

The Story of the OT: Israel

Genesis 4 - 2 Chronicles 36; August 18, 2019

Today is the second sermon in this two-part series covering the entire OT.

Last week I started off with the “why.” Why is knowing the story of the OT important?

- You can’t properly understand any part of Scripture apart from understand the context in which it is placed. Many of you have probably heard of the COMA Bible study method: context, observation, meaning and application.
 - Context is essential.
 - The context for any verse: paragraph, chapter, book, Bible.
 - The “story” is the larger context that sheds light and gives perspective on each verse of the Bible.
- The goal of these two weeks is not to cover every verse of the OT but to cover the story so that you can parachute into any place of the OT and be able to get your bearings.
 - What is the story?
 - Where is this passage in the story?
 - Where am I in the story?
 - How does this passage fit into that story and contribute to it?
 - What am I supposed to do in light of this.
- Test case: the sacrificial system.

Where we’ve been and where we’re headed.

- The Six Act Drama: 1. Creation. 2. The Fall. 3. Israel. 4. Jesus. 5. The Church. 6. New Creation
- Act 1: Creation - God’s Kingdom Established (Genesis 1-2).
 - God is the author and king of Creation (1:1).
 - Humans are the climax of creation (1:26-30).
 - “Rest” is the goal of creation (2:1-3).
 - Summary: “It is an idyllic picture of the good life: life as it was meant to be...God’s people, Adam and Eve, live in God’s place, the garden of Eden, under God’s rule; as a result, they enjoy God’s blessing” (Vaughan Roberts).
- Act 2: The Fall - Rebellion in the Kingdom (Genesis 3).
 - The serpent is Satan, the great deceiver (3:1).
 - Adam and Eve rebel and reject God as King (3:1-13).
 - God responds in judgment (3:14-19, 22-24).
 - God also shows mercy and grace (3:15, 20-21).
 - Summary: God’s people have been banished from God’s place and presence because they rejected his rule and as a result face his curse. But death isn’t the end of the story. Sin is met by judgment but God also shows mercy and grace and gives us hope.
 - We conclude Act 2 with a question: who will be the one to reverse the effects of the fall so we can return and enjoy God’s forever rest.

- A few other things I want to draw your attention to:
 - What kind of obedience did God require? Perfect. They sinned once and faced his judgment.
 - Who is the promise of restoration and reversal for? The entire world. At this point, it's just Adam and Eve.

The Main Point of Act 3 is this: The King Chooses Israel, Initiating Redemption.

Before we jump back into the story, let's do one more thing. Let's look at the entire OT together.

The OT Structure in our English Bibles

- Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy)
- Historical Narrative (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)
- Poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)
- Prophecy (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel and The Twelve: Hosea - Malachi)

A few notes:

- We're going to break Act 3 down into two separate scenes:
 - Scene 1: A People for the King (The Law)
 - Scene 2: A Land for His People (Historical Narrative)
- I've still got to cover 38 and 3/4 books in the OT today. Some books will hardly even be mentioned. Remember our purpose: not to cover every detail, but the big picture story.

Scene 1: A People for the King (The Law)

- The rest of Genesis seeks to answer the question: who will this offspring be?
 - **Adam to Noah (Gen. 6-9).**
 - The story of the flood and God's covenant with Noah.
 - Sidebar: we see "covenant" language throughout the OT and NT. What's this all about?
 - Covenants form the "backbone" of the story of Scripture (so Gentry and Wellum). They are the means by which God's rule and kingdom is established (so Schreiner).
 - God will never again destroy the earth by a flood (sign: rainbow).
 - **The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12; 15; 17)**

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 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. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen. 12:1-3 ESV)

- God will make Abraham into a great nation and him to bring blessing to

the entire world (sign: circumcision).

- **Isaac (Gen. 26)**
- **Jacob, who's name is changed to Israel (Gen. 35)**
- **Twelve Tribes (Gen. 49:8-12).**

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Gen. 49:8-10 ESV)

- **Exodus-Leviticus:**

- Israel ends up in Egypt because of a famine but God sovereignly provides for them through Joseph, a picture of a righteous suffering servant. There we see the 10 plagues, the Passover (salvation by substitution and a foreshadowing of a future passover lamb to take away the sins of the world - John 1:29), the parting of the Red Sea, and then God establishes his covenant with Moses.
- **Mosaic Covenant (Exod 19:3b-8; 20-24)**
 - God promises that Israel will be his special people and they in turn are commanded to obey his law (sign: the sabbath).
 - He's bringing them into the promised land (sort of like a new Eden) and in order to stay in the land, he requires complete obedience (blessing vs. cursing...see Deut. 28).
- **What was the purpose of the law?**
 - One of the primary purposes of the law was to reveal our sin and lead us to a savior (cf. Rom. 1-3; Gal. 3).
 - The sacrifices, the temple, etc. - Go read Hebrews

- **Numbers-Deuteronomy:**

- Israel departs Mount Sinai in Num 10 heading towards the Promised Land and faces one disaster after another. One scholar comments that the "desert has become one vast burial ground for the nation."
- The people rebel against the Lord and God condemns their entire generation to exile in the desert (Num 14:20-23; 40 years), all except for Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:30; cf. Num. 20:1-13).

