Canaan, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob succeeding one another. Eventually, during a time of famine, Jacob's family migrated to Egypt. There, after enjoying initial favour, they were subjected to forced labour by the Egyptian pharaoh. Under the leadership of Moses (about 1450 B.C.) however, and favoured by an extraordinary series of events, they escaped into the desert, where they were forged into a community with a single religious allegiance.

Leadership under Joshua

Later, under the leadership of Joshua, they successfully attacked Canaan and claimed the land as their own. During this time, they had to wage ceaseless wars of defence. Enemy pressure became so intense that a monarchy was established under Saul, and in the time of kings David and Solomon (1000-922 B.C.) Canaan was an Israelite empire.

On the death of Solomon, the United Kingdom split into the two kingdoms of north and south Israel (Ephraim and Judah). These kingdoms, by virtue of their strategic location in a buffer zone between Mesopotamia and Egypt, were drawn into the power struggle of the Near East. The Northern Kingdom fell under the aggression of Assyria (721 B.C.); and the Southern Kingdom, after more than a century of vassalage (subordination) to Assyria, fell victim to the Babylonians, who wrested world rule from Assyria. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. and the people were carried away into Babylonian captivity.

But under the benevolent rule of the next empire, Persia, the exiles were permitted to return to their homeland, where they rebuilt Jerusalem and resumed their way of life. The restoration took place under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra (about 450-400 B.C.).

Under Greek control

After more than two centuries of Persian rule, Palestine (Israel) came within the orbit of Greek control, as a result of the world conquest of Alexander the Great (332 B.C.). Alexander's policy of imposing Hellenistic (Greek) cultural uniformity upon the world was continued by those who inherited his divided empire, especially by the Seleucid rulers of Syria. When this policy was forced upon the Jewish community by a Seleucid King, open revolution broke out under the leadership of the house of the Maccabees (168 B.C.).

But the Old Testament does not claim to be simply a book of secular history or culture. It is sacred history, to both Jews and Christians, because in these historical experiences, as interpreted by faith, the ultimate meaning of human life is disclosed.

From Israel's standpoint, this history is not just the ordinary story of wars, population movement, and cultural advance or decline. Rather, the unique dimension of these historical experiences is the disclosure of God's activity in events, the working out of His purpose in the career of Israel. It is this

faith that transfigures Israel's history and gives to the Bible its peculiar claim to be sacred scripture. To put it in a nutshell, the Old Testament is Israel's witness to its encounter with God.

For this reason, we cannot begin to understand the Old Testament so long as we regard it as merely great literature, interesting history, or the development of lofty ideas. The Old Testament is the narration of God and His action: who He is, what He has done, is doing, and will do. All human history is the theatre of this self-disclosure, and nature too is his handiwork; but He acts particularly within the career of the comparatively obscure people in order to initiate a historical drama that has changed human perspectives and has altered the course of human affairs.

Recap of some of the main points of this excerpt:

- It is **sacred history**, to both Jews and Christians, because in these historical experiences, **interpreted by faith**, the ultimate meaning of human life is disclosed
- It is **the disclosure of God's activity** in events, the working out of His purpose over the history and experiences of Israel
- The Old Testament is **Israel's witness** to its encounter with God.
- **The Old Testament is the narration of God's action:**
 - Who He is
 - what He has done,
 - what He is doing,
 - what He will do (in the future)
- The overall theme of the Bible is God the Father, **preparing a bride for His son**, Jesus. Marriage is a covenant and God relates to His people on the basis of **covenant**.

These all summarize something of the Old Testament story.

2. SEEING THE OLD TESTAMENT THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

"Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Luke 24:44

Three major divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament:

- **The Law** (of Moses)
- **The Prophets** (Former and Latter)
- **Writings** (Poetical books, Five Rolls and Historical books)

The Law commentates on God's dealings with His people.

The Prophets give a heavenly perspective of what God is doing on earth. They interpret the history because history cannot be understood by itself. We understand history because of what the prophets have said about history. So we can't just read Kings alone. Reading the Prophets tells us what God is doing, and reading Kings tells us what is happening on the earth and what man is doing.

Chronicles is written at the time of the restoration after the Exile and looks back over a period of about 500 years, starting with Saul and David. The chronicler is a preacher preaching his message. He takes from history and draws out certain aspects to make his point.

Psalms, on the other hand, is a theology book - the songs of theology - that expresses the theme of what is happening prophetically and historically in the Old Testament.

Bearing this in mind it would be helpful to see which Old Testament scriptures Jesus and His disciples emphasised, because it is from this hindsight that we are assisted in our study of the Old Testament.

Examples of Jesus' use of the scriptures

Jesus was steeped in the scriptures and constantly quoted them in every aspect of life: In His teaching; in His encounter with Satan in the Wilderness; in His contact with the Scribes and the Pharisees; teaching the disciples and prophesying about the future. It is therefore important to look at the Old Testament through the eyes of Jesus.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert, he quoted from Deuteronomy (the Torah, the five books of Moses).

Read Matthew 4: 1 – 11 (cf Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, 6:13)

Not only does Jesus reference the Old Testament and give it credence, but He also shows its greater fulfilment in Himself and the perfecting of God's purposes through the church.

It is helpful to remember that at the age of twelve, Jesus was so conversant with the Scriptures that He held His own in debating and discussing it with the Jewish leaders in the Temple.

Several of His statements regarding the Old Testament will help us in our appreciation of it.

Alec Motyer cites five important assertions by Jesus regarding the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthew 5:17-20

- The Old Testament is 'the Law and the Prophets' (vs. 17)
- Jesus is the 'fulfilment of the Old Testament' (vs. 17b)
- The Old Testament has **permanent validity** for the earthly church (vs. 18)
- The Old Testament is to be obeyed by the children of the Kingdom (vs. 19)
- It is crucial to assured citizenship (vs. 20)¹

A key moment in the life of Jesus took place in the Synagogue when He was given the scriptures to read. It says that "He found the place where it is written" (which was Isaiah 61):

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed ..." He then ends off by saying: *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Luke 4:21 (with reference to Isaiah 61:1)

The key element here is Jesus' proclamation that in Him all the revelation of the Old Testament has come to fulfilment.

¹ Alec Motyer – The Story of the Old Testament p. 9

² Alec Motyer – The Story of the Old Testament page 17

3. THE OLD TESTAMENT POINTS TOWARDS CHRIST

We come now to probably one of the most important aspects of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the **progressive revelation of God to man**, which culminates in the advent of Jesus Christ. By ‘progressive revelation’ we mean the unfolding disclosure of God to man. In other words, the ‘picture’ of God and His ways moves toward a defining moment when we can see clearly all that God has planned for mankind.

It is very much a two-way street. On the one hand it is looking forward to the perfect revelation of God in Christ and then it is backward looking, confirming the process of God in the unfolding revelation of Himself.

Alec Motyer states this principle very clearly:

Hebrews 1:1 (NIV) offers a concise statement of God’s revelation-plan.

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways”
Hebrews 1:1

He did not reveal all His truth at once but spoke *polumeros*, ‘in many portions’, spread over a two thousand year timespan (as we see in Scripture).

He also spoke *polutropos*, ‘in many ways’ – in the recorded lives of individuals, and in Israel’s history, through the spoken word, and the voice of song.²

In all the many and various ways, the unfolding - or disclosure - of God’s nature and ways was being revealed, moving toward the completion of His revelation in Jesus Christ.

The scripture continues:

“but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe”.

Hebrews 1:2 – NIV

This is the culmination of God’s full revelation in Christ.

The Old Testament constantly points towards Christ our Messiah. Not only are there prophecies concerning the life and geography of Christ, e.g. Micah 5:2 concerning the birthplace of the Messiah, or Isaiah 9:1-2 concerning Jesus’ ministry base in Galilee; but there are also great theological themes that are only properly understood in the light of Christ’s atoning death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection and power over death and sin, e.g. Habakkuk 2:4 “**the righteous will live by faith**” becomes Paul’s great theme in Romans and Galatians (as well as Hebrews).

We want to follow these prophecies and themes through the Old Testament. These words of anticipation of God’s great plan of redemption is Christ the Redeemer and the Church as God’s ambassadors, those sent into all the world to share the good news with all nations (**Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 28:18**).

Although it is not in the scope of this section to do an exhaustive study of how the scriptures point toward the Messiah, we would like to show you how the Old Testament points toward the New.

² Alec Motyer – The Story of the Old Testament page 17

Throughout this study you will discover the types and shadows of Christ the Messiah in the writings of the Old Testament.

Here are some examples of the looking forward to Jesus the Messiah:

3.1 **Old Testament Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ**

- **The Seed of the Woman victorious over Satan** (Genesis 3:15 - fulfilled in Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:11; 1 John 3: 8).

War is proclaimed between Satan and the Seed of the woman, where Satan shall bruise His heel, but the Seed shall bruise Satan's head. Jesus suffered tremendously at the hands of men, crucifixion being an agonizing and slow death. But Jesus gained the ultimate victory.

"...because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work".

1 John 3:8

- **All families blessed through Christ, the Seed of Abraham** (Genesis 12:3 - fulfilled in Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8).

God promises to make of Abraham a great nation, and that ALL families of the earth will be blessed. Paul wrote to the Galatians;

"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'"

Galatians 3:8

- **The priesthood of Jesus like Melchizedek** (Genesis 14:18; Psalms 110:4 - fulfilled in Hebrews 7:1-28).

We do not know much about Melchizedek other than he was considered very great. He was the King of Salem (later to be Jerusalem) and priest of the most high God. Salem means "peace", making him the King of peace, and the writer of Hebrews also referred to him as the King of righteousness. The patriarch, Abraham, paid his tithes to Melchizedek, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham, bringing out bread and wine. It is fitting that he brought forth bread and wine, the elements Jesus used at His last supper. The beginning or ending of Melchizedek's life or his lineage is not recorded, making him

"without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever".

Hebrews 7:3

- **Jesus is the Passover Lamb** (Exodus 12:1-14:46; fulfilled in John 19:31-36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19).

To protect themselves from the death angel, each family was to take a spotless male lamb, kill it, and then take the blood and place it upon the top and sides of the doorframe. When the angel saw the blood, he would pass over the house. Peter said that we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. (**1 Peter 1:19**). Paul said of Christ that He was our Passover which was sacrificed for us (**1 Corinthians 5:7**).

- **The Messiah's blood would be shed for our sins** (Exodus 24:8 - fulfilled in Hebrews 9:11-28). Moses took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people and the tabernacle and its furnishings.

"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins"

Hebrews 9:22.

Neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by His own blood Christ entered once in the Holy Place to obtain eternal redemption for us.

- **Jesus is the true bread from Heaven** (Exodus 16:4 - fulfilled in John 6:31-35). God rained down manna from heaven which the people of Israel collected to make bread. Jesus reminded the people of this story, and said;

"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then Jesus declared, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty".*

John 6:32,35

- **Jesus the smitten Rock** (Exodus 17:6 - fulfilled in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4). The people of Israel complained against Moses and God for they were thirsty. God then told Moses; *"Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink."*

Exodus 17:5

Paul said that they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. Jesus said that those who drink of the water He gives will never thirst.

- **Jesus to be lifted up on a cross** (Numbers 21:8-9 - fulfilled in John 3:14-17). God sent a plague of snakes among the people of Israel as punishment for their continued complaining. God commanded Moses to place an image of a serpent on a pole. If someone was bitten, they would look upon the pole and be saved. It was a look of faith and not just a simple glance. Jesus said that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up;

"so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life"

John 3:15

- **Messiah will come out of Jacob** (Num 24:17 - fulfilled in Luke 1:32-33; Rev 22:16).

"A Star shall rise out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel".

Numbers 24:17

The star would represent Jesus' glory and the sceptre His authority and power. The angel told the Virgin Mary,

"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Luke 1:33

Jesus said of Himself in John's great vision;

"I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

Revelation 22:16

- **God will send the Prophet** (Deut 18:15-18 - fulfilled in John 6:14, 12:49-50; Acts 3:18-26). God promised He would raise up a Prophet from among Israel that will speak what He commands Him. When the people saw the miracle Jesus performed in feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fish, they said of Him;

"This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

John 6:14

Jesus said that He spoke the words which the Father gave to Him. Peter referenced Moses' prophecy of a coming Prophet in his sermon about Jesus that he delivered in the temple. (**Acts 2:30; 3:22**)

- **Son of David raised from the dead** (Ps 16:8-11, fulfilled in Acts 2:25-32; 13:35-37). When Jesus died, He went down into Hell and led away the captives and returned with the keys to Hell and to death. David said;

"—because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."

Psalm 16:10

Peter quoted this passage in his Pentecost sermon and said that David spoke:

"of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption."

Acts 2:31

Paul also quoted this same passage in his message in the synagogue at Antioch.

- **The Messiah will come from Bethlehem** (Micah 5:2 - fulfilled in Matthew 2:1-6).

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

Matthew 2:7

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Micah 5:2

This was fulfilled when Joseph had to take Mary to Bethlehem, the place of his birth, for the Roman census. **The great church father, St. Augustine, encapsulated the essence of this when he said:**

"The New is in the Old Concealed; the Old is in the New revealed. The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the new explained. The New is in the Old enfolded; the Old is in the New unfolded. The New is in the Old latent; the Old is in the New patent." Attributed to St. Augustine

4. SEEING THE OLD TESTAMENT THROUGH A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

4.1 God has a plan for all nations

By looking at the Old Testament through New Testament 'spectacles' we notice that God has a plan for all nations—not just the nation of Israel. The New Testament is not a new idea! Neither is it divorced from the Old. Rather, it is the fulfilment of the Old. Jesus said;

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them".

Matthew 5:17

The church age finds its expression in the way the New Testament apostles referenced the Old Testament. With this perspective in mind let's look at some of the Old Testament highlights that the New Testament references.

A key scripture referring to Genesis would be:

"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the **gospel in advance to Abraham**: "All nations will be blessed through you."

Galatians 3:8

As New Covenant believers we see **Genesis 12 as the gospel in advance**—the gospel for all nations. The gospel is not just the cross of Jesus. It is the fact that **all nations** will be drawn into God's plan of redemption. As wonderful as the cross is, the cross without all nations takes you to the place of Christ coming for only one nation. I.e. he has come to save the Jews. That is not what He came to do. He came for all nations.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Rom 1:16

The end goal of Christianity is to fulfil the great commission and disciple every ethnic group in the earth, introducing them to God through Jesus Christ and bringing the Kingdom of God about. This is not a New Testament phenomenon.

Have a look at the following Old Testament scriptures that give an indication of God's intention for the nations of the world:

Isaiah says:

"...the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it."

Isaiah 2:2

"Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

Isaiah 56:7

Haggai says:

*"I will shake **all nations**, and the desired of **all nations** will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. '**The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house**,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."*

Haggai 2:7-9

Jeremiah says:

"At that time they will call Jerusalem the Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honour the name of the LORD".

Jeremiah 3:17

Other important Scriptures to read: Isaiah 14:26; 61:11; 66:18; Jeremiah 3:17; 33:9.

This is the underlying theme throughout the Old Testament. God is moving toward a time when this theme will find greater fulfilment in the earth.

CONCLUSION

Whilst one can get bogged down in the complexities of the Old Testament, we need to see that there are a number of golden threads of truth running throughout the Old Testament. Looking back to the Old Testament from a New Testament vantage point, one can see how it forms a cohesive whole, pointing toward the greater fulfilment in Christ.

We will now go on to discuss the flow of history in the Old Testament and introduce you to the chronology of the Old Testament.

THE FLOW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Our plan is to look at the Old Testament chronologically and see the great unfolding story of redemption. Having the New Testament gives us the wonderful benefit of hindsight.

"A Chinese philosopher insisted on riding his mule backwards so that he would not be distracted by where he was going and could instead reflect on where he had been. The Bible works in somewhat the same way. The Epistles shed light backwards on the events of the Gospels, so that we understand them in a new way. Epistles and Gospels both shed light backward on the Old Testament".³ [See the chart showing the tie-up of the old and new.]

The object of a timeline or a chronological chart is to give you a framework within which to understand, in this case, the history of the Old Testament. As you get to know the timeline you will see the unfolding story of God and His people and His purpose for all mankind. (We have given you a basic Old Testament timeline in **Appendix I**).

By studying the events in their sequence gives us a better understanding of how God was at work in his pilgrim people, and how he was taking them on a **journey of faith** that would culminate in the coming of the Messiah and the unfolding of God's perfect plan of redemption. When you get to grips with the flow of history and God's activity in the life of His people, you will note how the story moves to greater definition.

1. AN UNDERSTANDING OF TIME

The New Testament will throw some important light on understanding the concept of time. Although the New Testament has several words that describe time, there are two in particular that are helpful in understanding two features of time:

- The Greek word **chronos** is used to speak of chronological time. i.e. time in sequence. A day; a week; a month; a year a decade etc.
- Another word the New Testament uses is **kairos** which speaks of seasonal times or 'God's moment'. It is not a specific day or month or year but a season or a moment when God does something.

