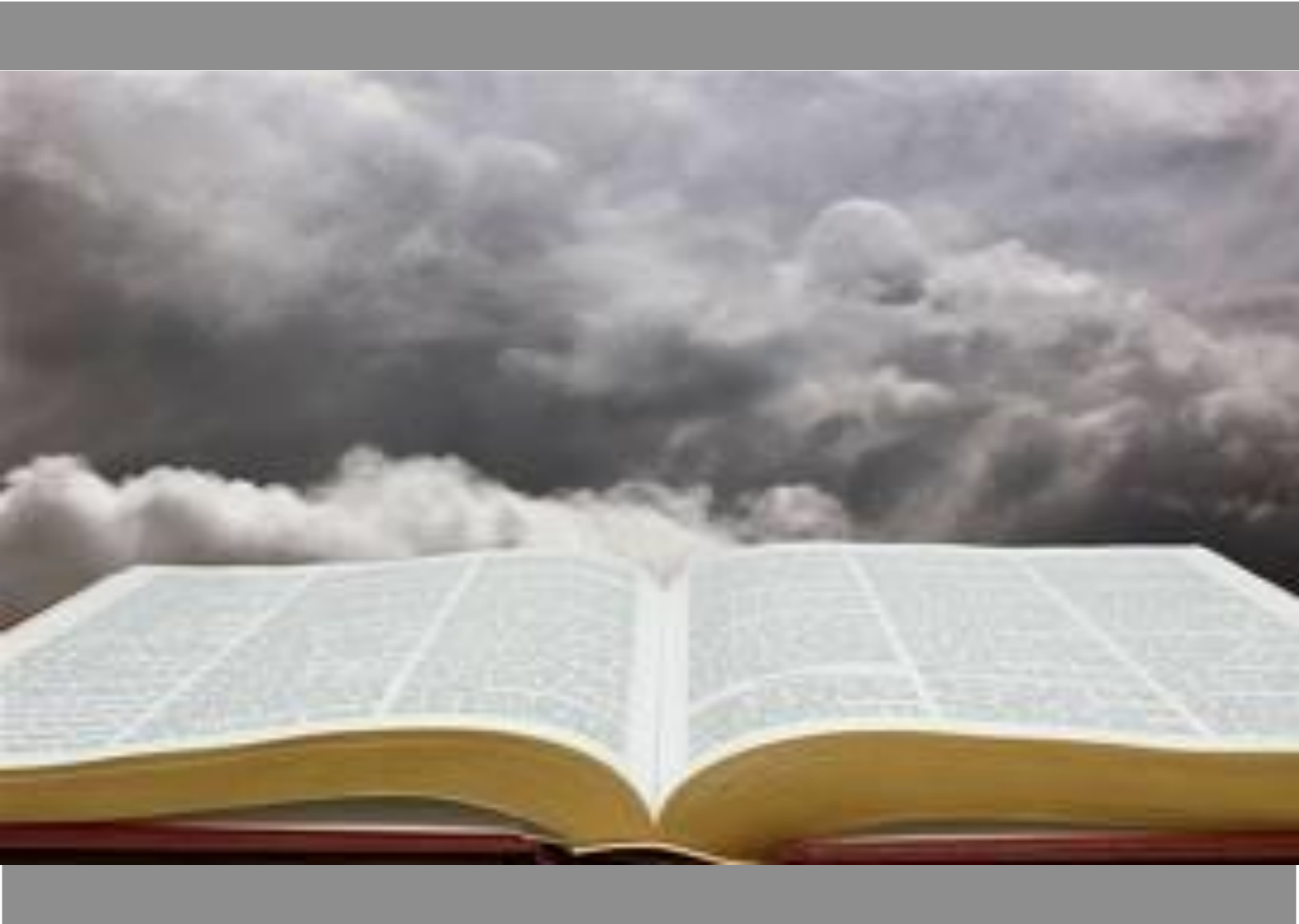


God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 2: The Nation Of Israel



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 2: The Nation Of Israel

Learn how God chose the nation of Israel to be His special people and used them to accomplish His eternal plan of salvation

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW20

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 2:

