

Old Testament Overview

Old Testament Introduction

Welcome to the very first class of the Grace Equipping Institute

- I am excited about the upcoming few years
- I trust that you are as well

Let me state my goals and plans for this class

My plans are to teach through a variety of topics over the next few years

- Old Testament Introduction
- New Testament Introduction
- Systematic Theology
- Church history
- Hermeneutics (how to study the Bible)
- Cover several books that have proven very beneficial to the elders and members of this church
- Other various topics

I am still in the process of laying out the “big picture” of schedule

- But I hope that these classes will benefit many over the next few years

If the Lord allows, it would be neat to offer multiple classes on Sunday afternoons

- I also want to involve other teachers to come alongside me

What is expected of you?

- To show up eager to learn
- To participate as you desire
- To enjoy learning

If you desire to dig deeper into these topics, talk to me individually

- I can give you homework and assignments to help you understand more than we will cover in class

Let's pray and get started

The Bible is a book unlike any other

- Even among religious books, it stands in a class all by itself

The Bible is the only book that claims to be the written Word of God, all the while “demonstrating its divine authority by many infallible proofs”¹

- Other religious books may claim to be God’s Word; however, they do not contain any self-authenticating proofs such as fulfilled prophecy

For this afternoon, I plan to give you a big picture view of the Old Testament

- I also plan on discussing the book of Genesis

How much of the OT that we cover every month will vary

- Most months, we will cover at least two books of the OT
- I want this to be a true survey class

As we begin our overview of the Old Testament, realize that this will not be an exhaustive study

- There will be many areas that I will not take the time to discuss during this study
 - o Customs – although we will discuss some of the normal customs of the day, this study will not discuss how other societies affected the people of God
 - o World events – this is a fascinating part of Bible study whereby we see the setting or background by which certain books of the Bible were written or Biblical characters lived
 - o Canonicity – the process of how certain Bible books were recognized to be part of the Old Testament. This study would also include the study of inspiration and the interplay between the Divine and the human writers.

Our goal is to obtain an overview of the Old Testament books

- Not to go too in-depth

When you think of the OT, what comes to your mind?

- **(wait for feedback)**
- Abraham
- Moses
- Prophets
- Animal sacrifices
- Various covenants
- Law
- Lots of sin

There are some pretty amazing things that happen in the OT

- I hope to discuss some of these with you over the next few months

Let me start off with a really basic question

- Why study the Old Testament?

¹ Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 15.

I can think of at least two purposes for studying the Old Testament²

1. To study the character of God as revealed in the Old Testament

In the New Testament, we have the benefit of great clarity, and the benefit of considering God this side of Christ

- Whereas the New Testament was written in a generation, the Old Testament spans thousands of years

As we see God's character manifest through history in the Old Testament, there is a certain depth and richness that we take away

- The NT is much more crystal-clear
- The OT is a bit more grainy

Listen to the words of 2 Peter 3:9

- "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"

As believers, we are humbled by God's patience toward us

- Patience before we were saved
- Patience after we have been saved

But think of God's patience as evidenced in the Old Testament

- Patience before the Flood
- Patience with Sodom and Gomorrah before their destruction
- Patience with King David
- Patience with the nation Israel as they wanted a king
- Patience as the first generation of Israelites died off in the wilderness
- Patience during the period of time between the testaments

Some people say that the God of the OT is different from the God of the NT

- But the Bible shows the same God in both covenants
- The same, patient, gracious God
- This is the God who we worship even this afternoon!

In the Old Testament, we see God's dealings over a much larger span of time and people groups

- There is such a richness and abundance of God's mercy that we see toward undeserving sinners

That's our first purpose in studying the OT

- To study the character of God as revealed in the OT

² This lesson references material from Capitol Hill Baptist Church's core seminar on the Old Testament. <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/class-1-introduction-to-the-old-testament/>

There is a second purpose in studying the OT

2. To see what the OT teaches us about Jesus

Yes, the OT has much to teach us about Jesus

If the God of the OT is different than the God of the NT, then this is a major problem

- There are two different Jesus people in the Bible

Of course, we know this not to be case

- Jesus is the same in both the OT and NT
- God is the same in both the OT and NT

“The OT is a redemptive history that lays the foundation upon which the NT is built”³

- If you really want to understand the NT, you must understand the OT

Books like Hebrews, Revelation, and the Gospels quote or allude to the OT quite frequently

- If you don't have a good grasp of the OT, your understanding of the NT will be limited

For example, consider the theme of sacrifice that is developed in the OT

- Hundreds and hundreds of years
- Multitudes of animal sacrifices

This was all getting us ready for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross

- Remember the statement by John the Baptist in John 1:29?
- “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”

You won't understand that statement about Jesus if you don't understand the significance of sacrifice, atonement, and sin from the Old Testament

The OT is referenced or alluded to many, many times in the NT

- Some of these references were clearly speaking of the Christ who would come to the Earth

The New Testament writers clearly expect a working knowledge of the Old Testament

- They don't explain every detail
- Rather, they expect us, the reader, to be familiar with the context of the passages to which they refer

Remember when Jesus is walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24?