Within the time frame of history, we have both of these times at work. The **kairos** – God's moments where He discloses His nature, His ways and His plans to his people. Within the chronological (**chronos**) time frame you have the many **kairos's** where God breaks into history and reveals Himself to his people.

Scriptural examples:

Kairos – God's moment or season

"You see, at just the right time (kairos), when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly".

Romans 5:6

Paul is referring to the moment in history when Jesus came.

³ Philip Yancey. —The Bible Jesus Read. Page 24

Chronos – linear time

*"But when the time (**chronos**) had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,"*
Galatians 4:4

Here Paul is saying that at a very specific time in history, God sent forth His son into the world.

Another interesting scripture:

*"Now, brothers, about times (**chronos**) and dates (**kairos**) we do not need to write to you,"*
1 Thessalonians 5:1 (NIV)

*"But concerning the times (**chronos**) and the seasons, (**kairos**) brethren, you have no need that I should write to you."*

1 Thessalonians 5:1 (NKJ)

As we study the history of the Old Testament, it may be helpful to bear the above in mind. We are not only looking at dates on the chronological chart, but we are looking at God's activity in history with His people, Israel - Great moments when God 'appears' in History, displaying His mighty acts and disclosing His nature and His ways.

2. IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING CHRONOLOGY

By studying the timeline, one is able to pick up the flow of God moving in history. It is not simply an academic exercise but one that helps us get a full picture of the unfolding revelation of God and His dealings with His people.

The fascinating thing about a biblical timeline is to see that God is moving to a more defined moment in history when the fullness of His revelation in Christ would come to pass.

A timeline is like walking down a long road. Along the road are a number of markers, signifying important events. At various points you are able to stop and look back and see what has taken place. By looking back and seeing the flow of God's dealings with His people you can also look forward to the prophetic promises. By understanding the history, one is able to live with anticipation for what God is going to do in the future.

The prophets were effective in their witness to God and His ways because they understood what He had done and could grasp what He wanted to do in the future. A prophet does not stand up as an isolated individual and declare the purposes of God. He, himself, is at a particular time in history. He can look back and see what God's people have been doing and how God has been responding to His people. As God speaks to him he is able to prophesy into the future. Below, we will take a look at Moses and Ezekiel as examples of this trend.

Progressive revelation

You will also notice the exciting subject of **progressive revelation** as you study the flow of Old Testament history.

Example:

In Exodus, Moses has a revelation concerning sacrifice. By the time you get to David, you discover that he has a heightened awareness of sacrifice. David begins to understand that physical burnt sacrifices are part of God's process of dealing with man's sin, and that what God was really after was

a ‘sacrifice of the heart’. One is able to see the growth and development of God’s revelation of Himself and His ways. We hear David praying to God:

*“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a **broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart**, O God, you will not despise”.*

Psalm 51:16

Clearly David has captured something new in what God is after in terms of devotion. God is after the **heart** more than the outward practice of **sacrifice**. David has progressed in his spirituality.

Plotting the flow of Israel’s spiritual journey

The other very important aspect of studying a timeline is to get a flow of the spiritual state of Israel. It is easy to ‘plot’ the times when Israel was doing well and times when they were in rebellion.

- By studying the timeline, one can see that God is moving forward with definite purpose as His divine plan unfolds in the life of Israel.
- By studying a timeline and the history, one is able to contextualize the story of the Bible. What do we mean by that?

Example: Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones

Let’s take the well-known story of Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones. (Ezek 37). You will notice on the timeline below that Ezekiel is living in the time of the Exile. He is in Exile with his own people.

*“In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, **while I was among the exiles** by the Kebar River...”*

Ezekiel 1:1

Ezekiel is taken to a valley of dry bones. Some commentators believe that it could have been a real valley with real human bones, perhaps the scene of an old battlefield.

While Ezekiel is looking at these bones, God poses a question to him:

“And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.””
Ezekiel 37:3

As this prophetic drama unfolds, Ezekiel sees in the Spirit that:

*“breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an **exceedingly great army**.”*
Ezekiel 37:10

The setting for this drama is clear. It is during the Exile and the people of Israel are like a defeated army. Now that we know the context of where and when Ezekiel is prophesying, it makes the whole prophetic drama so much more powerful.

It is not the story of a prophet getting a word from the Lord ‘just out of the blue’. It is in a specific time and place. He knows the history of his people and he knows what God’s purpose is for them as a nation.

The diagram on the next page gives you an idea of seeing someone like Ezekiel in his context.

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE

In this unit we endeavour to massage the timeline into your thinking. We keep referring to it and by the end of the exercise I am sure you will have a grasp of the flow of history. Do not feel overwhelmed by the detail of the timeline. We will systematically unfold aspects of it throughout this course.

Introduction to the timeline

In this exercise we introduce you to a very basic **linear timeline** (sequential) to give you a broad grasp of the main dates, key characters and events.

4. CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

4000 BC - 2000 BC

▪ CREATION

- Power of God's creation
- Man created in God's image - crowning glory.
- Ability to relate to God spiritually.
- Free choice.

▪ FALL

- Man's first sin
- Broken fellowship with God
- Banished from Eden
- Curse enters.
- Earth suffers as result. (cf. Rom 8)

▪ FLOOD

- Noah - faithfulness; obedience; righteous
- God's Covenant with Noah
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Lot. Righteous man.

"- and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men"

2 Peter 2:7 (NIV)

▪ BABEL

- Beginning of Babylon. Note on Revelation
- Attempt to reach Heaven.
- Haughty God scatters (disperses) nations
- Gift of languages

2000 BC – 1500 BC - THE PATRIARCHS

- **2166 - ABRAM BORN**
- **2091 - ABRAM MOVES TO CANAAN**

"So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran."

Genesis 12:4 (NIV)

- Father of faith. Migrates to Palestine.
"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

Genesis 15:6 (NIV)

- **Covenant**

- He took him outside and said:

"Look up at the heavens and count the stars-if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Genesis 15:5 (NIV)

"No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations."

Genesis 17:5 (NIV)

- **2080 - ISHMAEL BORN - Genesis 15**
- **2066 - ISAAC**

"This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac,"

Genesis 25:19 (NIV)

- **2050 - ABRAHAM OFFERS ISAAC**
 - (+- 16 years old) Abraham's faith/promise tested. Promise turns to Oath.
- **2006 - JACOB AND ESAU BORN**
 - Jacob = grasper. Deceiver. **Genesis 25:23**
- **1991 - ABRAHAM DIES**
- **1929 - JACOB FLEES TO LABAN - CONVERSION.**
 - New name. Wrestling with Angel. Lays hold of the promise. Embraces promise.
 - **Genesis 28:15-21.** Covenant line is preserved
- **1915 - JOSEPH BORN**
- **1898 - SOLD INTO SLAVERY**
 - Served Pharaoh 24 years.
- **1876 - JACOB AND FAMILY SETTLE IN EGYPT.**
 - Slavery for 300 years.
- **1805 - JOSEPH DIES**

1500 BC – 1000 BC - THE EXODUS

- **1526 - MOSES IS BORN.**

Miraculous rescue at birth. Israel's future deliverer plucked from the bulrushes - 40 years wilderness. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.

- **1446 - THE EXODUS** - "*let my people go.*" **Exodus 14**
 - Declaration to Pharaoh; Ten Plagues' Red Sea; Song of Moses - **Exodus 15**
 - Song of Miriam the prophetess - **Exodus 15:20**
 - Golden calf – **Exodus 32**
 - Rebellion of Korah - Death of thousands
 - Only two left of original generation to enter promised land – Joshua and Caleb
- **1400 - JOSHUA**
 - Joshua appointed leader.
 - Spies - **Numbers 13**
 - Call - **Numbers 27:22**
 - Faith – **Numbers 14:6f**
 - Courage - **Joshua 10:25**
 - Obedience - **Joshua 24:15**
 - Brilliant military strategist – **Joshua 6:14-16**
 - Conquest of Canaan begins (Possession of Promised Land) - **Joshua 6:24**
 - Jordan; Jericho - **Joshua 5:13 - 6:27**

THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

- **1375 - 1050**

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

Judges 21:25

- **1209 - DEBORAH - Prophetess.** Led Israel to victory. **Judges 4**
- **1162 - GIDEON -** Mighty man of valour. Only 300 needed to fight. **Judges 7**
- **1075 - SAMSON -** Man of power (in Spirit). **Judges 13**
- **1105 - SAMUEL -** Mother's vow - Last Judge – 1st Prophet. **1 Samuel 1:11**
-

1000 BC – 500 BC - THE MONARCHY

- **ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING – 1 Samuel 8**
- **1050 – SAUL CHOSEN AS KING - 1 Samuel 9;** Anointing - **1 Samuel 10; 1 Samuel 13:13-15**
 - **SAUL REJECTED AS KING - 1 Samuel 15.** (NB. vs. 22, 23).
- **1010 - DAVID ANOINTED AS KING - 1 Samuel 16:11**
- **970 - SOLOMON -** Israel's Golden Age First Temple Built
- **950 - DIVIDED KINGDOM:** See separate chart

The Divided Kingdom

Northern

Southern

Israel

Judah

	<u>Prophet</u>	<u>King</u>	<u>BC</u>	<u>King</u>	<u>Prophet</u>	
Elijah 875-848	Jeroboam I	931-911	900	Rehoboam	931-915	
	Nadab	911-910		Abijah	915-912	
	Baasha	910-887		Asa	912-871	
	Elah	887-886		Jehoshaphat	871-849	
	Zimri	886 (7days)		Jehoram	849-842	
	Omri	886-875		Ahaziah	842-841	
	Ahab	875-853		Athaliah (Q)	841-835	
Elisha 848-797	Ahaziah	853-852	850	Joash	835-796	
	Joram	852-841		Amaziah	796-767	
	Jehu	841-814		Azariah (Uzziah)	767-740	
	Jehoahaz	814-798		Jotham	750-735	
	Joash	798-782		Ahaz	735-715	
Jonah 785-775	Jeroboam II	782-753	800	Hezekiah	715-687	
Amos 760-750	Zechariah	753-752 (6m)		Manasseh	687-642	
	Shallum	752 (1m)		Amon	642-640	
	Menahem	752-742		Josiah	640-609	
Hosea 750-715	Pekahiah	742-740		Jehoahaz	609 (3m)	
	Pekah	740-732		Jehoiakim	609-598	
	Hoshea	732-722		Jehoiachin	598-597 (3m)	
ISRAEL CONQUERED			700	Zedekiah	597-587	
586 BC			550	EXILE	550	
				Jeremiah	605-585	
				Obadiah	605-585	
				Ezekiel	593-571	
				Daniel	605-530	
			500	Zechariah	520-480	
				Malachi	440-430	

- **600 - RISE OF BABYLON**
 - Daniel taken to Babylon
 - Ezekiel
- **597 - NEBUCHADNEZZARS CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM**
- **593 - EZEKIEL CALLED TO PROPHESY**
 - Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah
- **587 - DESTRUCTION OF TEMPLE**
- **550 - CYRUS GAINS CONTROL OF MEDIAN EMPIRE**
- **522 - DARIUS 1 TAKES THRONE**
- **538 - EZRA - Exiles return**
 - Haggai, Zechariah
- **520 - ZERUBBABEL BEGINS TO REBUILD TEMPLE**
 - Haggai and Zechariah (**Haggai 1**)
- **486 - XERXES 1 SUCCEEDS DARIUS**
- **458 - EZRA GOES TO JERUSALEM**
- **445 - NEHEMIAH APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF JUDEA**
 - Plans rebuilding of the wall (Jerusalem)
- **423 - PSALM 119** (Probably written by Ezra)
- **408 - TEMPLE – restoration.**
- **397 - EZRA BRINGS THE LAW** - completed Pentateuch
 - (NB sign of revival = the Word of God restored)

400 SILENT YEARS BEFORE JESUS

Note: There was enough righteousness among the Jews to keep the faith alive until the coming of Jesus. E.g. **Luke 1** Father of John the Baptist, Simeon etc.

5. FIVE MAIN PEAKS IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

Having been introduced to the **linear timeline**, and the **five main 500 year periods**, we conclude with the **five main peaks** in Old Testament history, which help you see the history of the Old Testament from another angle. We focus on four of these main peaks to help you gain an understanding of God's unfolding revelation of Himself and His ways.

In each block is a brief explanation of the key person and the significance of that new era. As you proceed through the course, the material related to each peak is introduced by means of reference to the diagram below.



2000 BC 1500 BC 1000 BC 500 BC 0 BC

Father of the Faith	Deliverer	Worshipper	Builder	Messiah
Pioneer – City who's architect is God ● Genesis 15 – Abrahamic covenant ● Isaac - Tested ● God will provide ● Promised land and people – 400 years	Exodus – Carrying out the promise made to Abraham ● Mosaic covenant ● Led his people out to take them in	● Man after God's own heart ● Sought to establish a house for the Lord	● Not by might...but by my spirit (Zechariah 4:6) Work by faith and the Spirit	● Luke 2 Messiah from Bethlehem (Micah)

GENESIS

1. Introduction to Genesis

Genesis means “beginnings” (Hebrew *B’reshith*) and the origins of the major themes of scripture find their beginnings in this first book.

Some of these seed truths are; **covenant, grace, justification, righteousness, resurrection, sovereignty**, etc. The most quoted of all the sixty-six books of the Bible is Genesis. The first part of the book deals with the period from the **beginning of creation** to the **call of Abraham** (ch 1-11) and the second part with the **call or preparation of the patriarchs** and the **fathers of the faith** (ch 12-50).

The first part has two sections, the **antediluvian** (before the flood) and **postdiluvian** (after the flood). In both of these periods, God entered into covenant with **Adam** (Genesis 2:16-17) and with **Noah** (Genesis 9:8), even after the former was explicitly broken. In the second part, God looks for another covenant partner and establishes the **base of his plan (Israel)**.

CH 1-11	CH 12-50
GOD AND THE WHOLE WORLD	GOD AND ABRAHAM’S FAMILY
1-2: God makes a good world for humanity	12-15: Abraham
3-11: Human sin and the ruin of God’s world.	26-27: Isaac
	28-36: Jacob
	37-50: Joseph

Much can be said about the nature and reading of Hebrew Narratives, particularly the *Historical* narratives found in Genesis. For now, we will satisfy ourselves with some general principles⁴:

- Biblical narratives are intended to tell us about things that happened in the past
- In addition, it is helpful to realize that the story is being, in effect, on three levels;
 - The top “third” level, often called the “**metanarrative**”, has to do with the whole universal plan of God worked out through His creation.
 - The middle “second” level is the story of God **redeeming a people for His name**. It is often divided by old and new covenants and/or a more nuanced study of the covenants through the Bible.
 - The bottom “first” level is where all of the many individual stories that make up the other two levels are found. One of the general principles of interpretation is to interpret a narrative on the **first level before making your way up**.

⁴ Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*

- Some common mistakes:
 - Old Testament narratives are not allegories or stories filled with hidden meanings.
We should always assume they had meaning for their original hearers.
 - Individual Old Testament narratives are not intended to teach moral lessons, unless the Biblical narrator makes that point explicitly.
 - However, Old Testament narratives often illustrate *implicitly* what is taught *explicitly* elsewhere.

1.1 Authorship and Literary Notes⁵

Traditionally the authorship of Genesis, like the rest of the Pentateuch, has been attributed to **Moses**. However, nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship has challenged the veracity of the traditional view making its authorship **uncertain to some**. As it will be for many open questions related to Genesis, it is not the purpose of these notes to present a singular view of the question. Instead, we will briefly discuss the salient points and leave further research to the reader.

We begin with Scripture itself:

- Much of the Pentateuch (with the exception of Genesis) deals with the **life and work of Moses** (under God) and there are decisive references to Moses' involvement in the recording thereof. (**Exodus 17:14, Exodus 24:3-7, Deuteronomy 31:24-26**).
- That being said, Moses is largely referred to in the **third person** ("he", not "I") and where he does speak in the first person it is accompanied by an Introduction and Conclusion to frame his words.
- The New Testament will sometimes refer to the Pentateuch in general as "Moses" or the "book" or "law" of Moses but never specifically points towards Genesis by itself in these ways. (**John 5:46, Luke 24:27**).
- Since the New Testament treats Genesis as part of "Moses" in general, it would be unnatural (particularly for its original readers) to force a distinction between Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch, whether or not Moses was its author, editor or compiler.
- Historical clues found within Genesis, which may or may not validate Moses' authorship, provide additional confusion. For example, **Genesis 47** uses the expression "*the land of Rameses*" for the Israelite territory, which would make sense if Moses was himself a contemporary of Rameses II. In contrast, **Genesis 36** lists kings reigning over Edom "*before there reigned any king over....Israel*" – a fact that only becomes relevant after the time of Saul.

Other textual clues/avenues:

- Variations in the use of divine names; *Elohim, Jahveh, Yahweh* etc... potentially indicating varying sources.
- Alternative expressions for the "same" idea (e.g. "cut" vs. "give" a covenant).
- The analysis of stories as "doublets" showing either converging or diverging traditions.
- Theories describing the presence of composite narratives (e.g. the flood, some of Joseph's stories).