The Nation Of Israel

In our first study, we began discussing the eternal plan of God (Ephesians 3:8-11). We discussed the creation, the fall, and the spread of sin. We also discovered the nature of God in the beginning (i.e. that He was already in existence and that He had a plan). You might want to go back and review all of the passages that were introduced concerning the eternal plan of God. We also discussed how God created the heavens and the earth during the 6 days of creation – and established that He created everything so that He would be glorified. Unfortunately, those God created in His own image decided to violate God's law – and consequences followed (namely the consequence of spiritual death). Yet, God promised (in Genesis 3:15) that He would defeat Satan through the Seed of the woman. This is the first glimpse into God's eternal plan. However, sin continued to spread – as seen in the stories of Cain and Abel and the flood. The problem of sin is the reason for God's eternal plan – for, mankind could not save himself from his sin. Mankind could only be saved from his sin if God would provide a Savior!

The story of the Bible is this story of God's eternal plan to provide a Savior for the world! The story, as we've seen, begins in Genesis 1 and comes to a climax in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts! Best of all – you and I are part of the story of the Bible (even though our names are not found in its pages)!

How do you fit into this Bible story? What does the story of the Bible mean for your life? We will discover the answer to this question as we continue to consider the “big picture” of the Bible by discussing “God's Eternal Plan” during the course of this study!

This second lesson will discuss how God chose the nation of Israel to be His own people – and how He used the nation of Israel to accomplish His eternal plan.

God's Covenant With Abraham

Our first study stopped around Genesis chapter 9, after the flood. However, the Bible story does not stop there. From this point, the Bible describes the lineage of Noah through his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth). From these three sons, the whole earth was populated again (Genesis 9:18-19). Their genealogical records are given in Genesis chapter 10.

Noah to Abraham

After the flood had ended and Noah's family exited the ark, the Bible records the account of Noah becoming drunk and naked in his tent (Genesis 9:20-27). Ham saw his father's nakedness; but it was Shem and Japheth who actually took a garment and covered their father's nakedness. While this story may seem insignificant to the Bible story, the words of Noah (in Genesis 9:24-27) show its true significance: “So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren.’ And he said: ‘Blessed be the Lord, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant.’”

So, Noah placed a curse on Canaan (the son of Ham), saying that Canaan would be the servant of Shem (and that Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem). When you come to Genesis chapter 11

(verses 10-32), the Bible brings Shem's descendants into focus, pointing to the genealogy of Terah (the father of Abraham). Thus, it is through the descendants of Shem that God will reveal His eternal plan!

God's promises to Abraham

It is at this point that Abraham (called "Abram") is brought into focus (Genesis 11:25-32). In Genesis 12:1, God called Abraham to leave his homeland (Ur of the Chaldeans) and his family (who would have been in the same area). He was to leave his homeland in order to go to the land that God was about to promise to give his descendants (the land of Canaan). Abraham's obedience to this call involved great faith; but, was based on three promises from God (Genesis 12:1-5; Genesis 15).

Genesis 12:1-5 says, "Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan."

Consider the three main promises God made to Abraham. (1) The nation promise. God promised that He would make a great nation out of Abraham's descendants. (2) The land promise. God promised that He would give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan (the land Abraham was called to dwell in). (3) The Seed promise. God promised to bless Abraham. In fact, God promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. This third promise has direct relevance to the unfolding of God's eternal plan! It would be through the descendants of Abraham (the nation of Israel) that God would bring Christ (the Savior) into this world,

thereby blessing all nations by providing them the opportunity to be saved!

The son of promise

While God had made these promises to Abraham concerning Abraham's descendants, Abraham was still childless. Therefore, Abraham questioned, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing that I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?...Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir" (Genesis 15:2-3). Still, God promised Abraham that he would have an heir come from his own body – and his descendants would be as innumerable as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:4-5).

Yet, as time went on and Abraham and his wife grew older, they remained childless. Then, Abraham's wife (Sarai, who would later be called Sarah) convinced Abraham to have a child by Sarah's maidservant, Hagar. This Abraham did and conceived a son who would be named Ishmael (Genesis 16). In Genesis 17, God renamed Abram and Sarai to Abraham (meaning, father of a multitude) and Sarah (meaning, princess) – while again promising that He would accomplish His promises through them. In Genesis 17:19, listen to what God told Abraham concerning Abraham's proposal that Ishmael would be the descendant God should fulfill His promises through: "Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.'"

