

Summary of Bible Story

Prehistory God creates the whole world and pronounces it very good. Immediately, we want to be like him (Adam and Eve). Instead of punishing us (exercising justice) he softens the consequences and protects us (Cain after murder of Abel). Sin (trying to be God), multiplies and infects creation. God decides to wipe out creation (Flood). Instead, he saves one family (Noah) and promises never again to destroy the earth (Noahic covenant). Sin multiplies anyway and God confuses our attempts to work cooperatively (Tower of Babel).

Patriarchs c. 1900 God singles out one (very unlikely) couple to be the parents of a great nation (Abraham & Sarah). The covenant with Abraham asks only that Abraham trust God, which he amazingly does. The story of their descendants, (Isaac & Rebekah, Jacob & Leah and Rachel/Esau, Joseph and his brothers) traces the family through deception, deceit, misfortune and eventual reconciliation. Throughout, the theme "you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" shows God's faithfulness.

Sojourn c. 1700-1290 Jacob's descendants multiply and are enslaved.

Exodus C. 1290-1250 God hears the suffering of his people and raises up a hero to lead them from slavery into a new and better future (Moses). To Moses God says: "I am" and "I will be with you". Through a series of plagues, God and Moses convince the pharaoh to let the people go. The pharaoh changes his mind, tracks them down and his army is drowned in the Red Sea. The people are intimately cared for (miraculous water, meat, direction, bread) and yet they complain constantly. Moses is frustrated and God gives him **The Law** (the mosaic covenant) to give to the people. Originally 10 laws intended to describe behavior if we loved God with all our hearts, it expanded to 630+ rules in 7 codes over 400 years of additions. God precedes Law and takes priority over it.

Conquest c. 1250 God gives Joshua to the people to lead them into the promised land, for which they have to fight. God is shown as a powerful victor who keeps his word.

Judges 1200-1030 God puts his spirit upon individuals to lead and rescue His people when they fall into sin. The pattern gets repeated: people get in trouble and call on God, he raises a leader and helps them, things are fine for a while and then they fall into trouble again. (Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola & Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, ION, Abdon, Samson)

Monarchy 1030-930 (Saul 1030-1010, David 101-970, Solomon 970-931) God is our King, but people want a human king (to be like the other nations). Over strong objections (both traditions appear in the biblical account), God gives the people a monarchy (Davidic Covenant) and promises that his line will continue forever. (That's why Jesus' genealogy and being a descendant of David is recorded.)

Divided Monarchy 931-722 God gives the people what they want and the kings fall into trouble, getting caught up in intrigues and power struggles and forgetting God is in charge. God puts his word of correction and vision for the future in his prophets, who use metaphor and enacted parables (Elijah, Dlisha, Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah...) The 8th century prophets remind Israel/us: God created the whole world, it is all good and his will is to restore All of it; that our place as chosen means more responsibility, not less; that there are real consequences for sin and evil; that "the days are surely coming" when God "will not execute my fierce anger...for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath." Hos11:9

Fall of Samaria 722 (to Assyria) The northern Kingdom falls as much a consequence of their actions as of God's punishment of Assyria's rise. God continues to speak to His people of his passionate vision for them through his prophets, who often wish it were otherwise (Jeremiah, Aephaniah, Nahum, Havakkuk?, Ezekiel). Theological tensions persist and intensify: justice and mercy, transcendence and immanence, election and responsibility, giftedness and frailty...In the midst of the worst, Jeremiah reminds us that "the days are surely coming" when there will be a new covenant on our hearts and we will not have to teach other about God, for we will all know Him. Jer 31:31-34

Fall of Jerusalem 597 (to Babylonians) The worst has happened. If the people see the land, the temple, the Law as a sign of God's promise, what does that mean if they are removed from it?

Exile 597-639 Only the skilled portion of the people were taken and their life in exile was materially pretty good. But they were cut off from the signs of God's promises. This is the low point.

Restoration 539 (Persian rule) The Persian King Cyrus allows the Jews to go home. A time of rebuilding: the wall, the temple, the traditions. (Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Daniel, Malachi, Joel?)

Inter-Testamental Period (Alexander the Great 333, Ptolemies 323-198, Maccabean Revolt 166-63, Rome 63 on... Herod the Great 37 BCE to 4CE)

Jesus is born 4 BCE God comes himself and we don't recognize Him. He is not what we were expecting. We thought he would be a warrior King to establish Justice. His power is in giving away his power and frightens those in authority. Jesus has a miraculous birth which is presented in fulfillment of the Old Testament. Jesus prays, teaches, heals, preaches, performs signs and does miracles of nature. He is wonderful, magnetic and hard to understand. The disciples consistently fail to comprehend, but follow anyway. The marginalized see something extraordinary in him and the authorities (especially the religious authority) react and have him killed. Knowing he is about to be arrested, he gives his disciples the New covenant (the divine heart transplant). They don't understand and desert him at his execution. He is raised and appears to his friends causing them to begin to understand and changing their lives (and ours) forever.

Conversion of Paul 37 CE Paul has an experience of Jesus (while he is persecuting the church), after Jesus life, ministry and death. Paul never know the earthly Jesus. Paul was a rabbi, teaching The Law and defending it ferociously and comes to understand Jesus as the fulfillment of it!

Ministry of Paul 41-65 Having again made what we would think of a an unlikely choice 😊, God uses Paul to bring the message of Jesus to the rest of the world, through his ministry and more, through his letters. Paul explains to us: The power of God's self-giving love, the relation of Law and Gospel, our sacred role(s) in church in spite of our ongoing sin, real hope in the in-breaking of God's kingdom now and real confidence in his return. Interestingly, Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther were both reading romans when they had their conversion experiences (separated by over 1000 years and many more miles). The two most influential theologians in the Western church were touched by Paul and his explanation that our salvation is from God alone: Justification by Grace. It is and always has been about God: His nature, His initiative, His faithfulness, His mercy..., not about us. Thanks be to God.

Final Imprisonment of Paul 65 CE