



Genesis to JESUS

Overview of the Old Testament

Bathurst Presbyterian Church 2017



If you've ever wondered what the Old Testament is really about. If you feel like the Old Testament is a confusing mix of hard-to-understand laws and boring history. If you've ever been confused about how the Old Testament relates to Jesus. These studies are for you.

This set of studies take us through the entire Old Testament in just 10 weeks. Their aim is to give us the big picture of creation, the fall and the history of God's dealings with Israel - the whole story with it's ups and downs, and with the certainty of God's promises shining through.

As with any study, you'll get the most out of them if you're able to read the relevant passage and answer the questions before your group meets. That will also equip you to best encourage the others in your group with what you say. However, if some weeks you don't get to prepare, please don't use that as an excuse to not go along. Just being there is a great way of showing the group that they're important to you. Plus, the studies are designed to be useful even if you're thinking about them for the first time at group.

So enjoy the view from this rapid flyover the Old Testament. Because sometimes its good to just see the forest instead of individual trees.

Genesis 1-11

When good goes bad

Getting started

Draw a diagram or a time line containing what you see as the main events of the Old Testament. Be as creative as you can.

A Good Creation

Genesis provides us with a very detailed and systematic picture of creation. Skim over 1:1-2:3. Do you notice any recurring words or phrase?

What key truths do you think these patterns tell us about God, nature and humanity?

A Bad Decision

Read Genesis 3:8-24. This records the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God's rule. This is often called the "Fall." How is Adam & Eve's sin typical of all sin?

God punishes Adam & Eve for their rebellion and the original pattern of creation is reestablished. All is not well though. How is the created order now different?

The spread of sin

Skim through Genesis 4-11 noting the main events which happen. How do they show the spread of sin and the worsening of creation?

Despite all the bad things that happen in Genesis 4-11, is there any evidence that God is still actively blessing his creation?

Think it over

Because of the Fall, life is now a mixture of good and bad. In what specific areas of life are you feeling this?

"I believe that God is nature. That's why it's so important to look after our planet." How would you react to that comment?

What was Jesus Christ's role in creation. What do the following passages say about this?

John 1:1-3

Colossians 1:15-17

Hebrews 1:3

Genesis 12-50

Full of promise

Getting started

You're stopped in the street by a TV reporter and asked for your opinion on what's wrong with this world. What would you say?

A Generous Promise

In Genesis 12 God decides to reverse the effects of the Fall by making certain promises to Abram. What does God promise (Genesis 12:1-9)?

In Genesis 15, God repeats his promises to Abram. Read verses 1-6. What new things do we discover about God and Abraham in these verses? How do these promises reflect a return to the good creation of Genesis 1-2?

The remainder of Genesis details the next few generations of Abraham's family, coming to a climax with the story of Joseph. Skim through your Bible and note some of the main events which happen. Draw a family tree from Abraham to Joseph.

Read Joseph's last words in Genesis 50:24-25. How does Genesis end in relation to God's promises?

Think about it

The most exciting thing about the Old Testament is the way in which it prepares us for Jesus Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of all of God's promises. In what ways does Jesus ultimately fulfill the promises made to Abraham in this study?

In the New Testament Abraham is an important person. Look up the following passages and consider the ways in which Abraham helps us better understand how we are saved by Christ.

Romans 4

Hebrews 11:8-19

and if you're especially the adventurous! Galatians 4:21-31

We've now reached the end of Genesis. How would you rate God's faithfulness out of 10? How would you rate mankind's faithfulness out of 10?

Exodus-Deuteronomy

The great escape

Getting started

Using no more than three sentences, write a summary of the book of Genesis.

The Exodus

Exodus 1:6-11 details the events following Joseph's time. What link can you see with God's promises to Abraham?

The Israelites are persecuted by Pharaoh and subjected to slavery. Read Exodus 2:23-24. What does God plan to do *and why*?

The rest of Exodus details the way God saves His people from bondage in Egypt. What eventually forces Pharaoh to let Israel go? (quickly skim Exodus 12:1-41).

After freeing Israel, God gathers them at Mt Sinai and explains his further plans. Read Exodus 19:3-8. What is God going to do and how does it relate to his promises to Abraham? What do Israel say they'll do?

Read Exodus 16:1-3, 17:1-2,32:1-4. Despite everything God has done, has the Israelites behavior improved?

The rest of Exodus details particular laws relating to life as the people of God. These laws carry on through **LEVITICUS**, as Moses teaches the people of Israel how to stand in proper awe of God's holiness. If Israel is to live with God as King, there are certain matters of "royal protocol" which must be observed. **NUMBERS** continues along a similar theme as Israel make their way from Mt Sinai to the edge of the promised land. **DEUTERONOMY** is made up of three speeches which Moses gives just before the wandering Israelites enter the promised land. First he revises what has happened then he gives instructions for clearing the land of pagan idolatry.