During this time, God also established circumcision as the sign of the covenant between Himself and Abraham. Although Abraham and Sarah both laughed at the prospect of bearing a child in their old age, God promised that they would bear a son who was to be called Isaac (Genesis 17:17-22; Genesis 18:1-15).

Then, according to the promise that He had made, God blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son. Genesis 21:1-7 records, "And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had

spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, ‘God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me.’ She also said, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.’”

Genesis 22:1-18 records how God then tested Abraham’s faith by commanding Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice upon an altar. Genesis 22:1-2 says, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”

Abraham proceeded to rise early the next morning and go to the place God had specified. Upon his arrival, Abraham and Isaac went up to the mountain alone to worship God – and Abraham prepared for the sacrifice. Then, as Abraham had laid Isaac upon the altar and was about to slay him, the Angel of the Lord stopped him. Abraham had demonstrated his complete faith in God. He believed that God would fulfill His promises in some way – even concluding that God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead (see Hebrews 11:17-19).

The promise to Abraham’s descendants

As the story continues, God continues to offer the same promises to the descendants of Abraham as He had made to Abraham prior. In fact, God had promised Abraham that He would establish His covenant with Isaac and with Isaac’s descendants. Again, Genesis 17:19 says, “Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.’”

When Isaac’s wife had twins sons (Esau and Jacob), God had promised that the older would serve the younger – and that there were two nations in her

womb (Genesis 25:23). As you read Genesis 25:29-34 and Genesis 27, you see how Esau (the older son) sold his birthright to his brother, Jacob, and how Jacob later received Isaac’s blessing (particularly note Genesis 28:3-4). This was all according to what God had said in Genesis 25:23.

In Genesis 28:12-15, God extends the covenant to Jacob, which He had made with Abraham prior, through a dream: “Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: ‘I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.’”

Then, Genesis 29:31 through Genesis 30:24 and Genesis 35:16-21 records how 12 sons were born to Jacob through his two wives and their two handmaids. In Genesis 32:22-32 (particularly note verse 28), God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, whose 12 children would become the patriarchs of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel.

Jacob’s last words to each one of his sons are recorded in Genesis 49 – and are significant in the unfolding of God’s eternal plan. Particularly note the statement that is made concerning Judah in Genesis 49:9-12: “Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk.”

It was through Judah that the kings of Israel would come – and Shiloh (the Prince of Peace, the

Messiah) would also come through the lineage of the tribe of Judah. Thus, God’s eternal plan would be accomplished through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. Then, as you roll forward in the pages of the Old Testament (1 Samuel 8-16), you will see the fulfillment of this when Saul (of the tribe of Benjamin) was the first king of Israel; but, was removed, and then replaced by David (of the tribe of Judah).

God, then established His covenant with David – promising that there would be no end to his kingdom. This would be accomplished through the Messiah, who would come through the lineage of David (of the tribe of Judah) and set up His kingdom (Isaiah 7:13-14; Isaiah 9:6-7). Consider the following passages.

2 Samuel 7:12-16 says, “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Psalms 89:3-4 says, “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: ‘Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations.’ Selah”

Psalms 132:11-12 says, “The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: ‘I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body. If your sons will keep My covenant And My testimony which I shall teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore.’”

Thus, God established His covenant with Abraham and with Abraham’s descendants. This was just as God had promised to Abraham in Genesis 17:6-8: “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their

generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” Therefore, the Israelites were God’s people during the Old Testament times.

God’s Covenant With The Nation Of Israel

Throughout the time of the patriarchs (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), God communicated His will directly to the heads of the households (patriarchs). For instance, consider how God communicated His will directly to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. In this passage, God not only commanded Abraham to leave his homeland; but, he also established His promises to Abraham. This was also observed in God’s commandment to Adam and Eve regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Therefore, during this time, God did not have a written law. Instead, He communicated His will directly to the patriarchs.