⁵ Derek Kidner, *Genesis (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)*
ESV Study Bible – *Essay: Genesis*

Historical considerations:

- The book of Genesis contains **post-Mosaic** elements such as names of places (e.g. "Dan" and "Ur of the Chaldeans" as well as some instances of modernized Hebrew.
- Genesis appears to faithfully reflect its origin in the second millennium B.C. (Moses can be dated in a range from 1500 – 1300 B.C.) For example, the flood story finds a parallel in the Gilgamesh epic and in the Sumerian flood story, which were composed c. 1600 B.C.
- Names used in the Patriarchal stories are typical of that period and some family customs.
- Genealogies in Genesis 5, 11 find similarity with the Sumerian King List, dated about 1900 B.C.

1.2 History, Science and the Origin of Man

For Christians, the book of Genesis presents a distinct challenge to the modern naturalistic account of the beginnings of the world/universe. Additionally, the introduction of Darwinian thought (in the 19th century) into the explanation of (human) life has created a, potentially unnecessary, false dichotomy in many people's views of the relationship between science and faith. Whilst rigorous debate has increased in the modern era due to progress within science, it would be a mistake to imagine that this is only a modern problem. Christian writers and thinkers (read Augustine, for example) have wrestled with the "literalness" of Genesis for hundreds of years.

Tim Keller comments on **Genesis 1**:

*"The relationship of science to the Bible hinges not only on how we read the scientific record but on how we interpret certain key Biblical passages, such as Genesis 1. Christians who accept the Bible's authority agree that the primary goal of Biblical interpretation is to discover the Biblical author's original meaning as he sought to be understood by his audience. This has always meant interpreting a text according to its literary genre. For example, when Christians read the Psalms they read them as poetry. When they read Luke, which claims to be an eyewitness account (see **Luke 1:1-4**), they take it as history. Any reader can see that historical narrative should be read as history and their poetic imagery is to be read as metaphorical.....There will always be debates about how to interpret some passages, including Genesis 1. But it is false logic to argue that if one part of Scripture can't be taken literally then none of it can be. That isn't true of any human communication."⁶*

The Age of the Earth⁷

One example where this conflict manifests itself is found in how we determine the actual Age of the earth. Wayne Grudem introduces us to this idea as follows:

"Scientific investigation has helped Christians evaluate what earlier generations thought about the age of the earth, for example, so that no evangelical scholar today would hold that the world was created in 4004 BC. Yet that date was once widely believed to be the date of the creation because of the writings of Irish Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656), one of the greatest scholars of his day, who carefully added together the dates in the genealogies of the Bible to find when Adam was created. Today it is widely acknowledged that the Bible does not tell us the precise date of the creation of the earth or of the human race."

⁶ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God*

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

Some questions that complicate a simple understanding of the age of the earth are:

- To what extent do gaps in the genealogies of the Bible impact calculations?
- How do we account for previous iterations of "Man", for example *homo sapiens sapiens* evidence such as the Cro-Magnon man cave paintings dated 18000-35000 BC?
- What about the Dinosaurs?
- Are the six days of creation twenty-four-hour days?

In an effort to answer some of these questions, Christians have developed a number of explanations;

Old Earth Theories of Creation

- The Day-Age view theorises that the "days" of Genesis 1 are extremely long ages of time.
- The Literary Framework View argues that the six days of Genesis 1 are not intended to indicate a chronological sequence of events, but are rather a literary "framework", which the author uses to teach us about God's creative activity.

Young Earth Theories of Creation

- Creation with an Appearance of Age attempts to accord with dating data by suggesting that God created things to appear that way.
- The Flood Geology theory says that the tremendous natural forces unleashed by the flood at the time of Noah significantly altered the face of the earth, potentially explaining what we see in the fossil record.

When considering the origin of Man and God's involvement, typically there are **four broad schools of thought**⁸:

- Atheism and/or Agnosticism attributes the creation of life entirely to **naturalistic process** (such as the theory of evolution).
- Creationism states that the events of Genesis 1-11 occurred exactly as written, therefore it rejects evolutionary mechanisms and usually holds to a **young earth view**.
- Intelligent Design is another broad term which generally rejects evolutionary mechanism as being a sufficient explanation of the irreducible complexity found in DNA.
- Biologos (or Theistic Evolution) attempts to harmonize both "sides" by embracing evolution and natural selection as the mechanisms involved in the development of biological diversity whilst still attributing the creation-work to God and holding to an old earth view.

Francis Collins quotes B. B. Warfield:

"We must not, then, as Christians, assume an attitude of antagonism towards the truths of reason, or the truths of philosophy, or the truths of science, or the truths of history, or the truths of criticism. As children of the light, we must be careful to keep ourselves open to every ray of light. Let us, then, cultivate an attitude of courage as over against the investigations of the day. None should be more zealous in them than we. None should be more quick to discern the truth in every field, more hospitable to receive it, more loyal to follow it, whithersoever it leads."⁹

There are strong arguments for and against a literal rendering **Genesis 1-12**. We cannot possibly cover them all here. One approach would be to consider the way New Testament writers (including Jesus himself) treat Genesis, as this will give us clues towards how God intends that we read it.

⁸ Francis Collins, *The Language of God*

⁹ Francis Collins, *The Language of God*

- There are at least 165 passages in Genesis that are either directly quoted or clearly referred to in the New Testament. Many of these are alluded to more than once, so that there are at least two hundred quotations or allusions to Genesis in the New Testament. Furthermore, in not one of these many instances, where the Old or New Testament refers to Genesis, is there the slightest evidence that the writers regarded the events or personages as mere myths or allegories. To the contrary, they viewed Genesis to be absolutely historical and true.¹⁰
- Adam is referenced a number of times in the New Testament, sometimes within arguments or statements that would depend on him being a literal person in history and/or as parallel to Christ (see, **Romans 5:12-14**, **1 Corinthians 15:20-22,45-49** and **Jude 14**).
- Additional references where Adam and Eve are clearly understood to be historical figures (**Luke 3:38**, **Acts 17:26**, **1 Corinthians 11:8-9**, **2 Corinthians 11:3**, **1 Timothy 2:13-14**).¹¹
- Jesus quotes Genesis without repudiating its historicity (**Matt 19:4-5**, **Mark 10:6-8**).
- Other passages in Scripture shed light on the Genesis concept of creation without pre-existing material, especially **Hebrews 11:3** and **Romans 4:17**¹²

Christians who seek to properly engage with theology and scientific truths in order to arrive at, in the words Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict* are to be commended. However, we need to be careful that theological ground is not lost in the process of doing so. Defining and defending that theological ground is beyond the scope of this course but we will conclude this section with a few open issues¹³ that deserve further examination:

- Evolutionary mechanisms are dependent on pain, suffering and death. If God designed this process it would appear to be at odds with His character.
- Christian theology generally holds that the fall is responsible for sin and death in the world.
- What does the writer of Genesis mean when they state that God created plants and animals “according to their kinds”?
- How do we explain the special creation of Adam and Eve in an old earth context?

1.3 Key Theological Themes in Genesis¹⁴

God as Creator

- God presents Himself as a living, personal being.
- He is the only God, the Creator and Sovereign over everything (and everyone).
- God’s ways are perfect.
- God is self-revealed.
- God’s unity is not monolithic.

Man as God’s Divine Image Bearer

- The Hebrew word for “image” (*tselem*) literally means “statue” and usually refers to idols.

¹⁰ Doug Kelly, *Creation (an essay)*

¹¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

¹² Doug Kelly, *Creation (an essay)*

¹³ Norman C. Nevin, *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?*

¹⁴ Derek Kidner, *Genesis (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)*

ESV Study Bible – *Essay: Genesis*

The Bible Project – *Genesis part 1 Study Guide*

- In Genesis, this means that humans are commissioned as actual representatives of God's rule over the creation and to steward and guard God's good world on His behalf (**Genesis 2:15**).

Sin and Salvation (Justice and Grace)

- Man's Fall due to Sin and its consequences.
- The Promise of a Saviour and Covenant.
- Election: the choosing of Noah, Abraham, Isaac etc...

2. GENESIS CH 1-11 : CREATION, THE FALL, THE PROMISE AND THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

2.1 Creation

It is unwise to separate chapter one and two from the first section, (pre – flood) because of the focus on creation. This tends to create an imbalance, as if these are the only passages in the Bible regarding creation.

Creation was a good beginning, but creation was only a starting point not a final point. The earth was to be the arena in which the climax of the history of salvation would take place.

There are two histories, the **history of the world** and the **history of salvation**. In the history of the world, God is hidden. But in the history of salvation, God is unveiled and this history becomes the primary historical focus when we study **God's dealings with man**. Therefore, the history of the world is the “scaffolding” around God’s “building” which will one day be removed to reveal the principle focus, which is the history of salvation, with its epicenter, Jesus Christ. (**Colossians 1:17**). It stands beyond doubt that in the course of the outworking of this history it would become much more than it already was. (Hence God’s repeated stress upon the fact that His creation was good, because He had infinitely better in mind). Humanity could learn to know God and understand His will, enter more deeply and relationally into God’s happiness and peace and enjoy it all more fully.

In this way consummation, not commencement, must be seen as a great plus factor in creation, because there will come a time when we will know, even as we are known (**1 Corinthians 13:12**). In early Genesis, God is the author/designer of all of creation – wherever there is design there must be a designer and wisdom. However, the focus in creation is never upon the **how** but upon the **Who**. The “Who” is always Israel’s God.

2.2 The Fall and the Promise

In the region of Eden, the Lord planted the garden of God. The Lord asked Adam to cultivate and guard it because of the possibility of intruders. This is the first reference to an enemy (**Genesis 2:15** - notice the word ‘keep’ in Hebrew is ‘shamar’ meaning to hedge about, guard, or protect). A serpent appears in the garden and Adam does *nothing* despite having received divine revelation. The evil one (satan), leaving no doubt about his diabolic intentions, set himself openly and insolently against God and made Jehovah out to be a liar.

Notice his strategy:

- “Did God really say?” - Is it true? God’s word questioned = **Doubt**
- “You will not surely die” Is it wrong? God’s word contradicted = **Deception**
- “You will be like God” Does it matter? God’s word scorned = **Defiance**

There are three areas in which the devil tempts us (Read **Genesis 3:6, Luke 4:1-13** and **1 John 2:19**);

- Good for food – Tell this stone to become bread = **Lust of the flesh**
- Pleasing to the eye – Showed Him the splendour of all the kingdoms = **Lust of the eyes**
- Desirable for gaining wisdom – Throw yourself down from the temple = **Pride of life**

Adam and Eve had failed to obey God and the subsequent conversation with God makes it clear what He thinks of the explanation of Adam and Eve's sin. Do Adam and Eve exercise faith? Yes! Adam believed in the good news of the coming "seed" of the woman (**Genesis 3:15**). Proved by the name Eve (The Hebrew word is 'Chevva', Life), which he gave to his wife directly after the original promise, and immediately before the expulsion from paradise (**Genesis 3:15**).

So it was an **act of faith** that Adam named his wife Eve (Life). This also served as a reminder of the promise of God's grace. Eve also, in faith, took her stand (Revealed by her statement in **Genesis 4:1**).

God ignores the excuses and punishes the sin. Adam and Eve had chosen of their own volition to isolate their will from the revealed will of God. This act of isolation, of disobedience, God saw as sin. They had been given grace upon grace yet chose to miss the mark and be in opposition to the divine revelation, to stand inadvertently with the evil one, against their *Creator*. The devil exploited this situation by appealing to the innocent internal appetites of man.

The Essence of Sin

The essence of sin is the **preferring of self** and henceforth because of sin, the *good* has to be cultivated while the *bad* grows of itself.¹⁵ Humanity fell totally and could never be able to redeem itself by its own efforts. But the original pair (Adam and Eve) did not fall outside the grace or love of their Maker.¹⁶ God acts; he pronounces curses upon the serpent, the earth, the man and the woman (**Genesis 3:14-19**).

The first promise of a **redeemer** is mentioned:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel".

Genesis 3:15

The promise is that out of the seed of the woman, not the man's seed, someone will appear who shall crush the head (authority) of the serpent, although he will bruise the heel (humanity) of the crusher. Thus in the history of salvation, the **protevangelium** appears for the first time in scripture. (This word means the first pronunciation of the "good news" about the redeemer). (**Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17, Deuteronomy 18:15-18, Psalms 2:6, 16:10, 22:16, 110:1-4, 132:11, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, 11:1, 40:3, 53:2-7, Micah 5:2, Zech. 11:12-13.**) These are some of the **messianic promises**.

The Old Testament makes many promises about this initial proclamation.¹⁷ Adam and Eve experience expulsion from the garden of God. The root of death is in being sent out of the presence of God. But all is not gloom and doom, the *Aurora Mashiag* (Appearance of Messiah) will take place in the fullness of time (**Galatians 4:4**).

¹⁵ Strong, Augustus H (1974: 244) *Systematic Theology*

¹⁶ Vos, Geerhardus (1971: 46) *Biblical Theology Old and New Testament*

¹⁷ Hengstenberg, E W (1976: 13-14) *Christology of the Old Testament*

2.3 The Downward Spiral

After the Fall, Man's expulsion from the garden and the Promise, the rest of the first section of Genesis (up until, and including, Babel in **Genesis 11**) is a vivid demonstration of the consequence of Sin. God allows man's rebellion to outwork itself both in interpersonal relationships and society at large. He does this primarily to demonstrate what we will become without common grace, law or regeneration to control us¹⁸.

First, we see strife between brothers, Cain and Abel (**Genesis 4**). Then we see wickedness increasing upon the earth until **Genesis 6:5**:

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

God ultimately decides to judge the earth and, through the calling Noah (**Genesis 6:8**), begins to enact His own plan for redemption, through the introduction of **covenant**.

The epoch between the flood and Babel (and the calling of Abraham) demonstrates that God's original purpose for creation still stands:

- All mankind still bears the image of God.
- God's command to multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion over it, is still in force.
- Man is confirmed as being totally depraved, and it is only those who "find grace" who escape God's judgment.

3. GENESIS 12-50: ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB AND JOSEPH

3.1.1 Abraham - the blessing of all nations

We will now give our attention to the father of our faith, Abraham. Genesis is the book of beginnings. And so in this case, we have the beginning of the formation of the 'called out ones' in the person of Abraham. He is called "Friend of God" (**Isaiah 4:8; James 2:23**) and the "father of all believers" (**Romans 4:11**). The stories of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are foundational and will be addressed briefly, but we will focus on Abraham.

Galatians 3:8 tells us that;

"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham".

The gospel was announced to Abraham 2000 years before Christ, as we see in **Genesis 12:2-3**:

"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The **Gospel** is also contained in the Word of God regarding Abraham in **Genesis 18: 18**

"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on Earth will be blessed through him".

¹⁸ Church on Main, *Covenant Theology*

This is a clear promise that those who put their faith in God will be blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

The good news of the Gospel has always been about **all nations**. It has never been about just one nation. In fact, Israel was called to proclaim the good news to all nations (**Isaiah 42.6**). All those who put their faith in God are Abraham's 'children' and are therefore part of the same family of God. So we are here on this earth to bless all nations; we aren't here to be blessed, we are here to bless.

Galatians 3:13 - 14 tells us that Christ became a curse for us on the tree (on the cross) so that we could receive a blessing: *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.* That's part of our blessing, the Spirit of God. We become sons and daughters of the living God when we get born again by His Holy Spirit.

*"You are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, through your offspring **all peoples on earth will be blessed**. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you (that's to the Jews) to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways".*

Acts 3:25

"All nations will be blessed" does not mean all nations will be happy, rich, and prosperous and all nations won't have troubles. It means that all nations will come to know God, and that's what Jesus said; that we are to go and make disciples of all nations. That has always been God's plan from the beginning and will be to the end. The church, the people of God, do not exist for ourselves; we actually exist for those who have never heard. The reason we are together is so that we can tell them. We are not together so that we can be blessed, because we have already been blessed.

3.1.2 Abraham - Securing the promise

Every covenant of God is **conditional** and He gave Abraham a **promise** when He said, "*You will be a blessing to all nations*," but there are some conditions to be fulfilled. For example the promise of **John 3:16** tells us:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

This is a promise for everyone – the whole world – but the promise has a condition: 'to everyone who believes in Him'. If this condition is not met the consequence is clear: you perish. This promise is for everyone and is sealed with the blood of Jesus, the Son of God; the spotless Lamb; the One without sin, yet can only be appropriated by meeting the condition of faith in Jesus Christ.

God tells Abraham that He will give him the **Promised Land as his inheritance** and he will take possession of it. Abraham is unsure of this so God sets the conditions for working out the promise by entering into a covenant, a sign of the promise, with Abraham. God tells Abraham to bring a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove and a pigeon and to kill them all.

"Abram brought all of these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other."
Genesis 15:10

The reason He does that is because it is a sign of bloodshed sealing the promise. Each party is committing themselves to the conditions of the covenant. Effectively they are saying, "If I violate this

covenant then may I die like this beast that has been split in two." That's why it's a blood covenant. It's a serious thing. It's a giving of all. "No matter what, I'm not going to break this."