Read Deuteronomy 9:4-6. Why is God doing what He is?

Finally, Moses gives the Israelites a clear choice. Look quickly at his speech in Deut 30. What are Israel's options?

Think it over

One of the fascinating things that happens in the Old Testament is that God often does things in a way which foreshadows and models what he will most profoundly do through Christ. This is sometimes called typology. The Exodus rescue is one of these events. Consider how each of these characteristics of the Exodus foreshadow what Christ achieves for us.

A lamb is sacrificed (see John 1:29, Rev 5:6-10)

It's all God's work (see Eph 2:4-9)

God's people go from slavery to freedom (see Rom 8:1-4, Gal 5:1-6)

God's people go from poverty to riches (see Eph 1:3, 18; 2 Cor 8:9)

Moses urged Israel to never forget the Exodus since it was *the* event which gave them their identity. The same is true of the cross for us. What steps can we take to never forget the cross? What other things can threaten to push attention away from Christ crucified?

We've covered quite a lot of material in this study. Is there any one section that you have found particularly interesting, helpful or instructive? Why?

Joshua- Samuel

Great expectations

Getting started

Imagine you're an Israelite standing on the edge of the promised land. You've been wandering in the desert for 40 years. Moses is dead. Joshua is your new leader. You are about to cross the Jordan into the land God promised to Abraham. How do you feel and why?

Joshua

The book of Joshua details the conquest of the promised land. Look at Joshua 1:1-7. Why is God giving them the land? What does He expect from the Israelites (& Joshua) in return?

Read Joshua 24:19-24. Are the people responding to God's promises as they should?

Read Joshua 24:28-33. How does the book of Joshua conclude? What has been achieved so far concerning God's promises?

Judges

This book describes the "mopping up operations" in the land of Canaan. There are still plenty of idolatrous and pagan tribes to be driven out and destroyed. Throughout this time, Israel is unique among the nations - the nations have kings while Israel is led by "judges". Why do you think this is?

Read Judges 2:10-19 and draw a diagram to represent what's happening during this period of history.

What state is Israel in by the end of the book? (see 21:25)

1 Samuel

Samuel was the last of the judges. Though he was a godly man, his sons weren't! Israel was in a state of decay. The peoples request in 1 Sam 8 marks the start of a new phase in the nations history. What do they ask for and why?

What is God's response (v7)

Saul is chosen as the first King of Israel, a choice God promotes so as to teach the Israelites something of the perils of human kingship. However, God's real aim is to bless His people. In 16:1-13 God selects the ideal king for His people. Who is it and why is he unexpected?

Think it over

After all that God has done for them why do you think Israel so quickly deserted him in the promised land? What lessons can we learn?

During the period of the judges God has used some unexpected people and weapons to rescue his people from their enemies. How is this also true of God's rescue of us by Jesus.

What would be your progressive score for God's faithfulness out of 10? How would you rate Israel's faithfulness out of 10?

David-Solomon

The kingdom comes

Getting started

Congratulations! You're half way through our studies on the Old Testament. From what you've discovered so far, what would you say the Old Testament is all about?

2 Samuel

After a time of internal political turmoil in Israel, things finally settle down. David is their king and Jerusalem their capital city. Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17. What does David want to build?

What does God want to do first?

What does the future hold for David & Israel?

As usual we'll need to keep in mind the insidious way human sinfulness seems to mess things up. What small hint of future problems do you notice among these promises?

As 2 Samuel continues, David commits a big time sin. A spur of the moment adulterous affair with Bathsheba leads to the murder of her innocent husband. The remainder of 2 Samuel then reads like a sleazy, American soap opera with the Israelite royal family unravelling into feuds, rivalry and murderous ambition. Surprisingly, Bathsheba gives birth to the son who will bear God's blessing. His name is Solomon and under his rule Israel enters a golden era of peace and prosperity.

1 Kings 4.

Look up the following references and consider which promise of God is being fulfilled

1 Kings 4:20

1 Kings 4:21

1 Kings 6:1-3

1 Kings 10:4-9

Unfortunately there are some hints that this golden era of Israel may not last. What troubling signs are evident in

1 Kings 3:1-4

1 Kings 6:38-7:1

Think it over

How does Solomon's glorious rule compare with Jesus? (see Mt 12:42, 27:37, 28:18)

What does it mean in practical terms that Jesus rules over *you*?

What does Jesus call his disciples to do in the light of this great authority and rule that has been given to him (Mt 28:19)? What relevance does this commend have for us?

Solomon-Exile

The kingdom goes

Getting started

Think about your own experiences of life. Do you tend to forget about God when things are going well or when things are going poorly? Why is that?