The Law of Moses

God chose to give the nation of Israel a written law to abide by. The book of Galatians informs us that the Law was added because of transgressions – until the Seed should come (Galatians 3:19). It was described as a tutor to bring the Jews to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). That is, the Law was given as a temporary system because of sin (either because of the wickedness that was being committed or in order to reveal the true nature of sin), until Jesus Christ (the Seed) would come. You can read about the giving of this Law in the book of Exodus (beginning around chapter 19). Ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) served as the foundation of this Law.

The Law also consisted of regular sacrifices that were to be made – and a priesthood (composed of men from the tribe of Levi) who would administer these rituals and sacrifices on behalf of the people.

You can read more about the Law that was established with the nation of Israel in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. When Moses had spoken the words of the Lord to the people, they entered into a covenant relationship with God – that He would be their God and they would be His people (and be obedient to God’s commandments).

Exodus 24:3-8 says, “So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the Lord has said we will do.’ And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.’ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.’”

Blessings or consequences

God would keep His part of the covenant; but, Israel was warned concerning the consequences if they failed to keep their part of the covenant with God. In addition, God told them how He would bless them if they would keep His commandments. Just prior to Moses’ death (and just prior to the Israelites going in to possess the land of Canaan), Moses encouraged the people to keep the commandments of God, saying that it would prove to be beneficial to them if they did.

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 says, “Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.” Also read Leviticus 26 to see

what the Israelites were told concerning the blessings that would come from following the Lord’s commandments – and the consequences that would result if they failed to keep His commandments.

A shadow of things to come

The Law of Moses was but a shadow of things to come. It was not designed to be a permanent system. Galatians 3:23-25 makes this perfectly clear: “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Remember, the Law of Moses (according to Galatians 3:19) was “added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.” That Seed was Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Law of Moses was only designed to be a temporary system of law to govern God’s people (the Israelites) *till* the promised Seed would come into the world and establish His new (and better) law!

So, it was designed for a specific purpose, fulfilled that specific purpose (related to the nation of Israel), and has now been taken away. Colossians 2:14 says that this law has been nailed to Jesus’ cross: “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Yes, the Law of Moses was not a perfect system (Hebrews 8:7) – in that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4) and the law itself could not give life (Galatians 3:21-22; Galatians 3:10-14). Instead, the Law of Moses was a foretaste of better things to come under the Law of Christ (see Hebrews 9:1-10:18). Christ’s Law (the New Covenant) has since been established – and is far better! To see a discussion of how much better Christ’s Law is compared to the Law of Moses, read the book of Hebrews! However, the Law of Moses was designed so that the Israelites would come to faith in Christ Jesus whenever He would come to earth (as we saw from Galatians 3:23-25).

A Brief History Of The Nation Of Israel

The story of the Old Testament is the story of the nation of Israel and how God called the nation of Israel to be His people and used them to bring the Savior into the world. Let's consider an overview of the Old Testament to watch as this story develops.

The patriarchs

The account of the patriarchs (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) forms the foundation for the nation of Israel. Their stories in the book of Genesis tell how God promised to make a great nation out their descendants, give their descendants the land of Canaan, and bless the entire world through their Seed (i.e. Genesis 12:1-3). Go back and review the things that we have already discussed concerning these promises. Their descendants were called the "Israelites" or the "nation of Israel."

Egyptian slavery

Jacob had 12 sons. However, Jacob showed favoritism toward Joseph because he was the son of Rachel (who Jacob preferred over Leah, his other wife and Rachel's sister). He showed this favoritism by giving Joseph a coat of many colors. This action provoked jealousy from Joseph's brothers (besides Benjamin, the youngest). Joseph's brothers eventually sold him into slavery, telling Jacob that Joseph had been killed by wild animals. Joseph, meanwhile, was blessed by God and was caused to prosper wherever he went – and eventually became the second in command in all of Egypt (second only to the King/Pharaoh).

It was during this time (while Joseph was second in command in Egypt) that a great famine arose over all of the land. Having made provisions for this famine, food was available in Egypt – and Joseph was in charge of it. Unaware that Joseph had come to this position of authority in Egypt, Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt during the famine, seeking necessary provisions – and were eventually reunited with Joseph. It was in this way that God was providing for His people during this time of famine!