- Listen to what Jesus says, “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (emphasis mine)

³ Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 1.

Later in that same chapter, listen to these words from the very lips of Jesus Himself

- “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He made this statement, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Mt 5:17)

- Again, all of this is contingent upon the OT

These are two of the reasons why we are studying the OT

- To see the character of God as revealed in the OT
- To see what the OT teaches us about Jesus

So if you could try and summarize the entire OT in a phrase, what would it be?

- **(wait for responses)**

One answer is this

- **Promises made**

God does make some remarkable promises

- Immediately after the Fall of man, God makes an incredible promise about the future Messiah
- Throughout the OT books, we see God make promises

This leads us to summarize the NT in a phrase

- **Promises kept**

The God of the OT is the God of the NT

- The God who made the promises is the same God who keeps His promises
- Our God is faithful!

The greatest promise that God ever made was about His Son, Jesus Christ

Any questions so far?

Easy question; how many books are in the OT?

- 39

The OT is sometimes treated under two major headings

- The Law
- The Prophets

Christ said, “Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Mt 7:12)

Three times in Luke 16, Christ made this point

- “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John” (16:16)
- “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them” (16:29)
- “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead” (16:31)

Another major theme that we will need to understand is that of progressive revelation

- Can someone try and explain that term?

Progressive revelation is the gradual unfolding of events, doctrine, and teaching over a period of time

- In other words, God did not reveal everything at once

We have already discussed the topic of sacrifice

- Did God fully disclose everything about sacrifice to Adam and Eve?
 - o (no)
- Did God give them a book on atonement?
 - o (no)

But God did start teaching about sacrifice

- God Himself killed an animal to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve
- Abel in Genesis 4 brought forward an animal sacrifice
- When Abraham was about to offer his son, Isaac, God provided a substitute
- On and on we could go through the OT

So look for hints of theology that is mentioned in the OT but will be further explained later in the NT

Rapid overview of the Old Testament

What I want to do over the next few minutes is to give you a very high level view of the Old Testament

- This will be like riding in an airplane
- We are going to cover a LOT of ground very quickly

In the beginning, it was only God

- No creation
- Only eternal, perfect fellowship between the Father, Son, and Spirit

At some point, God created the heavens and the earth

- He populated them with creatures, birds, and other wildlife
- This is chapters 1 and 2 of the Bible

Then in chapter 3, God's first humans disobey him and the whole cosmos falls into ruin as a consequence

- God responded by banishing them from the Garden of Eden
- This was an act of mercy and grace from God; otherwise, they may have eaten from the tree of life and stayed in their sin-affected bodies forever

The narrative continues with things going from bad to worse

- And then in Genesis 12, God begins his plan of redemption, calling Abraham to be the first of his new people
- God leads him—and ultimately his family—to the promised land of Canaan
- After a series of providential twists, these people end up as slaves in Egypt, yet they also quickly reproduce to become a great nation

Moses then brings the nation out of Egypt

- God gives Israel the law, marking them off as His special people
- And He gives them the land He has promised where this special people is to live and display God's character to the nations
- But instead of displaying God's character, moral and political confusion follows during the rule of leaders called judges

After a few centuries, the people ask for and receive a king in the person of Saul

- David follows Saul as king

David's reign best represents the model of a kingdom in which God's chosen man and God's Word rule over his people in his chosen place

- The kingdom reaches its peak in the time of prosperity and the building of the temple by David's son, Solomon
- But David sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, causing ripple effects across the nation

Not only is David sinful, but his descendants are sinful as well

- Clearly this is not the fullness of God's plan

The kingdom divides into two

- Both parts of the now-divided nation fall into idolatry, until God finally allows the northern half to be conquered through the Assyrian empire
- A little over a century later, He exiles the southern half to Babylon
- Several generations pass in exile, and then the people return and rebuild the temple and Jerusalem's wall
- And here Old Testament history ends, with the people reduced to a position of utter desperation and dependence on God

This is the narrative taken up by the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament

- I have obviously left a lot of detail out in this quick summary
- But I hope to discover some of those treasures over the coming months

