

Lesson 2:

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

Introduction

As we noted earlier, the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Himself told his detractors, "*Search the Scriptures ... they ... testify of Me*" (John 5:39). In light of this truth, every portion of Scripture has a connection to Christ - revealing something about Him or about His mission. Again, He said, "*for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). So, a thorough understanding of the Bible will include how it relates to Jesus Christ.

Along the way there is so much valuable information for life and godliness: proper beliefs about God, principles for life, Godly wisdom, good and bad examples, and more - especially a big picture world view that should shape every part of our lives.

In this three-lesson course we will only be able to hit the highest of the high points, and reserve greater detail for the courses that follow.

Grouping the Bible Books Into Sections for Study

The Bible is only divided into two large parts (Old and New Testaments) and then into individual books within those parts. However, in order to more study the Bible more effectively it is helpful to divide it into smaller sections related to historical time periods and/or themes found in the writings.

For the purposes of this course, "Know Your Bible", the Bible will be covered in six sections:

1. Foundations: Genesis - Deuteronomy, Job
2. Landscapes: Joshua - Ruth
3. The Rise and Fall of Israel: 1 Samuel - 2 Chronicles
4. Exile and Beyond: Ezra - Esther, Daniel
5. Hebrew Poetry and Wisdom: Psalms - Song of Solomon
6. The Fulfillment: Matthew - Revelation (i.e. the New Testament)

Each subsequent session of this course will cover one of these sections. It should be noted that there is no section devoted to the prophets. They will be referenced in the section to which they are related historically and/or theologically.

In this session, "Bible Panorama", we will take an overview look at each of these six sections.

"Foundations"

Books: LAW (25% of O.T.; 19% of Bible): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy ; and Job (possibly the earliest written book - about 2400 B.C.)

Time period covered: Creation of the world (4004 B.C.?) to about 1400 B.C.

Historical context/setting: Middle East: modern day Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Israel, Egypt

Primary characters: Adam, Eve, Noah, Job, Abram / Abraham, Isaac, Jacob / Israel, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Miriam

Primary teaching/themes: Creation, Fall of man (into sin), problem of suffering and its causes / purposes, creation of God's chosen people; substitutionary blood sacrifice for sin, Law, ritual symbolism in tabernacle / offerings / sacrifices / feasts

Outstanding highlight(s): Creation of the universe, the worldwide flood, origin of languages, Abraham's faith shown in near-sacrifice of Isaac, plagues in Egypt, exodus from Egypt and miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, Ten Commandments given on Mt. Sinai, manna

Christ & redemption:

1. First promise of a Savior (Genesis 3:15)
2. First picture of redemption through shedding of innocent blood (Genesis 3:21)
3. Lord as initiator and securer of salvation (Genesis 6:13 ff; 7:16)
4. Lord commands a physical symbol to show a spiritual relationship (Genesis 17:1-10ff)
5. Lord providing a substitutionary sacrifice (Genesis 22:8, 13)
6. Passover - "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*" (Exodus 12:13)
7. All sorts of symbolism in Leviticus from priests to feasts
8. Savior becoming sin for us (Numbers 21:5-9; John 3:14-15)
9. The promised "Prophet of Israel" (Deuteronomy 18:18; John 12:49)
10. Outer symbols of redemption to become an inner reality (Deuteronomy 30:6; Colossians 2:11)
11. Confident hope of the believer's resurrection to be with the Savior (Job 19:26)

"Landscapes"

Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth

Time period covered: About 1400-1000 B.C.

Historical context/setting: Israel conquering, settling, and living in the Promised Land

Primary characters: Joshua, Caleb, Rahab, Samson, Boaz, Ruth

Primary teaching/themes: Taking possession of God's promises; cycle of spirituality; lineage of Christ

Outstanding highlight(s): Jordan river dried up for Israel to cross, walls of Jericho falling down, long day of Joshua, stories Samson's strength and weakness, God's working through a non-Israelite/Jew

Christ & redemption:

1. Redemption by faith (Joshua 2 - Rahab)
2. Preincarnate Son of God appears to Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15)
3. "Joshua", the Hebrew form of "Jesus", leads God's people to possess God's promises
4. Preincarnate Son of God appears three times in Judges with messages for the nation and certain individuals (Judges 2:1-5; 6:11ff; 13:3ff)
5. Genealogy of Christ, salvation of Gentiles, God's saving grace (Ruth)

"The Rise and Fall of Israel"

Books: 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles

Time period covered: 1000 B.C. - 586 B.C.

Historical context/setting: Establishment of monarchy in Israel, rise of Israel as a nation and world power, division and demise of Israel, final defeat and captivity

Primary characters: Samuel, Saul, David, Jonathan, Solomon, Elijah, Elishah, Ahab, Jezebel, (mostly wicked) kings of Israel & Judah, various prophets (note: prophetic books of the O.T.)

Primary teaching/themes: Importance of choosing God's ways and wisdom over the world's, principle of sowing and reaping, impact/consequences of leaders' character on a nation

Outstanding highlight(s): David and Goliath, Saul's growing rebellion and resulting insanity, David and Bathsheba, Solomon's wisdom/kingdom/Temple, visible

manifestation of God's glory in the Temple, God's power shown through Elijah (and the prophets of Baal) and Elishah, both Israel and Judah fall and are taken captive

Christ & redemption:

1. David's throne/kingdom will become the throne/kingdom of Christ (2 Samuel, et al)
2. God's continuing promise to establish David's descendants on the throne in preparation for the promised Messiah
3. Communication of reality that Messiah's kingdom is first and foremost spiritual in nature shown by allowing David's throne to go out of existence (cf. John 18:36)

"Exile and Beyond"

Books: Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah (chronological order)

Time period covered: 586 B.C. - 420 B.C.

Historical context/setting: God's people in captivity (first to Assyrians) then to Babylonians followed by the Persians

Primary characters: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar, Ahasuerus/Xerxes, Mordecai, Esther, Haman, Ezra, Nehemiah

Primary teaching/themes: God protecting and providing for His people even in their captivity, God's restoration of His people from captivity, rebuilding of Temple and Jerusalem

Outstanding highlight(s): God's deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, God's deliverance of Daniel from the lion's den, God's establishment of Esther as Persian Queen and protection of His people through her, promised return of God's people to Israel and rebuilding of Temple and Jerusalem's walls

Christ & redemption:

1. Symbolism of Ezra - Messiah will restore true worship in God's eternal temple
2. Symbolism of Nehemiah - Messiah providing protection so His people can focus on most important things in life
3. God delivers His people at just the right time just as the Messiah will come at just the right time (as predicted in Daniel 9)
4. Messiah would die for other people's sins (Daniel 9)