"As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from..."

Genesis 15:12 -18

He then describes the land from the Euphrates down to Egypt. It's very interesting that later this land that was promised to Abraham is the same extent of land that David and Solomon ruled over. After the 400 years of slavery it was the same land that God took them into with Joshua. When God makes a covenant with us, He sets the conditions. He tells us what is going to happen and what He requires, and He guarantees Himself to us.

3.1.3 Abraham fails to trust in God

In **Genesis 16** Abraham forgets that he has to trust in God. God had promised that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. But Abraham tried to make his own plan and took Sarah's maid servant Hagar.

Sarah said,

"The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maid servant; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Genesis 16:2

Abraham was meant to trust God to do what He had promised. But instead he tried to make it happen in his own strength and the result was that Ishmael was born.

Note what God says to him in **Genesis 17:1**:

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Abraham still did not have a child through whom to fulfil the promise, all he had was the promise of **Genesis 12**: "*All nations will be blessed through you and your seed*". He begged God to make Ishmael the one and God said no. God simply required of him to be righteous, not to think up a plan. God required his heart to be right and was testing his heart.

Abraham was not righteous in **every** way and even lied twice about his wife (E.g. **Genesis 20:1-2**). But he eventually does believe God and it is credited to him as righteousness.

Eventually in **Genesis 18:10-14** God speaks to Abraham and tells him "*I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.*"

Sarah laughed at this prospect because both her and Abraham were very "*well advanced in years*". But God was true to His promise and a year later Isaac was born.

3.1.4 Abraham's supreme test

The **promise will always be tested** and just as Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit and tested, so too was Abraham tested concerning the promise.

"Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Genesis 22:1

There are, in Abraham's life, four ascending tests of faith: The zenith was that which took place on Mt. Moriah:

- The first, the departure from Ur, the separating from his father's house and relations.
- Then came the separation from Lot, this indeed "righteous" (**2 Peter 2:7-8**) but nevertheless worldly minded man (**Genesis 13:10-13; 19:1**).
- The third step was the dismissal of Ishmael (the false seed) the son of Abraham's own strength.
- The last was the sacrifice on Mount Moriah of Isaac, who was God's own gift to him as the promised seed, and this is the zenith of his test of faith (**Genesis 22: 2** and **Chronicles 3:1**).

Because **Genesis 22** forms part of the history of salvation and the apex of Abraham's faith, the reader will do well to be thoroughly acquainted with this chapter of Genesis. Martin Luther calls this passage "Faith reconciles contradictions". This is indeed the highest point in the life of Abraham and should also be viewed as prophetically symbolic. The concept of sacrifice taught here is unique and cannot be classed with the Canaanitish, Phoenician, Semitic, Indian, Aztec, or any other sacrifices of human beings: this sacrifice at Mt. Moriah is distinct from all others. What sets this sacrifice apart from all others is that Abraham is offering his son to God out of obedience and as a direct command from God, as opposed to a heathen ritual. (The mountain range of Moriah has a number of well-known peaks, namely Zion, Olives, Golgotha, etc. This is where Solomon built his temple - **2 Chronicles 3:1**).

How it is set apart from other sacrifices:

- **Firstly**, by the *heart* of the sacrifice. Not the form but the *heart* is the chief matter. Abraham had "sacrificed" Isaac to God (**Hebrews 11:17**), and yet had not killed him. The completion of the act had been suddenly prevented by God Himself (**Genesis 22:12-13**). This established the principle that it is not the external performance that makes the sacrifice to be a sacrifice, but the intention of the *heart*; not the presenting of the gift, but the devotion of the *heart*. This is the wholly inward and spiritual concept of sacrifice, which once again comes to the fore in the history of salvation (**Genesis 4:1-5**).
- **Secondly**, by the *victory* of the sacrifice. Not death but **life is the final goal of true sacrifice**. This command, at first to Abraham, must have seemed full of contradiction. It seemed impossible for the promise to be fulfilled because the only one who could carry this promise forward, Isaac, was about to be sacrificed and he had no descendants. (**Genesis 21:12**) There appeared to be a conflict between the **command of God** and the **faithfulness of God**. Nevertheless, since God never lies, there remained a solution – **FAITH**. So the "sacrifice" is a

testimony of faith. In the very act of sacrificing his son, Abraham reckoned “that God was able even to raise him from the dead” (**Hebrews 11:19**). Therefore as he left his servants he said to them “When we have worshipped, **we** (not “I”) will come again to you”

“*Faith reconciles contradiction*” (**Genesis 22:5**) and by this test Abraham’s faith became a prototype of New Testament faith with regards to resurrection.¹⁹ Thus Abraham and Isaac also gained the idea that true sacrifice is “substitution”.

- **Thirdly**, the *goal* of Mt. Moriah is Golgotha. The *future*, not the present, gave this sacrifice its highest value. Therefore, it took place nowhere else other than on “Moriah” the mount where “The Lord will provide” (*Genesis 22:14*), where later in Jerusalem, the Temple stood (**2 Chronicles 3:1**). There upon the altar, all sacrifices which pointed to Christ were brought, where He, approximately 2000 years later, would carry a cross.

We know the rest of story - of how God provided a substitute for Isaac in the form of a ram and so Abraham did not have to kill his only son. Following Abraham’s obedience God spoke to him:

“The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself,” declares the Lord, “that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me.”

Genesis 22:15-18

At this point the promise is changed by God into an oath. God swears an oath to Abraham – He swears by His Name. The promise/covenant is conditional, but the oath is unconditional. An oath is where God swears by His Name. A promise is where God tells you what He wants to do and He gives us something that is a guarantee as long as we carry out the conditions. “*For God so loved the world*” is a promise - salvation for all. Do all get saved? No. Only *whoever believes*.

Abraham had to believe. He had to put his trust in God and when he passed the test God swore an oath that Abraham would be the father of many nations. **Hebrews 6:13-18** speaks of this oath that God swore to Abraham:

“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged”.

When God swears an oath nothing will change His mind.

¹⁹ Luther, Martin (1972: 50) *Genesis* (Luther’s view of Genesis 22 was “Fides conciliat contraria” .This is how Luther explained this chapter.

3.1.5 Abraham and Christ

Of Abraham's long life of 175 years (**Genesis 25:7**) we know extraordinarily little. Almost everything deals with the expected seed. Before Abraham there had been veiled announcements of the coming Redeemer: the Crusher of the Serpent (**Genesis 3:15**), and the Rest-bringer (**Genesis 5:29**). Now with Abraham, the expectation of the "seed" became the focus and chief thought (**Galatians 3:16**) and stands in the foreground of salvation history. The theme of the coming Redeemer is central to Abraham's life and as such, scripture focuses very little on the person of Abraham. In nearly every chapter we find reference to the expectation of the promised heir.

Thus the life-long goal of the patriarch lay not in himself but in the coming mediator of salvation.

Abraham exists for the sake of Christ. Never in the Old Testament do we know that Abraham "rejoiced", but the Lord Jesus speaks of it.

"Abraham your father, rejoiced over this, that he should see my day; and he has also seen it and rejoiced over it"

John 8:56 (cf 1 Peter 1:8)

3.1.6 The Abrahamic Covenant

The covenant with Abraham developed in a remarkable manner, first in his life, and then also in his physical and spiritual descendants.

- The **first stage** (**Genesis 12-14**) begins with the departure from Ur of the Chaldees and migration to the land of promise. This stage is connected with his **call**.
- The **second stage** (**Genesis 15-16**) begins with the covenant of grace, when he was declared to be righteous and with the sealing of that faith by the covenant sacrifice. The special significance of this stage is **justification**.
- Then, after waiting for thirteen years the **third stage** begins with the changing of Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of the multitude"), together with the introduction of the covenant of circumcision, and the dedication of the patriarch to **devotion** and **holiness** (**Genesis 17-21**). The circumcision is indeed no means to justification (**Romans 4:9-12**) or sanctification (**Galatians 5:2-12**). But it is nevertheless a **symbol**, or more specifically a **type**, of sanctification and of the principle of the surrender of the sinful self-nature to death, the "cutting-off" of the God-estranged life and all its impulses. Therefore the "circumcision not made with hands" is the "putting off of the body of the flesh," that is, being crucified and dead together with Christ (**Colossians 2:11**, **Romans 6:2-4**).
- Connected with this is the **fourth stage**, the chief test and proof in the surrender of Isaac on the mountain-range of Moriah.
- Thus finally, after this supreme **testing** of his faith, can the **fifth stage** commence, the final period of calm and repose, life's evening and final promotion (**Genesis 23-25:10**).

The covenant with Abraham continued as the primary foundation for Isaac and Jacob. This covenant is not another covenant, but simply a confirming, maintaining, and transferring of the same Abrahamic covenant to new participants (**Genesis 12; 15; 17; 26:3; 28:13-15; 35:12**).

3.2 Isaac

The name Isaac, which means "he laughs," describes his parents' reaction when God told Abraham that he (100yrs old) and his wife, Sarah (90yrs old), would have a son (**Genesis 17:17; 18:12**).

- Isaac married his cousin, Rebekah, after his father Abraham insists that he not take a Canaanite wife.
- Rebekah suffers the same barrenness and only conceives after Isaac prays for her in **Genesis 25**.
- During the life of Isaac, we see a different temperament to that of his father, particularly in his dealings with others.
- Ironically though, he makes the same cowardly mistake with regards to his wife and Abimelech, king of the Philistines (**Genesis 26**).
- It's interesting to note how Isaac reacts to the deception of Jacob (when he steals his brother's blessing) as he recognises God's will despite it being non-cultural.

3.3 Jacob

Jacob's life began with a struggle. He and his brother, Esau, were twins and he was born grasping his brother's heel. Jacob's name is translated as "he deceives" (**Genesis 25:26**). When his mother, Rebekah, asked God during her pregnancy what was happening to her, God said to her;

"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

Genesis 25:23

- Esau, being a hunter, was Isaac's favourite whilst Jacob, who was a "quiet man, dwelling in tents", was his mother's favourite.
- Jacob cheats his brother twice. First, in tempting him to "sell his birthright" for a bowl of stew and secondly, when he impersonates his brother in order to trick his father into blessing him instead.
- Jacob flees from his brother and travels towards Haran, in search of his uncle Laban (and a wife). On the way he has a dream of a ladder to heaven with God at the top and angels ascending and descending. After this, God reconfirms the promise of the covenant to him.
- Jacob marries both sisters, Leah and then Rachel, after his uncle Laban deceives him. He loved Rachel more.
- Initially, Rachel is barren, whereas Leah bears him a few sons (**Genesis 30**) until eventually God remembers Rachel and she gives birth to **Joseph**.
- Eventually, after fleeing from his Uncle, Jacob faces the prospect of meeting his brother again. That night, Jacob wrestles with a man whom he later learns is God (**Genesis 32:22-31**). During the wrestling, he is blessed by God and given the promised new name of "Israel," the name that would remain with his descendants and the land they were promised by God until the present day.

3.4 Joseph

Genesis ends with the story of Joseph. Through him we learn of the "family" of Jacob migrating to Egypt. As a result, the "nation" of Israel ultimately finds itself in captivity which prepares us for the events of Exodus. Joseph's story presents amazing insight into how God sovereignly works to overcome evil and bring about His plan.

- Joseph was Jacob's favourite son. A fact that caused his brothers to dislike him (**Genesis 37**).
- Joseph "gives a bad report" about his brothers, is blessed by Jacob in the giving of a special robe and eventually brags about dreams where he sees himself ruling over his family.
- In response, his brothers plot to kill him but instead end up selling him into slavery.

- Joseph ends up working for a high-ranking Egyptian named Potiphar but is eventually thrown in jail after Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him of indecency.
- In jail, Joseph finds favour with the keeper of prison and also interprets the dreams of fellow prisoners. After a sequence of events, he finds himself doing the same for Pharaoh himself.
- As Joseph's interpretation of the dream, and his understanding of the famine to come, is superior to all of Pharaoh's other servants, Pharaoh makes him second-in-command over all of Egypt.
- The famine eventually drives Joseph's brothers (and eventually Jacob's family as a whole) to seek refuge in Egypt. Joseph tests his brothers at first, but eventually reveals himself to them in **Genesis 45:2-8**:

"And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt."

- After describing the death of Jacob, but before ending with the death of Joseph, **Genesis 50** contains this iconic verse where Joseph again demonstrates his amazing understanding of the sovereignty of God;

"But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."

Gen 50: 19-21

THE EXODUS

1. BACKGROUND – HISTORICAL SETTING

Jacob and his descendants settled in the rich and fertile region of Goshen and multiplied from 70 (**Exodus 1:5**) to at least 2 million (**Exodus 12:37**). At first they prospered but afterwards were oppressed by the rulers of Egypt as God had prophesied to Abraham.

*"Then the LORD said to him, —Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be **enslaved and mistreated four hundred years**".*

Genesis 15:13

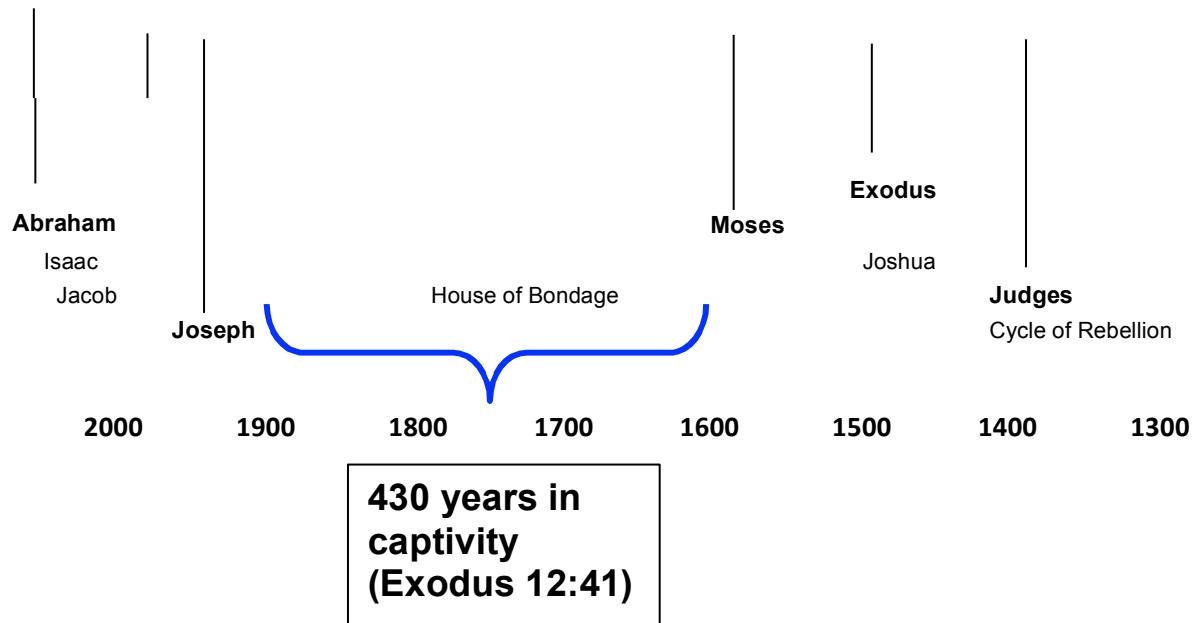
Archaeology further confirms the historicity of the Biblical account and expands our picture of the oppression. New Kingdom clay tablets reveal great building projects and speak of foreigners "who drag stone for the great pylon-gateway of the temple of Rameses", of men "making their daily quota of bricks" and of officials having neither men nor straw to produce bricks. There are worksheets recording in great detail quotas and actual production. Other tablets record that a man or tribe was often granted permission to miss work for a period to go and worship his/their god.

History also reveals that Moses' court upbringing was very plausible. Foreigners featured at every level of ancient Egyptian society, from Pharaoh's cupbearers to slaves, and foreign youngsters were often raised in the royal harem.

1.1 TIMELINE

The following segment from our time-line shows the period when the Israelites were in captivity, leading up to the time of their deliverance from over four centuries (430 years – **Exodus 12:14**) as a 'house of bondage':

Old Testament Timeline - The Exodus



1.2 THE EXODUS

The Exodus is possibly the most **formative and outstanding event** in the life of Israel. Exodus provides us with a very clear picture of God's glorious plan of redemption for all mankind. All the elements of God's plan of redemption are contained in the Exodus. It is here that we see God's revelation of Himself and His ways unfolding in the whole drama of God delivering his people out of bondage.

All the principles of our salvation are to be found in the Old Testament. As we read Exodus we are not only reading about historical events - although the 'Exodus' was certainly historical. We are also reading about God and the way in which He redeems us.

At a higher level, his way of salvation is still the same today. The human race is in bondage. No one can escape the power of sin. God prepares a redeemer; Jesus. Through the blood of the unblemished lamb, we are delivered from our sinfulness and bondage making possible a journey to a promised land.²⁰

1.2.1 Defining moment in the life of Israel

The Exodus is a defining moment in the life of Israel. Israel would be drawn into a relationship with **YHWH** and be established as His people. They would have a growing awareness of His **love** and His special call upon them to reveal His glory in the earth. They would not only grow in their understanding of His nature, but they would see His plan unfold before them as He shapes a people for Himself and His purposes.