If you look at the OT from a chronological perspective, you see that it does NOT match the book order of our OT

If you look at the books in the order they appear in our Bibles, here is one way to outline them

- **Law** (5 books)
 - o (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)
- **History** (12 books)
 - o (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther)
- **Poetry & Wisdom** (5 books)
 - o (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon)
- **Prophecy** (17 books)
 - o Major Prophets (5) (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel)
 - o Minor Prophets (12) (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi)

Now I want to give you a brief overview of each of the books

Narrative Books (Law and History, a combined 17 books)

- **Genesis** describes how the world and the first humans were made—the perfection of that unspoiled creation, how sin entered the world, and how God initiated his plan of salvation through Abraham. But despite God’s instructions to Abraham to live in the promised land, Genesis closes with this people in Egypt.
- **Exodus** finds Abraham’s descendants as slaves in Egypt, and constitutes God’s grand entry onto the stage of world history as He routes the most powerful nation on earth to bring His people back to their land as his own.
- **Leviticus** presents a digest of God’s laws given to His people in the wilderness. Holiness is the theme of Leviticus.
- **Numbers** mostly tells the story of the people journeying toward the Promised Land, their rebellion, and God’s persevering faithfulness.
- **Deuteronomy** presents the second giving of the law (deutero=second, nomos=law).
- **Joshua** describes the conquest of the Promised Land some 400 years after God’s people left.
- **Judges** is the depressing account of life in the Promised Land: the people continually revert to lawlessness, and the times were well summed up by the phrase, “**In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.**” (Judges 21:25)
- **Ruth** is a little story set during the days of the judges, preparing the way for King David.
- **1 and 2 Samuel** are about the last judge, Samuel; a “false-start” king, Saul; and the first real king, David.

- **1 and 2 Kings** follow David's royal descendants as they lead the people into idolatry, and eventually into annihilation for the Northern ten tribes and exile for the Southern two tribes.
- **1 and 2 Chronicles** tell that same story. But instead of explaining why the exile happened—the message of Kings—they point ahead to God's final salvation.

The last three books of history are about the exile and the return from exile: (3)

- **Ezra** describes the return of the Jews from their captivity and the rebuilding of the temple
- **Nehemiah** continues the story by describing the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, a partial fulfillment of God's promises of restoration to His people.
- **Esther** is the last book of history: a story of God's providential deliverance of the Jewish community during the exile.

The Writings (5 books)

The middle books of the Old Testament are largely collections of wisdom literature, devotional poems, and ceremonial literature from the temple.

- **Job** is a story about a righteous man who is tried by God.
- **Psalms** are poetic prayers of praise, confession, and lament to God.
- **Proverbs** presents the wisdom of Solomon and others concerning practical life issues.
- **Ecclesiastes**, again probably by Solomon, recounts one man's search for the path to happiness and meaning in this world.
- **Song of Songs** is the collection of love songs between a bridegroom and his bride.

The Prophets (17 books)

The final collection of books in the Old Testament is the Prophets.

- These seventeen books present God's commentary on Israel's history, particularly Israel's disobedience.
- **Isaiah** was a prophet in the Southern kingdom, called "Judah." The first thirty-nine chapters are prophecies leading up to the captivity. The last twenty-seven chapters point to a future restoration and redemption.
- **Jeremiah** prophesied in Jerusalem during the years the city was besieged. He continued to prophesy for seven years after the city fell in 586 B.C.
- **Lamentations** is Jeremiah's lament over the destruction of Jerusalem
- **Ezekiel** prophesied in Babylon during this time about the coming fall of Jerusalem and God's ultimate restoration of His people.
- **Daniel**, part prophecy and part history, chronicles how God showed Himself to be the ruler of the world even as His people were in captivity in Babylon.
- **Hosea** prophesied to the northern kingdom (called Israel) at the same time as Isaiah. God used Hosea's adulterous wife as a living example of Israel's unfaithfulness.

- **Joel** preached about the coming judgment of God on the southern kingdom—and God’s blessing that would follow their repentance. That’s really the outline for most of these prophets.
- **Amos**, another contemporary of Isaiah, predicted the judgment and restoration of the northern kingdom.
- **Obadiah** uttered his very short prophecy of judgment against one of Judah’s neighbors, Edom.
- **Jonah**, when called to prophesy to the Assyrian city of Nineveh, fled and was swallowed by a great fish. In the belly of the fish, he prayed, repented, was delivered, and obeyed.
- **Micah** prophesied at the same time as Isaiah and Hosea. He spoke to both Israel and Judah.
- **Nahum**, who lived a century after Jonah, proclaimed the coming judgment of God on Nineveh—and a future deliverance for Judah.
- **Habakkuk** asked God why bad things happen to good people, and good things to bad people. God’s response is a call to faith and trust in his promise of restoration.
- **Zephaniah** promised that judgment would come on Judah as he called them to repent.