Joseph's family would live in the land of Goshen (in Egypt) through this time of famine.

However, as time passed, Joseph and the Pharaoh both died. Later, a new Pharaoh came to power in Egypt – one who did not know Joseph or remember his contributions to Egypt. Therefore, this king looked upon the Israelites as a threat (seeing that they were becoming strong in number) and determined to put them to hard labor, making them slaves of the Egyptians.

The exodus

During this time of slavery, the Pharaoh commanded that all of the male children who were born to the Israelites be killed (cast into the river). It was during this time that Moses was born. However, Moses' parents hid their child so that he would not be destroyed. They made an ark of bulrushes for Moses to lay in, and put the ark in the reeds by the river bank. It happened that Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the river at this time and Moses was discovered! However, Pharaoh's daughter chose to take Moses as her own son instead of having Moses killed.

As time went on and the children of Israel continued to be in captivity, God heard the cry of His people for help while they were in Egypt. God, therefore, called Moses through a burning bush to lead His people out of Egypt. Moses later went to Pharaoh and commanded that the Israelites be permitted to go into the wilderness to hold a feast for the Lord (and was given signs to perform in front of Pharaoh to demonstrate that God had sent him). But, when Pharaoh repeatedly refused to allow Israel to leave, God brought a series of 10 plagues upon the Egyptians (the last of which was the death of all the firstborn in Egypt – except among those who complied with God's instructions regarding the "Passover"). Israel was finally permitted to leave Egypt after the 10th plague; but, Pharaoh's heart was hardened once more and he pursued the Israelites with his military. It was at this time that Moses parted the Red Sea, allowing Israel to cross on dry ground – and destroyed all the Egyptians who pursued! Thus, God delivered His people out of the land of Egypt!

The wilderness wanderings

Israel was now on their way to possess the land that had been promised to Abraham (the land of Canaan). Although God was with Israel and provided for them, Israel often complained against Moses and against God while they were traveling in the wilderness (saying that they would have been better off staying in Egypt). Then, when they came near the land of Canaan and sent out spies to view the land, Israel did not trust in God enough to go into the land and possess it! Only two of the 12 spies (Joshua and Caleb) gave encouraging reports about their ability to possess the land with God's help. The others said that Israel would not be able to drive out the inhabitants of the land. Since the children of Israel listened to the 10 spies who brought back negative reports and failed to trust in God, God sentenced all of the Israelites who were 20 years old and above to die in the wilderness (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb). This period of wilderness wandering lasted for 40 years.

The conquest of Canaan

When this time of 40 years was complete – and those who had rebelled against God had died – God led His people into the promised land, under the leadership of Joshua. Now, it is important to understand that Israel had been divided into 12 tribes (according to the 12 sons of Jacob). The land of Canaan, then, would be divided up among the tribes of Israel. Joseph's 2 sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) were each given their own territory and were recognized as "half tribes." Levi, the priestly tribe, was given no land inheritance. Instead, the Levites were supported by the rest of the Israelites for the services they performed. Israel, by the power of God, was able to possess the land of Canaan and drive out the inhabitants of the land. The victory of Israel over Jericho is an example of how God caused Israel to inhabit the land (read Joshua 6). However, the Israelites often failed to entirely drive out or destroy all of the inhabitants of the land (not due to the lack of ability; but, simply because of their own disobedience).

The period of the judges

Those who had been permitted by Israel to remain in the land of Canaan would often influence Israel to sin against God (often through their idolatrous practices). This angered God – and God would deliver the Israelites to the enemy to be oppressed. Then, when Israel would repent and cry out to God for deliverance, God would deliver them by means of judges. Later, they would go back into sin. This cycle continued throughout the book of Judges. Consider the sad conclusion to the book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

The united kingdom

Israel, again, rejected God and demanded that a king be appointed to judge them like the other nations (see 1 Samuel 8:5-6). The book of 1 Samuel, then, describes how God gave them a king – according to their desires. Saul (of the tribe of Benjamin) was the first king appointed over Israel. However, because of Saul's disobedience, Saul's kingdom was taken away from him by God and was given to David (of the tribe of Judah), a man after God's own heart. Remember, the scepter was not to depart from Judah, according to the words of Jacob in Genesis 49:10. David's son, Solomon, then became king after David.