The beginning of the end

In our last study we left Israel in the golden age of Solomon. But it's not long before problems develop. Read 1 Kings 10:14-29 in conjunction with Deuteronomy 17:14-17. What's going wrong with Solomon?

Solomon finally goes too far by taking many foreign wives who led him away from God. In 1 Ki 11:9-13 what does God promise to do as punishment?

Read 1 Ki 12:1-24. What are the political reasons for the splitting apart of Israel? What are the spiritual reasons?

The rest of 1-2 KINGS describes the separate fates of the northern Kingdom (who retain to name "Israel") and southern Kingdom (called "Judah"). 1-2 CHRONICLES describes the same period of history but from a slightly different perspective. Both Kingdoms continue to sin and refuse to take God seriously despite numerous prophets trying to warn them of the consequences.

Israel: the northern Kingdom

Amos was the name of one of the prophets who warned the people of Israel about rejecting God's laws. Read Amos 2:6-16. What are some of the evils that Israel are doing? What does Amos predict will happen?

Read 2 Kings 17:1-23. What happens and why to Israel?

Judah: the southern Kingdom

Jeremiah is one of the prophets who brings God's message to Judah. Look at Jeremiah 11:1-13. What is Jeremiah's message and what is it based on?

Read 2 Kings 25:1-26. What does happen to Judah? The event which we read about in 2 Ki 25 is known as "the Exile." In what ways is the Exile similar to the Fall?

How are God's promises to Abraham and David going by the end of 1&2 Kings?

Think it over

If Solomon was so wise how could he get things so wrong? Are there any warnings for us here?

"The God of the Old Testament is so serious and judgmental but the God of the New Testament is so patient and loving." From what you've read so far in the Old Testament do you think this is a fair comment? Why or why not?

What warnings and comforts can we learn from the period of Israel's history from Solomon to the Exile?

The Exile

Is God dead?

Getting started

The words "Exodus" and "Exile" appear to be quite similar. The events are very different. From what you've already discovered about the Exile in the previous study, list as many differences as you can between the two events.

Lamentations

Read Lamentations 1:1-22. What emotional effect did the Exile have on Judah?

Read Lamentations 3:19-33. In the midst of great despair what is the writers basis for hope?

Life in exile

Read Jeremiah 29:1-9. How should the exiles respond to the Exile?

Read Daniel 3. What lessons do you see here about how the exiles are to live in Babylon?

Read Daniel 9:1-19. According to Daniel, how should the exiles now respond to God?

Looking forward

According to the prophets, what will happen after the Exile?

Jeremiah 29:10-14

Jeremiah 16:14-15

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ezekiel 37:21-28

Ezekiel 36:33-36

Isaiah 65:17-25

Within the future plans for God's people, two specific individuals will play an important role. Who are they and what will they do?

Person 1; Jeremiah 33:14-26, Isaiah 11:1-5

Person 2; Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Think it over

Our life is quite similar to that of the exiles in Babylon. We are aliens in a land which is not our ultimate home. How does the promise of our heavenly home help us deal with life? (see Rom 8:18-39, 2 Thess 1:5-10).

Christ arrives as both the anointed Messiah and the suffering servant of God. How do these two aspects of Jesus' role, spur us on to greater obedience as we wait for our heavenly home?

Nehemiah to Jesus

At last!

Getting started

A friend says to you, "If there really is a God why doesn't He do something about all the bad things in the world?" What would you say in reply?

Post-exile

The Exile came to an end in 538 BC. The Persian Empire conquered Babylon and allowed Israel to return to the promised land. The scene was set for the great day predicted by prophets like Isaiah. You can read about the resettlement of the land in EZRA , NEHEMIAH, HAGGAI and MALACHI. At first things sound promising. Israel say they've learnt their lesson. Read Nehemiah 10:29. What do the Israelites now promise to do?

List the 3 key issues this will involve:

Neh 10:30

Neh 10:31

Neh 32-39

Nehemiah spends sometime away from Jerusalem but returns to see how they're getting on. What has happened in his absence?

Neh 13:10-11

Neh 13:15-16

Neh 13:23-24

How does Nehemiah react (see v11, 17-22, 25-28).

Chronologically speaking, Nehemiah is the last book of the OT. How would you say the Old Testament finishes?

The arrival of Jesus

With the arrival of Jesus, the gospel writers can't contain their excitement. Look at the following passages. How do they refer to Jesus' arrival?

Luke 1:67-79

Luke 2:25-32.

Luke 4:1-21

Think it over

Congratulations, you made it! The entire Old Testament in 8 weeks! What things have you discovered about God? Has there been any one lesson or truth that has especially effected you?

Look back at your answer to the Getting Started question in Study 1. Would your timeline/ diagram be any different now that you've finished these studies?

Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises (2 Cor 1:20). Are there any specific promises from the Old Testament, that you are especially excited by Jesus' fulfillment?