1.2.2 The promise of God to the Israelites

"No theme is repeated more in the Bible than the testimony of the blood of the Lamb as the means of redemption. And no event is cited more often than the deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea. These two facts frame the picture of God's people for all time: from Egypt to the present, He is saving people through the Lamb, and calling people out—making a way for their deliverance from past bondages into His freedom."

Jack Hayford - Hayford's Bible handbook

God hears the cry of His people and gives them a promise:

When Moses has his encounter with God at the burning bush, God gives him a ground-breaking promise:

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."

Exodus 6:6-7

²⁰ Michael Eaton – The Exodus part 1

Let's take a moment to reflect on this amazing covenantal promise

- ‘I am the Lord – Jehovah or YHWH. The great I am’. i.e. The self-existent, all-powerful God.
- ‘I will bring you out.’ The people of Israel will be brought out of their bondage by God Himself.
- ‘The yoke of the Egyptians’ – an indication that the people of Israel were in bondage; literally ‘tied’ to the Egyptians.
- ‘I will free you from slavery’ – re-emphasis of earlier point
- ‘I will redeem you’ – now the word of God is much more specific.
- He is not only going to release them from an oppressive tyrant, but he will redeem them as a people. To redeem means to ‘buy them back’
- ‘An outstretched arm’ – God himself will reach down from heaven and save His people.
- Mighty acts – God will show his miraculous power in their deliverance.
- ‘Acts of judgment’ – God will judge Pharaoh (a picture of judging sin).
- ‘Take you as my own people’ – we will see later how Israel becomes God’s own people—his own possession.
- ‘I will be your God’ – a covenant keeping God.
- ‘You will know that I am the Lord your God’ – they will experience the power of God to save and deliver.
- ‘The One who brought you out’ – again an emphasis that it will be by His power, His mighty arm that they will be set free.

This event would see Israel become an established nation among the nations of the world. But what would make her unique, is that she would be God’s nation — set apart for His glorious purpose of bringing redemption to lost mankind.

1.2.3 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

- An enslaved people living in ‘the house of bondage’.
- A **deliverer** is raised up as a Messianic figure to set God’s people free.
- Confrontation with the forces of darkness. God, through his servant Moses, confronts the gods of Egypt – let my people go.
- God’s Judgment on their oppression.
- Preparation for God to act.
- Obedient faith waiting for the angel to Passover.
- Passover – blood of the lamb. The power of the blood. A prefiguration of the cross.
- Exodus/Emancipation: Crossing the Red Sea in faith - An enactment of the waters of baptism.
- The cloud and the sea.
- Wilderness wanderings.
- A nation is born – the called out ones.
- Establishment of the tabernacle.
- Establishment of the priesthood.
- Entering the promised land.

2. THE EXODUS – The Redemption of God’s Chosen People

2.1 God the Redeemer

The outstanding feature of the Exodus is the way it reveals God as the Redeemer, the warrior God who is able to deliver His covenant people (**Exodus 6**).

Before you read Exodus, read **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**. Notice how God took His people out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

- Egypt is a picture of the world.
- The Red Sea is a picture of water baptism.
- The Rock that provided water in the wilderness is a picture of Christ.
- The Promised Land is a picture of our inheritance of God’s promises.

Let us look at each one separately and, from this, form a complete picture of this powerful prophetic drama that played out in the life of Israel—a drama that caused them to know the power of God and how they became established as the nation of Israel, through whom God would display his power in the earth and reveal His plan of salvation for all mankind.

An enslaved people living in ‘the house of bondage’. God had warned Abraham that his people would live in slavery for 400 years:

*“Then the LORD said to him, (Abraham) —Know for certain that your descendants will be **strangers in a country not their own**, and they will be **enslaved and mistreated four hundred years**”.*

Genesis 15:13

This indeed took place when Israel settled in the land through Joseph. After Joseph died a new Pharaoh came into power (**Exodus 1:8**), ushering in an era of suffering and oppression that had been spoken to Abraham.

Confrontation with the forces of darkness

Before Moses could confront Pharaoh, he himself needed an encounter with God and an understanding of God’s nature and His power.

God’s commission to Moses

Having drawn Moses into a life-changing encounter, God gives him his commission to be the deliverer of Israel. The commission is simple yet dramatic and one that would have far reaching consequences for Israel and God’s people in general.

Moses was instructed by God to go and tell Pharaoh: “Let my people go” (**Exodus 3:10**). God uses Moses, His servant, to confront Pharaoh and the forces of demonic powers to free the children of Israel from their captivity.

Contest between two opposing powers

We have a contest between two opposing powers: on the one side stands the stubborn Pharaoh and his crafty magicians;²¹ on the other is YHWH, ‘the God of the Hebrews,’ who is represented by Moses and Aaron.

Yahweh's conflict is not with the gods of Egypt (they are mentioned only in **Exodus 12:12**), but with an arrogant Pharaoh who presumptuously supposed that he was running history - according to Egyptian religion, the Pharaoh was the embodiment of deity and therefore he was believed to possess superhuman wisdom and power. (Egyptian kings were regarded as the divine sons of the supreme god of Egypt, the sun-god Re(a) or Amon.)²²

The confrontation was to demonstrate the superiority of the true God over the false religions of Egypt. Pharaoh, the enemy oppressor, must be convinced that the God of Israel is the Sovereign of heaven and earth. The Israelites, too, must be convinced. Hence, in connection with the Exodus, we have the first great period of biblical miracles. These miracles were necessary as accompaniments to the mighty act of deliverance that God would perform in bringing forth the people from Egypt and establishing them in Canaan.²³

The plagues themselves are directed not so much against Pharaoh or the people of Egypt but against the **gods of Egypt** (the Nile defiled, the sun obscured, etc: see **Numbers 33:4**). God demonstrates His absolute power and authority over them, treating them with contempt. It is possible that with some of the plagues, He used natural disorders—but the controlled timing of each and Israel's immunity in each case were clearly supernatural.

God's judgement on sin

The Exodus presents us with a perfect ‘type’ of God’s plan of redemption that would be perfected fourteen hundred years later at Calvary with Christ giving His life as the perfect Lamb of God to redeem the world from sin.

2.2 The Passover

Before we proceed, let’s look at the instruction given to Moses for the people of Israel regarding the Passover. God was about to judge the land of Egypt. He was about to judge sin. The first-born was the representative of each family. But God provided Israel with a way to escape His judgment, which was through the blood of the lamb.

God is giving Israel a picture of the way in which He sends salvation by the blood of the lamb. The Passover gives the principles of salvation that would later operate in and through the blood of Jesus. **Exodus 12:1-13:16** tells of the original events. Other vital references to the subject in the Old Testament are **Exodus 34:25; Leviticus 23:5, Numbers 9:1-14, 28:16; 33:3; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Joshua 5:10-11; 2 Chronicles 30:1-27** and the two accounts of the same event that we find in **2 Kings 23:21-23** and **2 Chronicles 35:1-19.**^{24 25}

²¹ see 2 Tim 3:8 for the names of the chief magicians

²² B.W. Anderson – Living world of the Old Testament page 44

²³ Introduction to the Old Testament – Young p. 65

²⁴ Eaton – Preaching Through the Bible - Exodus

²⁵ Michael Eaton – Preaching through the Bible Vol 1

The Lamb of God

First, the lamb had to be sacrificed. The blood of the lamb had to be painted on the two sides of the doorposts as well as the top (the lintel).

When the angel visited each home, he would see the blood on the doorpost and pass over the home, saving the family from the judgment of God. In this way the Passover was a prophetic picture of salvation, where Jesus, the Lamb of God, would shed his blood for the sins of the world by dying on the cross. Everyone who turns to Jesus in faith escapes the judgment of God. The Israelites are literally saved by the blood of the lamb. From this point on, the blood covenant has a weightier significance, awaiting a time when it would be perfectly fulfilled in Christ (**Galatians 4:4**).

It is exactly in this way that the New Testament speaks of Jesus 'the lamb of God' (**John 1:29**). The New Testament doctrine of the atonement is a Jesus-centred reinterpretation of the story of the exodus. God put forward a substitute, Jesus. God was giving a demonstration of how He saves. He was giving a way of interpreting what He would do through His Son. When Jesus came, the people of Israel would know about a lamb dying for the sins of the people.¹⁴

But the blood of the lamb becomes the people's protective covering. The LORD who came in judgment; 'passed over' in peace when he saw the blood' (**Exodus 12:13**). This blood, therefore, fulfills a propitiatory²⁶ role, satisfying the justice of God in relation to those who claim protection (**Exodus 12:22**).²⁷

Propitiation means placating or appeasing the anger of God against sin. It was the act of placating and overcoming distrust and animosity. Word Web dictionary gives the following definition: the act of atoning for sin or wrongdoing (especially appeasing a deity)'. *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* (**1 John 2:2**)

When the blood was placed on the mercy seat, the wrath of **God was appeased**. In other words, the wrath of God was satisfied. It was similar to the Passover. When the angel of death saw the blood on the doorposts of the houses, he passed over. When God looked upon the Mercy Seat and saw the blood, He 'passed over' the sin of the people. The sacrificial lamb satisfied the anger of God.

2.3 Pre-figurement of Christ

Here we have a good example of a type and a shadow. A type is a form of something that would be made clearer later on. It would be like seeing someone you know in a difficult light. You have a vague feeling that it may be the person you know. As the light improves, it becomes clear that it is, in fact that person. In the same way, a type in the bible is a hint of something that would become clearer. Paul said —These are a shadow (Old Testament pictures or types) of the things to come, but the substance (reality) belongs to Christ (**Colossians 2:17**). Christ the Passover lamb (**1 Corinthians 5:7**) was pre-figured in the Passover of the Exodus. In other words, we see the form and shape of what would be perfected many years later when Jesus came into the world as the Lamb of God.

Our salvation takes place by the blood-sacrifice of Jesus. The New Testament often speaks of the blood of Christ (**Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; John 6:53-56; 19:34; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:25; 5:9; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25,27; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14,20; Hebrews 9:14; 10:19, 29; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2, 19; 1 John 1:7; 5:6,8; Revelation 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11; 17:6**). 'Blood' means death as a sacrifice for sins.²⁸

²⁶ Having power to atone for – similar word: expiation

²⁷ Motyer - Story of the Old Testament page 30

²⁸ Eaton – Exodus notes

In our earlier unit in Genesis, we discussed the meaning of covenant. The Passover in a sense ‘amplifies’ the meaning of covenant as God’s people are delivered by the blood of Lamb. Before Jesus went to the cross, he made the following declaration about his blood at the last supper:

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood”

Luke 22:20

2.4 Waiting in faith and obedience

The next stage in the unfolding drama of the Exodus was the element of **waiting in faith to be delivered**. God was drawing His people into a major faith exercise. They were to wait in faith and obedience for the moment when the Angel of death would pass over their homes and begin the deliverance process; a clear indication that salvation happens God’s way. We are merely partners in the unfolding of salvation.

2.5 Deliverance – crossing of the Red Sea

The stage has been set. Everything is in place. It is time for the final confrontation to take place and for the judgment of God to fall upon Pharaoh. Pharaoh relents and releases the children of Israel.

The crossing of the Red Sea is of major significance. After waiting in faith and obedience they are released from the house of bondage and make their exodus by crossing the Red Sea. This is another vital step in the process of their salvation. They are leaving the land of slavery and are crossing over into freedom, into God’s inheritance for them as a people. As a part of this process, they are leaving behind their old life and begin their journey toward the Promised Land. Here we see another type or shadow of salvation. When we come to faith in Christ, we are taken out of the world and we enter into the kingdom of God. Paul explains it this way:

“—He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son”

Colossians 1:13

The arm of the Lord

When Moses raises his hand over the water, it is as if it is the hand of God Himself. As priest and deliverer, he raises his hand over the water, but it is the hand of God that works the miracle. —The hand is the organ of personal intervention and action—God did it, and he alone.²⁹

Song of Moses

When the people of Israel successfully crossed the Red Sea, there was great jubilation. Moses sang a song of deliverance over Pharaoh and his armies (**Exodus 15:1-9** and **Deuteronomy 32**). At the end of salvation history, another song of deliverance will be sung about God’s final deliverance of His people from the oppression of Satan, and the song of Moses will be sung once again. (See **Colossians 2:14-17**; **Romans 15:3-4**; **Revelation 15**).

2.6 BIRTH OF A NATION

God’s people were delivered from death. Patrick Fairbairn points out that it was the —**birth-season of their existence as a people**. It was the stretching out of YHWH’s arm to save them from destruction, and vindicate them to Himself as a **peculiar treasure above all the nations of the earth**. By mighty acts the Lord then did what He afterwards expressed where He said;

²⁹ Alec Motyer – The Exodus P 166

*"But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."*

Isaiah 43:1

Above all others, then, this event deserved to be embalmed in the hearts of the people, and held in everlasting remembrance.³⁰

After their emancipation from Egypt, the children of Israel begin their journey of faith. They were now a **nation being formed by God**. Their nationhood became more of a reality when they collectively accepted the yoke of the Law at Mt. Sinai. They had been saved by God to work out their calling as God's covenant community. They were now on a journey of discovery of the great God that they served. They were now in the process of becoming His people. The next stage in the salvation experience was **sanctification**, which literally means 'to be set apart' or to be holy.

Remember what God instructed Moses to say to Pharaoh? God had set His people free **to worship him**. Now they had to be shaped as a people who would be the means of God's redemptive revelation for all of mankind.

2.7 PRIESTHOOD

Israel was a united people of God living under God's chosen leader, Moses. What followed is a journey in which God was forming a people for Himself with a mission to bring Him glory in the earth and open up the way for His salvation to be made known to the nations, culminating in the advent of Jesus the Messiah.

In these early stages of development we will look at the establishing of two major areas in their life as a covenant people of God. Both go hand in hand; the priesthood and the tabernacle.

Moses the priest

Moses himself was a priest. He would go before God on behalf of the people and then he would go before the people on behalf of God. According to **Exodus 18:19**, Moses is 'the people's representative before God'.³¹ The King James expresses it well;

"Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God"

Exodus 18:19

Initially, the patriarch acted as the priest for his family, but a large nation needed a more regulated priesthood; certainly, the elaborate instructions concerning the Tabernacle and the offerings to be made required a precise and complex code of instruction about priestly appointments and duties. Hence God's institution of the Levitical priesthood to mediate and maintain the covenant - with meticulous detail concerning selection, ordination, dress, procedures, etc, demonstrating again that man could only approach God as God determined.

³⁰ The Typology of Scripture – Patrick Fairbairn p 386

³¹ See Alec Motyer – the Exodus P 153

The priest represented man before God

Above all other functions, **the priest represented man before God**. Only the priest could come into the presence of God; all other Israelites had to go through him. So much so, was the priest the common man's link with God that he is sometimes equated with God. (**Leviticus 17:5**)

By representing one covenant partner before the other, **the priests were the mediators (or facilitators) of the covenant**. Priests were drawn from only one tribe, the tribe of Levi.

The Old Testament priesthood represented the whole nation before God as God had declared the Levites to belong to him in exchange for the firstborn of every family, which belonged to him on account of his redeeming them on the first Passover. Every family in Israel was represented before God. To symbolise this complete representation, the High Priest wore 12 precious stones on his outer garment indicating the 12 tribes of Israel; these acted as a sign of the covenant with God, reminding him when the priest came into His presence that he was in covenant with the nation and had to act accordingly.

In their role as representatives of the people before God, the priests sacrificed and interceded on behalf of God's people. They also acted as teachers, arbitrators, and peacemakers amongst the people, in both religious and civil matters.

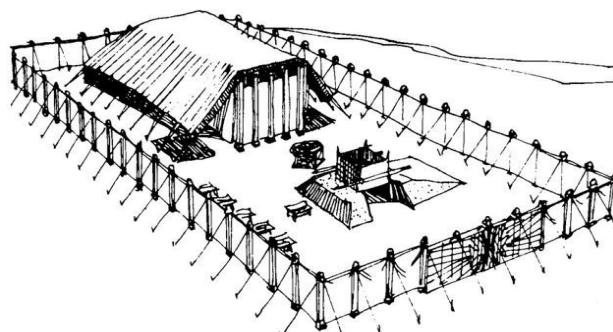
Moses, their leader, would have **an increasing revelation** of Yahweh and would in turn pass on the revelation to the people.

2.8 THE TABERNACLE

The Tabernacle – Dwelling place of God

The tabernacle provided a place where God would dwell among His people. The term tabernacle sometimes refers to the tent, including the Holy place and the Most Holy place, which was covered with embroidered curtains. But in other places, it refers to the entire complex, including the curtained court in which the tent stood.

Moses was instructed to build a Tabernacle to the exact pattern God gave him (**Exodus 25:40**). God was with them and could be worshipped wherever they were. It literally means 'dwelling place'.