- **Summary and Conclusion:**

- Scene One ends with the death of Moses outside of the land, but Joshua poised to enter into the land of promise to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.
- Scene ends with two lingering questions:
 - Once they enter into the land, will they be faithful and prosper or will they disobey and be exiled?
 - Who will be the new Moses?

And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

11 none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. (Deut. 34:10-12 ESV)

Scene 2: A Land for His People (Historical Narrative)

- **From Conquest to Exile (Joshua to 2 Chronicles)**
 - **Joshua:** he leads Israel into the land and they have rest from all their enemies (cf. Josh. 21:44; 23:1).
 - **Judges:** After Joshua dies, the Lord raises up judges to lead Israel. But the main theme of this book is that “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 14:3, 7; 17:6; 21:25), namely, that which was “evil in the sight of the Lord” (Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1; 20:3, 12-13).
 - **1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles**
 - Here, it becomes explicit that Israel has “rejected” God as king over them and wants a king to judge them like all the nations do (cf. 1 Sam. 8:1-9). As Roberts notes, “They want a king *instead* of God rather than a king *under* God.”
 - **Saul** is chosen as king but God makes his covenant with **David**, a man after God’s own heart.

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Sam. 7:12-13 ESV)

- From here onward, just like with the offspring in Gen. 3:15, we’re asking, “Is this the king who will establish God’s kingdom forever?”
 - **Solomon**, David’s son, builds a magnificent temple, symbolizing the dwelling place of God (cf. 1 Kgs 5:4; 8:256). His reign, which at one point looked to be the fulfillment of the Davidic promises, comes to a tragic halt as he marries many foreign wives and begins to worship their gods (1 Kings 11).
 - The kingdom divided (see 1 Kings 12).
 - After Solomon dies, Civil War breaks out and the kingdom divides.
 - Northern Kingdom called “Israel” with its capital city in Shechem
 - Southern Kingdom called “Judah” with its capital city in Jerusalem.
 - With each succeeding king, the hope of the Davidic covenant became even more faint, until Israel, because of her idolatry, is exiled and scattered among the nations and Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed.
 - Israel is exiled in 722 BC (2 Kings 17).
 - Judah is exiled in 586 BC (2 Kings 25; cf. Deut. 28:25, 63-64; Josh. 23:12-13).
- **From Exile to Jerusalem (Ezra and Nehemiah)**

- Ezra leads the rebuilding of the temple and Nehemiah the walls. Israel has returned in one sense, but in another sense, they are still in exile.
- It becomes clear that this is not the time of final fulfillment:
 - Jerusalem and the temple is far less impressive than the one before (cf. Ezra 3:11-13).
 - Some weep because they know this can't be the new temple Ezekiel prophesied about.
 - Nehemiah ends with disappointment over Israel's continued inability to keep God's law, despite Ezra's efforts (Neh. 13).
- **A note on the place of Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible (Tanak)**
 - Our English Bibles place Chronicles before Ezra and Nehemiah and conclude the OT with Malachi (see slide).
 - The Hebrew Bible places Chronicles after Ezra and Nehemiah and it's the last book of the OT (see slide).
 - With the Tanak concluding with Chronicles after Ezra-Nehemiah instead of vice versa, this suggests that even though the exile was over in a literal sense, Israel still remained in exile.
 - "God's people are still in exile, waiting for the Lord to return to them and fulfill all his promises of salvation. God's kingdom still has not come, because God's king as not come" (Roberts).
 - The Hebrew Bible ends with these words, "Let him go up."

What about the Poetry and Prophecy Books?

- The other books that don't move the storyline forward: Poetry and Prophecy
 - Poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs
- The prophets give theological commentary and reflection on Israel with two main and consistent themes:
 - **Judgment**
 - They speak against Israel's continual idolatry and rebellion and call her to repent and return to the Lord.
 - If you don't repent, judgment and exile is inevitable.
 - **Hope**
 - They remind Israel of God's promises and how one day he is going to send his anointed one, the Christ, to reverse the effects of the fall.
 - There will be a new exodus, a new covenant, a new nation, a new Jerusalem, a new temple, a new king, and a new creation. God's people in God's place, under God's rule and enjoying his blessing (so Roberts).
 - For reference: A New Exodus (cf. Jer. 16:14-15); the Servant (cf. Isa. 49:5-6; 52:13-53:12); the inclusion of the nations (cf. Exod. 19:6; Isa. 49:6); New Temple: (cf. Ezekiel 40-48); New Creation (cf. Isa. 65:17-18); The New King (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:13-14; Ps. 110:1); Great Blessing (cf. Amos 9:13-14; Isa. 11:6).

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. 31:31-33 ESV; cf. Ezek. 34-39; Joel 2:28-32)

- Jesus is the one who inaugurates this new covenant and accomplishes the redemption that God initiates with Israel.

Conclusion:

- Every single one of us face the same predicament as Israel. We continually reject God as king to be our own kings and thus face his judgment and exile out of his land and presence. The only way to return is through the son of Abraham, the son of David, through the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who brings blessing to the entire world.
- God chose Israel so you that and I might be redeemed.