The divided kingdom

After Solomon's death, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, became king. However, when Rehoboam acted on some bad advice, he made a decision that led to the division of the kingdom. The northern part of the nation of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam – and Jeroboam became king over these tribes (which would retain the name, "Israel"). The capital of Israel was set up in Samaria. Rehoboam continued as king over the southern region (which would be called "Judah"). Its capital would be in Jerusalem. During this divided kingdom period, every king of Israel was unfaithful to God, with only a few faithful kings in Judah.

The captivity

Remember the promise God made in Leviticus 26 concerning the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. Because of the disobedience of Israel, Israel was given over to Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C. Judah was left alone during this time. However, due to the disobedience of Judah, Judah was given over to Babylonian captivity in 606 B.C. Thus, their downfall was a bit slower than Israel's – because they had a few faithful kings (while Israel had no faithful kings).

The return

The focus of the Bible story now becomes Judah. It is important to remember God's promises we have discussed regarding the coming of a Savior through Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1-3) and that Jesus Christ (the King of Kings) would come through the tribe of Judah and David's descendants (Genesis 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12-16). Jeremiah had prophesied that this period of Judah's captivity would last for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11). Isaiah also prophesied that a remnant would return (Isaiah 10:20-23). You can read about this return of a small remnant of Judah to Jerusalem in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Prophets

During the Old Testament period, God used prophets. These prophets were charged with the responsibility of faithfully revealing God's message to the people (read Deuteronomy 18:20-22). Sometimes this message would contain warnings about disobedience, information about future events, etc. Most of the prophets you read about in the Bible revealed God's message to God's people (the Israelites). However, some also prophesied to other nations. A basic understanding of the prophets is helpful in understanding God's eternal plan because not only were these prophets revealing things that were relevant to people of that time; but, God was revealing His eternal plan through these prophets as well!

Then, consider the fact that, as the prophets revealed the words of God, they would not have perfect understanding themselves about the salvation that God was unfolding. 1 Peter 1:10-12 says, "Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into."

Prophecies about the Messiah

Some of the prophecies that were made pointed to the coming of the Messiah (the Savior of the world). Some examples of these Messianic prophecies are: Isaiah 7:13-14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 53). There are over 300 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

Prophecies about the gospel

Some prophecies pointed to the new covenant that would be established (this is the gospel of Jesus Christ). Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Joel 2:28-32 to see prophecies about the gospel.

Prophecies about the church

Some prophecies pointed to the establishment of Christ's church/kingdom (which would be an everlasting kingdom). A couple examples of this are found in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Daniel chapter 2.

Conclusion

God's eternal plan is unfolding. We have watched its development through the promises made in the book of Genesis – and promises that were made throughout the Old Testament. Furthermore, we have watched as God is telling this story of

salvation through His chosen people during the Old Testament period – the nation of Israel.

In the next lesson, we will continue to watch as the promise of a Savior is fulfilled and all nations of the earth are blessed through Him!

Study Questions

Review what you've learned thus far.

1. God's Covenant With Abraham

What significance does the events of Genesis 9:20-27 have on the Bible story?

What promises did God make to Abraham? What significance do these have in God's eternal plan?

Discuss the significance of Abraham's son of promise.

Discuss how God made the same promises to the descendants of Abraham.

2. God's Covenant With The Nation Of Israel

Why did God give His people a Law to follow? What did the Law consist of?

What would happen if Israel kept the Law and if they did not keep the Law?

How was the Law a shadow of things to come?

3. A Brief History Of The Nation Of Israel

What is the significance of the Old Testament story?

Discuss significant points related to each of the following:

1. The patriarchs –
2. Egyptian slavery –
3. The exodus –
4. The wilderness wanderings –
5. The conquest of Canaan –
6. The period of the judges –
7. The united kingdom –
8. The divided kingdom –
9. The captivity –

10. The return –

4. The Prophets

Who were the prophets and what was the significance of their work?

List some passages that prophesy about the Messiah, the Gospel, and the church. Discuss the significance of these prophecies.