Purpose

Like the Law, the Tabernacle flows from the covenant. As we have seen, the intention and goal of covenant is, "*I will be your God and you will be my people*". So, if God and Israel are to be in covenant, there must be a place where the two parties can meet: God must dwell amongst his people. God commands the Tabernacle for this purpose (**Exodus 25:8-22; 29:42-46**). Note how the

command to build the Tabernacle in chapter 25, follows immediately after the covenant-cutting ceremony in chapter 24.

Understanding the priesthood by understanding the tabernacle

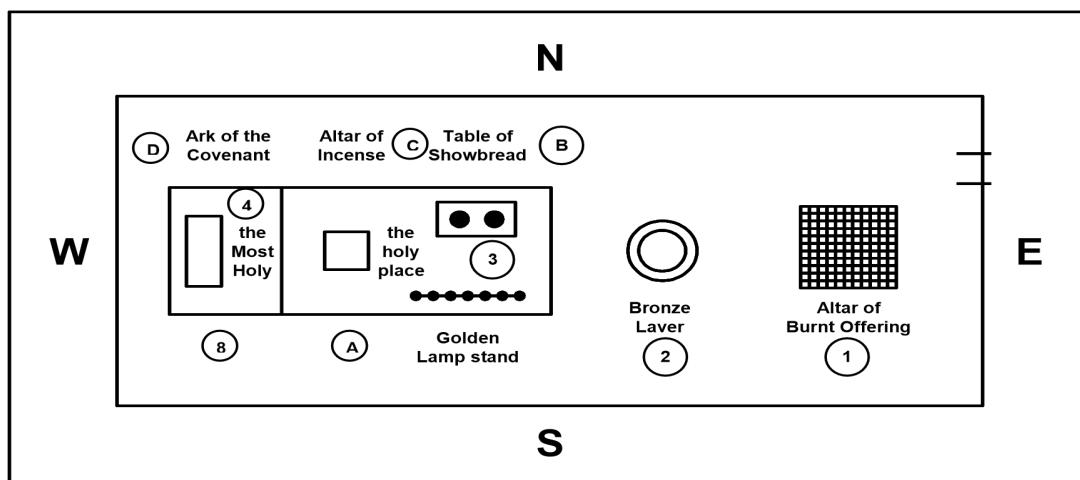
The priesthood and the tabernacle go hand in hand. As we will see later on, both the tabernacle and priesthood find their completion in Jesus Christ.

Brief explanation of the tabernacle

The diagram above shows the tabernacle as a very rudimentary structure with all the various altars of sacrifice and the curtained-off area which was the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, or the 'holy of holies'. A helpful way of understanding the tabernacle and the function of the priest is to look backwards from the New Testament. The writer to the Hebrews is writing for the benefit of the Jewish people.

He uses the tabernacle of Moses as his reference point to describe the fulfilment of God's promises in the Messiah and, is therefore very helpful to us in understanding how the tabernacle was laid out and what the various furnishings meant. It was not the tabernacle of David or Solomon, but of Moses, because all Jews could identify with the tabernacle of Moses. It was the pattern that God gave him to build. In it are all the fundamentals of God's process of making atonement for the sins of the people.

The floor plan of the tabernacle



The outer fence: only the Jews, the redeemed of the Lord could enter into the area of the tabernacle.

Once inside the area of the tabernacle you find the following:

- **Altar of sacrifice** – various animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin
- **Bronze laver for washing:** a basin in which the priests washed their hands for purification purposes while officiating at the altar of the Tabernacle or the Temple. Moses was commanded to make a laver, or basin, so Aaron and the Levitical priests could wash their hands and feet before offering sacrifices (**Exodus 30:18–21**).

The holy place would include the following:

- **The golden lamp stand** – a continual reminder that God was their light

- **Table of showbread:** holy or consecrated bread placed in the sanctuary of the tabernacle or Temple every Sabbath to symbolize God's presence and His provision for His people. The ritual always involved 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. It was called showbread (shewbread, KJV; bread of the Presence, NIV) because it was kept continually before God's presence in the tabernacle.
- **Altar of incense:** a sweet-smelling substance that was burned as an offering to God on the altar in the tabernacle and the temple. The purpose of this incense offering was to honour God. Incense symbolised and expressed the prayers of the Hebrew people, which were considered a pleasant aroma offered to God.

The holy place containing:

- **The Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred portable chest which, along with its two related items; the Mercy Seat and Cherubim, was the most important sacred object of the Israelites during the wilderness period. It was also known as the ark of the Lord (**Joshua 6:11**), the ark of God (**1 Samuel 3:3**), and the ark of the Testimony (a synonym of covenant; **Exodus 25:22**).
- **The Mercy Seat:** the golden lid or covering on the ark
- **Cherubim:** winged angelic beings often associated with the worship and praise of God.
- **Pot of manna:** a reminder of God's provision in the desert
- **Aaron's rod that budded:** a symbol of the authority of the priesthood
- **Tablets:** God's word to his people³²

The New Testament significance (based on Hebrews 9)

One of the main purposes of the tabernacle was the mediation of the priests for the various sacrifices. This is how the writer to the Hebrews described the main sacrifice for sins on the Day of Atonement, known as Yom Kippur. For every high priest, chosen from among men, is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (**Hebrews 5:1**).

Note the role of the priest: "*to act on behalf of men in relation to God'*

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties (**Hebrews 9:6**).

Hebrews 9:7 (second part): holiest place. The high priest went in, once a year with blood, to make atonement. The writer points out that this was incomplete and had limitations. The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest (**waiting full outworking**) while the first tabernacle was still standing.

The process of the Atonement

The high priest would go **behind the veil** into the holy of holies on behalf of the people. He would go in once a year to make atonement (Yom Kippur) for the people. The blood of the animal was placed on the mercy seat which was on top of the Ark of the Covenant. When the blood was placed on the mercy seat it made **propitiation** to God for the sin of man.

Fulfilment in Christ

The Tabernacle, as the means of God's dwelling among men and of sinful man's approach to the Holy God, was fulfilled and made redundant, along with the rest of the ceremonial law in the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. However, it remains a powerful visual statement of many New Testament truths; in particular, it is a type of Christ and his salvation and of the church.

³² Most of the above material is taken from *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*, electronic version

Both the Tabernacle and Christ were God's way of coming to, and dwelling amongst, men (cf. **John 1:14**: "The Word became flesh and tabernacled for a while amongst us"). In both cases, however, this occurred without pollution by sin: the Tabernacle and Jesus were separated from the world by a white fence and purity, respectively.

Both the Tabernacle and Christ were also man's way of coming to God. Christ fulfils every part of the Tabernacle's procedure for making sinful man righteous and so allowing him to come into the presence of God; he thereby tears the veil separating the Most Holy Place (God) from the Holy Place (man), creating a new and free access to God (**Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19-22**). Moreover, just as the Tabernacle was the only place at which man could come to God in Old Testament times (the sanctuaries of other nations were powerless), so also is Jesus today the only place where man can find God and be saved (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**).

Progressive revelation of tabernacle.

Here is another wonderful example of **progressive revelation**. The tabernacle begins with a rudimentary tent of meeting and goes on to the glorious Temple of Solomon and finds completion and fulfilment in Jesus Christ (**Revelation 21:3** and **2 Chronicles 3:1**).

'And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God".

Revelation 21:3

The conclusion and climax of the Exodus story, therefore, occurs when God, in all His glory, comes to dwell in the Tabernacle (**Exodus 40:34-38**), a foreshadowing of the climax of all His redemptive acts (**John 1:14; Revelation 21:3**). Nothing can deter the instructions for (**Exodus 25-31**), and the erection of the Tabernacle (**Exodus 35-39**). By living among and travelling with the Israelites, God guarantees his uninterrupted personal presence.³³ Though God now dwells among men, there can be no familiarity. His holiness cannot tolerate or live with sin (cf. **Hebrews 1:13; 1 Timothy 6:16**).

A sinful man who comes into the presence of the Holy God, or who has contact with holy things (Tabernacle utensils, etc), must die, for sin is immediately judged in the presence of holiness and the just sentence on sin is death (**Exodus 33:20** cf. **Isaiah 6:1-5**). Hence the painstaking, but necessary (indeed, merciful) emphasis, on everyone and everything connected with the Tabernacle being consecrated.³⁴

The clear message in all of this was that the people could only worship God according to His pattern. In this way the Tabernacle demonstrates how man comes to God.

2.9 The church – the place of God's presence

In the same way, the church is the place of God's presence in the world and yet, is separated from sin by its holiness (**John 17:14-19**). It and it alone, offers the nations the way of salvation. The materials donated for the construction of the Tabernacle had to be freewill offerings (**Exodus 25:2; 35:5 - 21:29**): the only service and worship of God acceptable to him is that freely chosen. Those

³³ Explanatory note: the Tent of Meeting originally referred to a small tent Moses used to pitch outside the camp within which to meet with God (Ex 33:7). After Ex 40 it referred to the Tabernacle, more specifically the Holy Place, where God now met with Israel (Ex 25:8, 29:42-43).

³⁴ made holy by being ritually set apart, and kept holy through ritual cleansing if contaminated)

commanded to oversee the construction were supernaturally equipped for the task (**Exodus 31:3 - 6; 35:31 - 34-35**): those who build the church are also anointed to fulfil their various tasks.

3. THE PROMISED LAND

The next stage in the faith journey of Israel was their entry into the Promised Land. The people of Israel had been delivered from their ‘house of bondage’ and were about to inherit the ‘land flowing with milk and honey’ (the Promised Land). This is very like our salvation in Christ. We are delivered from sin and enter into our destiny as sons of God, which can be likened to our land of promise.

3.1 Spying out the land

In two years they had reached the border of the Promised Land and God told them to go in and defeat the enemy. An advance party went in to spy out the land. They returned with a **bad report** of how the people there were ‘giants’. All, except Joshua and Caleb, voted against entering in to the Promised Land. This angered God and He declared that none of the Israelites, except Joshua and Caleb, would enter the Promised Land.

All of them were given the promise. They all escaped from Egypt (a picture of salvation). They all went through the Red Sea (a picture of baptism). They all left their past behind them and saw their enemy defeated and drowned in the sea. They all reached the border of the Promised Land. They all knew that God had moved supernaturally to get them to this point and yet only two said, "**We believe**". By faith and obedience only Joshua and Caleb received the promise and entered the Promised Land.

In the next unit you will study in more detail the next stage in the life of Israel as they enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua.

4. The Names of God

In the Old Covenant, God made Himself known through His deeds. Motyer says,
“God has made Himself known by name, that is, *revealed Himself and summed up the revelation in a significant name. Those to whom the revelation has been made can now use that name to enter into a worshipping intimacy with the God who has revealed Himself.*”

4.1 The name Jehovah means —the self-existent One who reveals Himself. Here are **seven redemptive names** of Jehovah that will help you understand how He has revealed Himself to mankind:

- Jehovah-Jireh (Genesis 22:14) —I am the Lord your “**Provider**”
- Jehovah-Rapha (**Ropheka**) (Exodus 15:26) —I am the Lord your “**Physician**”
- Jehovah-Nissi (Exodus 17:15) —I am the Lord your “**Banner**”
- Jehovah-Shalom (Judges 6:24) — I am the Lord your “**Peace and Prosperity**”
- Jehovah-Raah (Rohi) (Psalm 23:1) — I am the Lord your “**Shepherd**”
- Jehovah-Tsidkenu (Jeremiah 23:6) — I am the Lord your “**Righteousness**”
- Jehovah-Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35) — I am the Lord who is “**Present**”

*Since it is His **redemptive** relation to us that these names reveal, they **must each point to Calvary where we were redeemed and the blessing that each name reveals must be provided by the Atonement** - F.F. Bosworth*

4.2 In the book of Isaiah, God reveals Himself as “—*the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel*” (**Isaiah 41:14**).

The Redeemer had the right to be the **Family Protector** (**Ruth 2:20**).

The NIV Study Bible gives four points to help us understand this:

As Israel's Family Protector, He:

1. Redeems their **property** (**Isaiah 54:1-8**)
2. Guarantees their **freedom** (**Isaiah 35:9; 43:1-4; 48:20; 52:11-12**).
3. Avenges them against their **tormentors** (**Isaiah 47:3; 49:25-26; 64:4**)
4. Secures their **posterity** for the future (**Isaiah 63:8-9**).

4.3 The Exodus is God's act, and it reveals Him as:

- The **God of Compassion**. He hears the Israelites' cry and is concerned about their suffering (**Exodus 3:7-10**).
- The **God of Faithfulness**. He remembers his covenant with their forefathers and, because covenant included descendants, with them (**Exodus 2:23-25, 6:2-8**).
- The **God of Liberation**. Forever hereafter, he would be known as the One who liberates the oppressed (**Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 6:12**).
- The **God of Mercy**. Israel was frequently reminded that once they were an oppressed people mercifully redeemed. Thus God would not allow them to oppress others. They had to treat aliens with the mercy God had shown them. Their own experience of oppression was meant to motivate them in keeping the civil law.
- The **God of History**. There are two histories, the history of the world (Mankind) and the history of salvation. In the history of the world, God is hidden. But in the history of salvation God is unveiled and this history is primary. Therefore, the history of the world is the ‘*scaffolding// and will be removed to reveal the principle focus; the history of salvation, with its epicentre, Jesus Christ.*’ Therefore, at the simultaneous consummation of these histories, the chief goal will be the gathering of the redeemed to Christ Jesus.
- God is not distant or uninvolved. He **invades and involves** himself in history. Nor is he subject to cyclic time (inevitable, repetitive patterns) like other gods. He **changes and controls** history, breaking cycles and directing history into a new future.
- The **God of the gods**. He is victorious, not so much over the nations but over their gods, humiliating them by demonstrating his absolute power over them.
- **The Incomparable God.** “*For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of.*” (**Deuteronomy 4:32**).

4.4 A deliverer is raised up as a Messianic figure.

God hears the cry of his people and raises up Moses as the deliverer of His people. He is a type of the Saviour. It is the pre-figuration of Christ the deliverer.

“*Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face*”.

Deuteronomy 34:10

4.4.1 Some comparisons of Moses and Jesus

There are some very interesting comparisons between Moses and Jesus, strengthening the understanding that Moses is a Christ-figure.

- **Moses' Birth** - Egyptian dictatorship (Exodus 1); Christ's birth under Roman rule (Luke 2:21)
- **Moses' Infancy** -Life endangered (Exodus 1:22); Christ's life threatened (Matt 2:16)
- **Moses' Childhood** - Moses' childhood spent in Egypt; Jesus' in Egypt (Matt 2:13; Hosea 11:1)
- **Moses' early knowledge of his mission** – (Acts 7:25); Jesus (Luke 2:49)
- **Moses' Shepherdhood** – (Exodus 3:1); Jesus (John 10:16)
- **Moses' Apostleship** - Now therefore Go (Exodus 4:12) Jesus (John 9:4, Heb 3:1 "The apostle")
- **Moses' Prophetic office** – (Deuteronomy 18:15-18); compare (John 7:16, 8:28)
- **Moses' priestly activities** – (Psalm 99:6, Leviticus 8:14-16); Jesus (Hebrews 6:14)
- **Moses' Kingly rule** – (Deuteronomy 33:4-5); Christ (Luke 1:32-33)
- **Moses' sending forth of the Twelve** – (Numbers 13:16); Jesus' apostles (Matthew 10:5)
- **Moses' appointing of the Seventy** – (Numbers 11:24); Christ elected seventy, (Luke 10:1)
- **Moses' Transfiguration on the Mount** – (Exodus 33:29-35); (cf. Matt 17:2)

5. CONCLUDING SUMMARY & REMARKS

In conclusion, the connections between our study of Exodus and how Jesus is the fulfilment of the Law (**Luke 24:44**) point to a number of the fundamental tenets of our faith and hope. The Law of Moses resulted from the rise, migration and resettlement of the Hebrews; God's chosen people and the genesis of Jesus' genealogy as a man on earth. Here is a summary of key points for further study and contemplation to take away from our session this evening:

- **The Passover Lamb** (**Exodus 12:1-14:46 & John 19:31-36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19**). To protect themselves from the death angel, each family was to take a spotless male lamb, kill it, and then take the blood and place it upon the top and sides of the doorframe. When the angel saw the blood, he would pass over the house. Peter said that we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. (**1 Peter 1:19**). Paul said of Christ that He was our Passover which was sacrificed for us (**1 Corinthians 5:7**).
- **Blood, shed for our sins** (**Exodus 24:8 & Hebrews 9:11-28**). Moses took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people and the tabernacle and its furnishings. "*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins,*" **Hebrews 9:22** says. Neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by His own blood Christ entered once in the Holy Place to obtain eternal redemption for us.
- **Bread from Heaven** (**Exodus 16:4 & John 6:31-35**). God rained down manna from heaven which the people of Israel collected to make bread. Jesus reminded the people of this story, and said;

"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then Jesus declared, —I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty".

John 6:32-35

- **The Rock of Salvation (Exodus 17:6 & 1 Corinthians 10:1-4).**

The people of Israel complained against Moses and God for they were thirsty. God then told Moses,
"Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink"

Exodus 17:5

Paul said that they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. Jesus said that those who drink of the water He gives will never thirst.

- **The Staff and The Cross (Numbers 21:8-9 & John 3:14-17).**

God sent a plague of snakes among the people of Israel as punishment for their continued complaining. God commanded Moses to place an image of a serpent on a pole. If someone was bitten, they would look upon the pole and be saved. It was a look of faith and not just a simple glance. Jesus said that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, *"that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life"* **John 3:14-17.**

- **God will send the Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-18 & John 6:14, 12:49-50; Acts 3:18-26).**

God promised He would raise up a Prophet from among Israel that will speak what He commands Him. When the people saw the miracle Jesus performed in feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fish, they said of Him; *"This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."*

Jesus said that He spoke the words which the Father gave to Him. Peter referenced Moses' prophecy of a coming Prophet in his sermon about Jesus that he delivered in the temple **Acts 2:30; 3:22.**

- **Progressive revelation**

You will also notice the exciting subject of **progressive revelation** as you study the flow of Old Testament history. In Exodus, Moses has a revelation concerning sacrifice. By the time you get to David, you discover that he has a heightened awareness of sacrifice. David begins to understand that physical burnt sacrifices are part of God's process of dealing with man's sin, and that what God was really after was a sacrifice of the heart. By the time you get to David (1000 B.C.) one is able to see the growth and development of God's revelation of Himself and His ways.

We hear David praying to God;

"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise".

Psalm 51:16

Clearly David has captured something new in what God is after in terms of devotion. God is after the **heart** more than the outward practice of **sacrifice**. David has progressed in his spirituality.

JOSHUA

The Book of Joshua follows Moses' death and demonstrates God's **faithfulness** to the covenant He had made with Abraham in bringing His people to the Promised Land. It recounts the **battles and barriers** experienced by the Israelites as they enter the Promised Land. God is faithful and while not all territory is conquered, the Israelites have safely settled in the land promised to Abraham.

As the book closes, Joshua calls on Israel to remember the covenant it made with God. Like with Moses in Deuteronomy, Israel is reminded of the choice it must make to be **faithful and obey**, leading to life and blessing or prove unfaithful leading to the judgment that befell the Canaanites.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Joshua captures the imagination of readers as few other books do, for it challenges and builds their faith. However, the message of Joshua remains a difficult one to interpret and apply. On the positive side, the book calls for a high level of courage and commitment to God and teaches that following the orders of God can lead to success. By contrast, people who disobey God fail. Courageous and committed leaders win battles when they are **within the will and act on the instructions of God**. The book says believers receive rest from enemies and security when they fight for God and God's chosen leader.

There are certain aspects of the theology of Joshua that Christians struggle to easily accept. Readers often grapple with God's sanctions and commands of violence and the way in which God gives territory to a favoured nation that exterminates the inhabitants of its land. God's apparent brutality is often upsetting to readers who have expectations that the God of the Old Testament would act according to the commands of Jesus: **to love your enemies**. Readers also sometimes feel uncomfortable with Joshua's promises of material success; Christians who read the New Testament typically identify success with meekness and spiritual maturity. Along with Joshua's nationalistic overtones, exhortations to devotion to a nation raise concerns.

1. BACKGROUND

Joshua is a key figure in Old Testament history. He is a remarkable Biblical character and an outstanding role model. He faced many hardships, tests and battles and walked through them as a godly man. He did make some mistakes, but on the whole he lived an exemplary life – a life we can learn from.

The historical context of Joshua is very important and we should look at it through the lens of God's covenant with Abraham, eight centuries before - **Genesis 12**.

This was a **three-fold covenant**:

- God promised that He would bless him and his offspring with land – a permanent **home**;
- God promised him a seed – a **heritage**, a great nation;
- God promised that through him **all nations** would be **blessed**.

Genesis 12: 1-3

The flow of Israel's history, prior to Joshua, bears witness to the gradual unfolding of these promises and Joshua rises to prominence at a time when Israel is poised to enter and possess the Promised Land. He is God's chosen man at that appointed time to continue the unfolding of the covenant made with Abraham centuries before.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

2.1 Battles for the land

Joshua leads Israel

Joshua sends spies into the land with far better results than when Moses did the same in **Numbers 13-14**. He leads Israel into the Promised Land and is presented as a **new Moses**. Chapter 5 serves as a transition where the people are called **back to their roots as a covenant people**. Joshua's encounter with a warrior, who is commander of God's army, makes it clear that what lies ahead is God's battle and Israel will serve as spectators.

Jericho and Ai

Israel first battles with Jericho and Ai (rather, witnesses their miraculous destruction). The results of these two battles illustrate **God's faithfulness vs. man's failure**. Both battles show that Israel had to be obedient and trust God's commands if they were to have victory

2.2 Conquering

Beginning in Chapter 9, Israel battles with a number of Canaanite tribes. A few believe, but most conspire together to destroy God's people.

2.3 Inheritance: Allotments of the land

In this section, Joshua divides the Promised Land to the 12 tribes of Israel. This could be somewhat boring until you realize how exacting God is in fulfilling the promise He first made to Abraham.

2.4 Commitment for the remaining land

Joshua reminds Israel of God's promises and His calling to remain faithful. Like in Moses' speech before his death, Joshua calls the people to make a **choice between faithfulness and disobedience**.

3. THEOLOGICAL THEMES OF JOSHUA

3.1 Leadership

Joshua presents a number of insights into the nature of leadership. **Joshua 1** begins with the death of Moses, a great leader. Moses, a servant of the Lord dominates the exodus from Egypt and events of the wilderness. He is the great lawgiver, the intermediary between God and the people. Joshua, the assistant to Moses, no doubt faces a crisis of confidence upon succession. Chapter upon chapter describes how Joshua emerges as a leader in his own right until he too, like Moses, is called "*the servant of Lord*" (**Joshua 24:29**) after his death. Joshua tells how God develops leadership and defines its characteristics.

Joshua is typically strong, courageous, obedient, not afraid, not confused, a follower of God's ways, and successful (**Joshua 1:1-9**). Joshua's leadership shows that leaders can act decisively, prepare well, be unprepared, make mistakes, be manipulated, and compromise outside of God's will. As a leader, Joshua does not model the ideals of leadership throughout the book. He combines success with disappointment. Though Joshua leads with mixed results, he remains faithful to God and serves His people. Consequently, the success of Joshua teaches that leaders ultimately can succeed with guidance from God.

3.2 Land as a gift

God's gift of the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel dominates the book. Military might, however, does not enable the tribes to defeat the Canaanites. Though the passage does celebrate victory in battle and defeat of enemies using traditional battle account forms, they do so to praise the divine warrior who made victory possible at Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, and Hazar. The book contains very little information about fighting. Battles for Canaan would humble professional soldiers, and these encounters are decided by ritual, deceit, a night march, extended daylight, and thunderstorms. **Victory comes when the people follow God's guidelines for war.**

The distribution of allotments emphasises the land as a **gift from God**. Eleazar, the priest, helps Joshua determine the will of God for the allotments. Frequently Joshua also directly addressed the tribes to remind them that the Lord is giving them their inheritance (**Joshua 23:3-5**).

"And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you. Behold, I have allotted to you as inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you."

Joshua 23: 3-5

God's allotments of cities of refuge and no allotment of land for Levites (God was the inheritance, **Joshua 13:14**) reminds the tribes that the Lord owns the land and controls its use.

"Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Say to the people of Israel, 'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them.'"

Joshua 20: 1-5

The realization of the gift of land obligates tribes to respect and serve the Lord wholeheartedly and unswervingly.

3.3 Obedience and God's grace

In an act of grace, God freely promises and gives land to the tribes. God's grace, in return, demands obedience to the commands of Moses and to the instructions of the Lord. Those instructions vary from pre-battle calls for destruction at Jericho and to the later call to preserve cities and reward troops. The annihilation of Achan and his family in the valley of Achor, because of violations of 'loot' at Jericho (**Joshua 7**), underlines the importance of obeying these instructions. What remains consistent in God's instructions through Joshua is the call to do as God commands (**Joshua 11:15**). **Faithfulness becomes synonymous with obedience.**

4. JOSHUA'S TRAINING

God chose Joshua and prepared him well in advance (**Joshua 1:1-9**). He was born in Egypt before the Exodus and grew up under the leadership of Moses. He had been Moses' aide from a young age (**Numbers 11:28**) and had been with him on many occasions when God did miraculous things. The hardships and persecution of living under Pharaoh were also not foreign

to him. God's miraculous interventions on behalf of His people were witnessed by Joshua as the children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt.

Moses took Joshua along with him on the journey up Mt. Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments. Here Joshua gained a greater understanding of the presence of God and, inspired by Moses' relationship with God, Joshua learned to develop his own unique and close relationship with God (**Exodus 33:11**).

Joshua was a trustworthy man and Moses chose him as one of the twelve spies to go and spy out the land of Canaan (**Numbers 13:1-14:10**). His faith and maturity were evidenced by his positive report and willingness to enter in (along with Caleb). The other ten spies were scared, negative and incited the Israelites to rebel against Moses and Aaron. This rebellion resulted in further wanderings in the wilderness and, eventually, it was only Joshua and Caleb from that generation who entered the Promised Land. We see the development of faith and obedience as requirements for entering the promises of God as themes in the books of Joshua and Judges, evident in the character of Joshua earlier in scripture.

The faithfulness that Moses saw in Joshua led him to change his name from Hoshea which means —salvation (**Numbers 13:8**) to Joshua which means —the Lord is salvation (**Numbers 13:16**). Notice that it is not a man who would lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, but God Himself **working through this faithful man**, Joshua. God alone was Israel's salvation. The Greek rendering of the name Joshua is —Jesus , and in this man Joshua we see a **foreshadowing of Jesus Christ**. Joshua was a man who served faithfully without knowing that one day he would succeed Moses and lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. Moses was the one who took them out in order to take them in, and Joshua is the fulfillment of this.

5. JOSHUA ENCOURAGED

Joshua had been with Moses and had seen all that he had accomplished – he had seen and experienced the greatness of the man whose shoes he was called to fill. Not only was he to succeed Moses, but he was also to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land they had dreamed of and desired for centuries. It must have seemed an almost impossible and totally overwhelming task: not only did he have to lead in the shadow of Moses' achievements, but he also knew how fickle the children of Israel were. Under the immense weight of the responsibility of leading this unpredictable multitude into God's promise for them, many inadequacies and fears must have flooded his heart and mind. Joshua had been primed in advance by Moses (**Deuteronomy 31:7-8**) and commissioned by him (**Deuteronomy 34:9**), but he still must have felt overwhelmed by the awesomeness of what lay ahead. God, however, understood Joshua's human weaknesses and in **Joshua 1:1-18** we see how God encouraged him.

"You will help the Israelites take that land and divide it among them. The Lord will lead you. He himself is with you. He will not fail you or leave you. Don't worry. Don't be afraid!"

Deut 31:7-8

"And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Deut 34:9

"Just as I was with Moses, I will be with you. No one will be able to stop you all your life. I will not abandon you. I will never leave you." Joshua, you must be strong and brave! You must lead these people so that they can take their land. I promised their fathers that I would give them this land. But you must be strong and brave about obeying the commands my servant Moses gave you. If you follow his teachings exactly, you will be successful in everything you do. Always remember what is written in that book of law. Speak about that book and study it day and night. Then you can be sure to obey what is written there. If you do this, you will be wise and successful in everything you do. Remember, I commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't be afraid, because the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:5-9

In the midst of this divine encouragement God issues Joshua with **instructions (Joshua 1:7-8)**:

- **First** – Joshua had to know and understand the Law
- **Second** – He had to practice the Law obediently
- **Third** – He had to communicate the Law effectively to the people

This would ensure success in the task that lay ahead.

Obedience was to be the key to moving in to all that God had promised. This may sound like the unconditional promise of land (a permanent home) was suddenly conditional. The truth is that the promise of land is unconditional but the occupation of that land is conditional upon obedience to God's commands – ownership is unconditional, but occupation depends on obedience.

5.1 Possessing the land

Traditionally, it is often taught that Joshua teaches us how to possess or occupy the land. But when we look at the life of David, we realize that Joshua teaches us to enter the land but not possess the land because he never fully did so. He actually fell short of possessing the land; Joshua fell short in terms of establishing good government (kingship) in his generation. If we are going to use Joshua as our main text on possessing the land, we run the risk of ourselves falling short because he did not develop the vital element of kingship that David so capably did later on. Joshua did not train up leaders to whom the baton could be passed; men who could lead the people of Israel on into all that God had called them to. Instead, we find that after Joshua's death a generation of rebellion and unbelief grew up amongst the people of Israel (**Judges 2:6-15**). Joshua has shown how to get ready to **go in** to the land and to **enter** the land, but David is the one who teaches us how to **occupy** and **possess** the land.

5.2 Entering God's rest

"Let us therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience."

Hebrews 4:11

"Joshua shows a picture of entering into God's rest and the inheritance he has for us. "The purpose of salvation is inheritance. God brought us out in order to bring us in." (Michael Eaton)

Entering God's rest is a theme found in Joshua and is part of the unfolding revelation of God. The rest God's people find in the book of Judges at the defeat of her enemies is a critical component to the overall theme of entering rest in the person of Christ. And follows the theme of the **positive consequences of obedience and faith**.

6. Rest

6.1 We must believe.

Hebrews 4:1-3

"They heard it but did not accept it with faith. Only we who believe it are able to enter God's place of rest."

6.2 God's presence is with us.

Exodus 33:14-16

"And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

6.3 Our enemies are defeated.

Joshua 21:43-45

"Not one of all their enemies had withheld them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass"

6.4 All God's good promises are fulfilled.

1 Chronicles 22:9 -10

"Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days."

7. Caleb

Caleb, a mighty man of God who is 85 years old, reappears on the scene as he steps forward to claim his inheritance that God promised to him (**Numbers 14:24** and **Joshua 14:6-15**). He had quietly, consistently and faithfully served under Joshua's leadership for many years. In the natural he had been the more logical choice to lead the people of Israel than Joshua. But he displayed **humility and submission** in loyally serving Joshua. There was no bitterness or jealousy at all.

This man of courage and determination does not settle for the gentle rolling fertile hills as his inheritance, but rather asks for the rugged unforgiving hill country where men of great size lived. He is not daunted by this in the least – even at the ripe old age of 85! Caleb knew that in God he could do anything. His trust, faith and obedience along with his tenacity are hallmarks of this truly courageous hero of the Old Testament.

8. FAMOUS BIBLICAL STORIES AND MOMENTS FROM AND IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

8.1 Commander of the Lord's army

"When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."

Joshua 5:13-15

8.2 The Battle of Jericho - The Walls fall down - Joshua 6

A lesson in the **blessing of obedience** through the defeat of Jericho by the following of God's instructions.

- And a lesson in God's **grace and mercy through repentance** and turning to Him found in the story of Rahab.

It would appear that God had a strange plan for the battle of Jericho. The Lord instructed Joshua to have the armed men march around the city once each day, for six days. The priests were to carry the ark, blowing trumpets, but the soldiers were to keep silent.

On the seventh day, the assembly marched around the walls of Jericho seven times. Joshua told them that by God's order, every living thing in the city must be destroyed, except Rahab and her family. All articles of silver, gold, bronze and iron were to go into the Lord's treasury.

At Joshua's command, the men gave a great shout, and Jericho's walls fell down flat! The Israelite army rushed in and conquered the city. Only Rahab and her family were spared.

8.3 This sin of Achan - Joshua 7

- Understanding the importance of 'devoted things' and idols in light of God's commands; particularly as it protects the Israelites from sinning against the Lord.

Immediately after the triumph at Jericho, the Israelites fight against the city of Ai, but are unable to take it. God tells Joshua that Israel lost because of God's anger. One of the Israelites has kept some of the "devoted things" from Jericho for himself instead of destroying them. Therefore, Israel herself has become a "devoted thing," which will be destroyed unless the sinner is punished and the stolen objects destroyed (**Joshua 7:12**).

Following instructions from the Lord, Joshua assembles the Israelites tribe by tribe, then clan by clan, then household by household. God reveals Achan, of the tribe of Judah, as the culprit. He and his household, along with the devoted things he kept, are taken and destroyed.

8.4 This sun stands still – Joshua 10

- The supernatural intervention of the Lord to see Israel's victory.
- Although Israel had been tricked into forming an alliance with the Gibeonites and were therefore unable to drive them out of the land as God had commanded, God honoured their commitment and promised to help Israel have victory.

During a particular battle, Joshua became aware that the sun would set before the Israel army could defeat her enemies and Joshua spoke to the Lord and proclaimed the following:

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.’ And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.”

Joshua 10:11-14

9. JOSHUA’S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

The reason for the godly lifestyle of Joshua becomes evident in the closing words to Israel towards the end of his life. His final exhortations to the people of God involved two historical perspectives:

1. A short-range review of God’s faithfulness to Israel since crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. (Joshua 23:1-16).

Joshua had finished allotting land to the tribes of Israel as God had instructed and he called the people together to remind them of all that God had done for them over the past seven eventful years and to instruct them to obey God, live according to His word and not to take on the beliefs and practices of the Canaanites. He emphasised that it was God alone who had brought them this far, and it was God alone who would take them into the future. God had kept His promises to them and had brought them into the Promised Land. Consequently, he warns them never to turn away from serving Almighty God.

2. A long-range review of God’s faithfulness to Israel since the time of Abraham.

Joshua gathered Israel together again at the historically significant place of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim to deliver his farewell message. This was the place about which Moses commanded the Israelites in **Deuteronomy 27:2-3** to set up large whitewashed stones and write the Law of God on these stone tablets and read it to Israel. Even more significant than that, is the fact that it was at this same place that Abraham first received the promise from God. He rejected the false gods of Canaan and built an altar to God here (**Genesis 12:6-7**). It was also at this place that Jacob cleansed his whole household from false gods by burying his idols and building an altar to God (**Genesis 33: 18-20** and **Genesis 35: 1-4**).

Joshua wanted all Israel to know that it was the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who had brought them to this point in history – He had been moving them in this direction right from the time he called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans (**Genesis 12:1-3**). Joshua outlines this history for them and finally exhorts them, yet again, to fear God and serve Him unwaveringly with their whole hearts. **Joshua 24:15** contains an amazing testimony to Joshua’s life:

“Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The book of Joshua closes with a well-deserved tribute to this wonderful, courageous leader:

“Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel.”

Joshua 24:31

JUDGES

The book of Judges tells the story of Israel's **total failure** after the death of Joshua. Judges were tribal chieftains, and their story can be quite disturbing. It serves as a tragic tale of how Israel's leaders became increasingly corrupt and no better than the Canaanite tribes they had overthrown. Though sad, this is also a story of hope for the future.

Judges illustrates the vicious cycle of apostasy, oppression, and deliverance. Yahweh repeatedly raises up "judges" (rulers who were military and judicial leaders) to deliver the people following a period of foreign oppression. However, the increasing corrupt leadership and populace led to some of the most violent events recounted in the Bible. The theme of this book is summarized in **Judges 21:25**:

"In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."

1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Joshua into Judges

Once the Promised Land had been conquered, the people of Israel should have entered into a time of consolidation that would have taken them from strength to strength. Instead, they took their eyes off God and became attracted to the idols worshipped by the nations around them. This ushered them into a time of turmoil, which we read about in the book of Judges.

Disobedience to God's Word will always create problems for His people and, in this case, it involved being delivered into the enemies' hands. But **God was faithful** to them when they cried out to Him and sent help in the form of judges, to rescue them from the oppression they were suffering.

The book of Judges covers a turbulent time in the Middle East as nations vied for supremacy. The Israelites should have been an example to the people around them but instead, they adapted to their pagan mind-set and worshipped their idols.

Remember, after Joshua led the tribes of Israel into the Promised Land, he called them to be faithful to their covenant with God by obeying the commands of the Torah. And if they do this they will show all the other nations what God is like.

Joshua's charge to Israel;

"Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day. For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God. For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you."

Joshua 23:1-13

Israel after the death of Joshua

The book of Judges follows this charge and begins with the death of Joshua. It tells the story of Israel's failure to heed Joshua's charge and tells the story of Israel's total failure.

The book's name comes from the type of leaders Israel had in this period. Before Israel had any Kings, the tribes were all governed by these judges. These judges took the form of both magistrate and military figures, as well as occupying regional or tribal leadership type positions.

There is a warning for the reader on reading the Book of Judges: it can be very disturbing from violence and beliefs perspective. It tells the tragic tale of Israel's moral corruption, of its bad leadership, and basically how, because they did not heed Joshua's charge, they become no different to the Canaanites.

But this sad story is also meant to **generate hope for the future** and perspective on Godly living and the provision of His grace. This is evident in the design of the book.

The introduction sets the stage for Israel's failure as they don't drive out the remaining Canaanites. While the large, main section of the book has stories about the growing corruption of Israel's judges. And the progression here shows how Israel's judges degenerate in character, action, and beliefs and understanding of God. The concluding section continues a disturbing trend, and showing the corruption of the people of Israel as a whole.

The opening section begins with the tribes of Israel in their territories in the Promised Land. And while Joshua defeated some key Canaanite towns there was still significant land to be taken which had Canaanites living in those areas. And so, chapter one gives a long list of Canaanite groups and towns that Israel failed to drive out from the land. It is important to remember the purpose of driving out the Canaanites was to avoid their moral corruption and their way of worshipping the gods through child sacrifice. God had called Israel to be a holy people and that doesn't happen.

Chapter 2 describes how the Israelites just moved in alongside the Canaanites and adopted all their cultural and religious practices. For nearly an entire chapter the narrator gives an overview of everything that is to happen in the body of the book. This part of Israel's history, the narrator says, was a series of cycles moving in a downward spiral.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Many of the corrupt Canaanite tribes had been allowed to remain; by extension, Israel adopted their cultural and religious practices. A lengthy passage describes the future history of Israel which is a series of cycles that move in a downward spiral due to this corrupt influence. So Israel became like the Canaanites and would sin against God. God would then allow them to be conquered and oppressed by the Canaanites and eventually, the Israelites would see the errors of their ways and repent. So God would raise up a deliverer, a judge from among the people, who would defeat the enemy and bring about an era of peace. But eventually Israel would sin again and it would all start over.

2.1 The Introduction

The introductory section (**Judges 1-3:6**) serves two purposes;

- First, it links with Joshua by continuing from where that book ended. It shows that God is still fighting for Israel and driving out their enemies before them. The Israelites continue to occupy and subdue the Promised Land. Joshua was gone, but God was not, neither was His blessing, nor his covenant nor the future facing Israel.

- Second, the introduction sets the scene for everything in the book by explaining Israel's short lived obedience after Joshua died. Even the generation that buried Joshua was only partially obedient to God. The first chapter records the failure of one tribe after another. But the next generation was even worse:

"Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals."

Judges 2:8-11

Reading further reveals the sad picture of Israel's rapid decline after Joshua, as they participated in the religion of the Canaanites

"Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the LORD's anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths."

Judges 2:11-13

2.2 The repeated cycles and the judges

Judges 3:7 to the end of **Judges 16** details the repeated cycles of sin, chastisement, pity and deliverance.

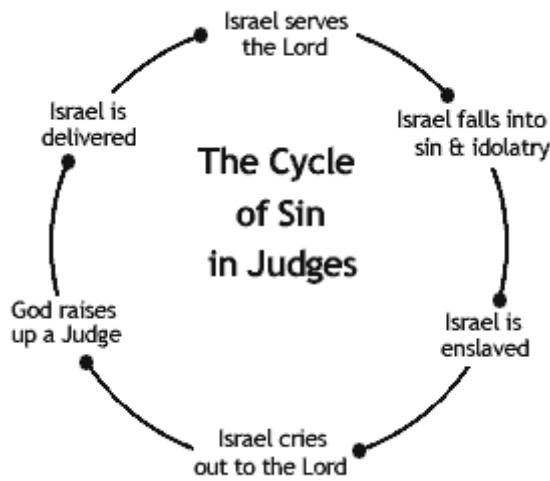
- The first cycle is described in **Judges 3:7-11**

"And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died."

- The remainder of the book (until **Judges 16**) shows how this cycle repeats itself during the time of each of the other judges: Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

2.2.1 THE REPEATED CYLES:

1. Israelites sin, forsaking the ways of the Lord (as seen in **Judges 2:11-13**)
2. Enemies oppress them (as seen in **Judges 2:14-15**)
3. They cry out in distress to the Lord (as seen in **Judges 2:15-18**)
4. The Lord saves them raising up a deliverer-judge (as seen in **Judges 2:16**)



2.3 The Appendix

Judges 17-21 describes two very painful episodes in Israel at that time.

- The first story, about Micah, describes the building of a private temple to an idol which is plundered by a private army sent from the tribe of Dan. The army steals everything, and proceeds to burn down the peaceful city of Laish and murder all of its inhabitants. When Israel forgets its God.
- The second story tells a gruesome story where one Levite carved up the body of his concubine into twelve pieces and sent one piece to each of the other eleven tribes resulting in civil war.

3. THE JUDGES

The Hebrew title for the book is 'Judges' but we should avoid only reading a modern meaning (magistrates) into it. Certainly, these judges helped govern Israel as in the time of Moses, where daily they were involved in legal disputes, as the Law of God was applied to daily issues.

Some scholars suggest regarding these judges as quasi-'heroes' who liberated god's people from oppression. Not entirely dissimilar to the calling on Joshua's life, they were saviours of their people at a particular time, in a particular place within unique circumstances. And, like Joshua, to a certain degree can be viewed as a pre-cursor to Christ as saviours of God's people, mercifully raised up as judge-deliverers in times of crises.

However, it is important to note a particular thematic refrain. At key moments, God's spirit empowered each of these judges to accomplish these acts of deliverance. This is an important distinguishing thread of each of the judge's story. God uses people who do not always typify God-honouring characters to deliver His people. This doesn't mean He endorses all, or any, of their decisions. God is committed first and foremost to saving His people but he often uses people as His means and in these cases He works with the corrupt leaders at hand.

Following on themes from the book of Joshua, the fact that God uses characters with many 'character flaws' almost highlights the fact that it is **God alone who brings victory or defeat**. And we see the recurring theme from Joshua continue to weave its way through the book of Judges: that obedience is the key to defeat over enemies and oppression.

3.1 THE FIRST THREE JUDGES

Now the stories of the first three judges; Othniel, Ehud and Shagmar, are epic adventures; they are also extremely bloody. Either the judge themselves or people who help the judge, defeat their enemies and deliver the people of Israel.

3.1.1 Othniel

"The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years. But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them. The Spirit of the LORD came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died."

Judges 3:7-11

Israel was in the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim, the King of Mesopotamia. The stories tell of a ruthless king whose name meant 'Cushan of double wickedness.' Following the cycle we have explored, Israel cries out to God while experiencing the oppression of this Mesopotamian King and Othniel is raised up, and through the working of the Spirit of the Lord he overpowers the king.

"The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim."

Judges 3: 10

Othniel was the nephew of Caleb and would have been raised in a godly household. His name means 'lion of God' and we see, through the story of Caleb's challenge for the hand of his daughter in marriage, that Othniel is a brave man. Although by the time he fights against the Mesopotamian king he is an elderly man.

3.1.2 Ehud

Ehud's story in the Bible is often known for its richness in tale, particularly as compared to Othniel. He is an unlikely candidate, known as a 'left-handed man' most likely meaning he had some disability with respect to his right side. In the time of the rule of King Elgon of Moab the Israelites cried out to God. When Israel had to present her fare to the King, Ehud told the king that he had a secret message for him, thereby gaining a more private audience. At which point he thrust a dagger into the King unsuspectingly concealed on his left side, and fled in secret.

3.1.3 Shamgar

Not much is said of Shamgar. In fact, only one verse is attributed to him in the entire book of Judges. He appears to have judged Israel between Ehud and Deborah, albeit it briefly as Deborah is still introduced in the wake of Ehud. There is much intrigue regarding Shamgar, a Canaanite name, while his father, Anath, had the name of a Canaanite goddess. In addition, his weapon of choice, an ox-goad (a large hardwood stick used in farming).

3.1.4 DEBORAH (AND BARAK)

With the death of Ehud, the cycle of Israel's disobedience started again resulting in oppression of Jabin, King of Canaan and so Israel cried out to God.

Enter Deborah, a prophetess. She is the first prophet we see since Moses' time and one of a handful of woman prophets in the Old Testament. She describes herself as 'a mother in Israel' and held court (as a magistrate would, settling disputes) under a particular tree. Deborah is often seen as different to the judges which preceded her in that she typically led from wisdom and character, whereas Othniel used might and war and Ehud an assassination plan.

Timothy Keller describes Deborah in the following way:

"She was a judge who led beyond the battle field. In all this, we are reminded that God's chosen leader does not simply rescue, but also rules... In fact Deborah is (alone among judges) not a warrior. She is not the one who, in God's strength, rescues Israel by defeating her oppressors. Instead, she sends for Barak, and passed on the commission to him."

3.2 THE LAST THREE (main) JUDGES

The stories about the next three judges are longer and they tend to focus in on the character flaws of the judges which get increasingly worse.

3.2.1 Gideon

Gideon is a bit of a coward of a man. But he eventually comes to trust that God can save Israel through him, but not before he is assured of God's instruction by 'putting out his fleece' looking for a sign. He lays his fleece on the ground overnight and asks that God show him the ground and fleece in certain conditions (wet and dry) as proof. Gideon leads a small army of men, selected by watching those who drank from a spring in a particular fashion. They defeat a huge army of Midianites with only 300 men carrying torches and clay pots.

But Gideon has a nasty temper and he murders a bunch of fellow Israelites for not helping him in his battle, and then it all goes downhill from there. He makes an idol from the gold he won in his battles. And then, after he dies, all Israel worships the idol as a god and the cycle begins again.

3.2.2 Jephthah

"The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him."

Judges 10:6

And so Jephthah is raised up as a judge. The beginning of **Judges 11** provides important background information on this new judge. He was a mighty warrior from Gilead, but was the son of a prostitute and had been turned out of his father's house. As such, he was living in the hills and had gathered a following around him. Like the judges before him, Jephthah was a very effective leader, he won lots of battles against the Ammonites. However, there is great contention regarding the vow Jephthah made to the Lord:

"And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

Judges 11:30-31

Some believe that this vow is evidence of how far Israel had fallen, that they no longer knew the character of God, and that He is treated like a Canaanite god as Jephthah, for all intents and purposes, vows to sacrifice his own daughter.

Others believe that making a vow to the Lord is in keeping with Jacob's vow at Bethel (**Genesis 28:1-22**). And that in fact he did not offer his daughter up as a burnt sacrifice but rather offered her life in service to the temple.

3.2.3 Samson

Samson is admittedly the most problematic of all Israel's judges. His story portrays him as an arrogant, duplicitous, womanising trickster - hardly a good role model! He is born under supernatural circumstances (his mother had been barren) and his birth is heralded by an angel of the Lord. He was to be a Nazirite to God from the womb (**Judges 13:5**).

Samson's Life

Samson's story skips from his birth to his adulthood, where his first distinguishing act is to ask his father to bring him a certain Philistine woman to be his wife. Samson's parents object, asking him to find a woman among the Israelites. But the text justifies Samson's choice, explaining that by marrying a Philistine woman Samson would have opportunities to infiltrate and fight the Philistines, who were the current oppressors of the Israelites. In fact, it is on his way to claim this non-Israelite bride that Samson first discovers his super-human strength:

"Suddenly a young lion roared at him. The spirit of the Lord rushed on him, and he tore the lion apart barehanded."

Judges 14:5-6

The most famous of all of Samson's attacks against the Philistines comes in **Judges 15**. The Philistines raid a town in Judah in order to lure and capture Samson. To save themselves, the Judeans tie up Samson to deliver him to the enemy. But this episode does not end well for the Philistines:

"Then the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men."

Judges 15:14-15

In spite of his continued directive from God to fight the Philistines, Samson pursues a much more personal connection with them. He falls in love with a second Philistine woman - the notorious Delilah, who has been tasked by her people to find the secret of Samson's strength. Three times she begs to know the secret of his strength, and three times he lies to her. Finally, after Delilah nags persistently, he confesses:

"A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

Judges 16:17

Delilah takes advantage of this new information, lulling Samson to sleep and shaving off his hair. He immediately weakens, and God's power leaves him. Delilah hands Samson over to the Philistines

Samson's Death

Samson's death ends up being his greatest victory against the Philistines. The Philistines bring Samson down to Gaza and bind him to two pillars in their temple as a display for the amusement of the Philistine worshipers. Here Samson prays to God, asking for his strength to return to him one more time (**Judges 16:28**).

God responds by sending Samson a final burst of strength, and Samson pushes against the pillars and brings the entire temple down, killing himself and all those in the temple with him. The text concludes:

"Those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his life"

Judges 16:30

4. THE LESSONS

The book of Judges illustrates that God's people need a leader. Sheep are lost without a shepherd. The 350 years of anarchy were preparation for a monarchy. Joshua provided good leadership but when he died, the tribes became disunited and individuals began to live as they pleased. The leadership of the judges over the next 300-400 years provided some relief, but it was temporary and partial. As soon as one judge died the old weakness set in again.

The judges were preparing Israel for the next period in the redemptive story - the Kingdom period. However, even the best of kings needed a greater king and head. They all failed at some point. They did not provide an exemplary reign over God's people. The entire Old Testament prepares us for the righteous, messianic king, Jesus Christ - the ultimate judge-deliverer. Disobedience to him sees a repeat of the history of the book of Judges. The last verse of the book of Judges focuses the attention on the source of all Israel's problems, past and to come.

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes"

Judges 21:25

This verse simultaneously provides a glimmer of hope in that although Israel has no King, the way forward to the ultimate King in Christ is being highlighted and the path paved. The stage is set for the following books to tell the origins of King David's family, the book of Ruth and also the origins of Kingship itself. But the story of Judges has value as a tragedy; its sobering exploration of the human condition. And ultimately, it points out the **need for God's grace** to send a King who will rescue His people.

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