The last three prophets prophesied after the exile, as Jerusalem was being rebuilt.

- **Haggai** prodded the people to get on with rebuilding the temple.
- **Zechariah** prophesied two months after Haggai and presented a series of wild dreams that attacked the religious lethargy of the people and foresaw the messianic age.
- **Malachi** also attacked religious apathy and promised a coming Messiah. He was the last Old Testament prophet.

Well, that’s the Old Testament from end to end

As you hear this quick overview, what stands out to you?

- What repeated themes emerge as you heard me quickly recite the summaries of these 39 OT books?
- **(wait for their responses)**

Consider these three themes that emerge as we look at the OT

- God is passionate about His holiness
- Sin is serious because it’s such a deviation from His holiness
- Atonement could be accomplished when an innocent one dies in place of the guilty

The Old Testament teaches that all people are sinners⁴ and the story line as a whole quickly leads to the conclusion that people are not able to deal with sin themselves

- Adam and Eve sin; they cover themselves with fig leaves
- Fast-forward and God wipes the slate clean and starts over with Noah and his family
- But he and his descendants sin
- God picks one family to bless—but they sin too

⁴ 1 Kings 8:46, Psalm 14:3, Proverbs 20:9, Eccles. 7:20

- God's miraculous rescue of Israel from Egypt is followed only by grumbling and rebellion, by the very people God chose to rescue
- Arrival in the Promised Land finds things getting only worse; the book of Judges suggests that the problem is that they have no king (although God was their King!)
- But even a king as good as David sins, and subsequent kings *lead* the charge to idolatry
- God warns His people and then disciplines them through exile
- When they return from exile, they go back to their wicked ways
- What is needed, we find, is not a second chance but a new heart
- We are sinful, and no solution for that problem is achieved in the Old Testament
- God must do something new

That's a huge problem, because God's purpose for His people was for them to live lives together that proclaimed the perfection of His holy character to the nations around them

- As Ezekiel puts it, the people intended to *proclaim* God's name instead *profaned* it
- What is to be done?

This is where references to atonement are significant

- A number of images are used to describe atonement in the Old Testament, but the most prominent is sacrifice

Sinners could seek to restore their relationship with God through sacrifice

- Abel's sacrifice is the first described explicitly in Scripture
- And then Noah's shows that sacrifice pleases God
- Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of Isaac introduced the idea of sacrifice of a substitute—and at the first Passover, a substitute by which God's wrath was turned aside
- And the sacrificial laws on Leviticus introduced the idea not just of a substitute, but of a penal substitute—a substitute who bore the punishment we deserved
- A penal substitute who made atonement, as on the Day of Atonement, where punishment was not merely served, but relationship with God was restored

Do you see how the Old Testament gradually builds up this idea of sacrifice?

- That doesn't disappear when we come to the NT

In and of themselves, Levitical sacrifices were never the point

- Ironically, sacrifices were most appropriate when the person offering the sacrifice realized that the offering was *not* sufficient to atone for sins
- So you have the psalmist saying, "**Against You, You only, have I sinned**" (Ps. 51:4)
- Sacrifices were not efficacious except by God's grace

The ineffective nature of sacrifices can be seen most clearly through the Jewish Day of Atonement

- That's a day on which a special sin offering was made for the whole nation
- What's striking is that this ritual had to be repeated annually

Why? Because the people were in a *state* of sin, and no animal sacrifice could ultimately remove their guilt

- There was no perfect sacrifice
- If there had been, the people could have stopped offering them (Heb 10:1-3)

Instead, these imperfect sacrifices emphasized the fact that God is holy, that sin separates us from God, and that he provides a way of forgiveness

- So the Old Testament explores so many different potential solutions to the problem of sin, but ultimately comes up empty-handed
- That's one reason why it is bookended with God's curse

Think of Genesis 3: because of sin, God curses the serpent, the man, and the woman

- And does anyone know the last word of the Old Testament?
- Turn to the last page of Malachi

Referring to the second Elijah, who would be John the Baptist:

- "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse" (4:6)

"Curse" at the beginning of the OT

- Still under the curse at the end of the OT

This brings up a question

- In Exodus 34, the Lord describes himself to Moses, saying "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.
- Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex 34:6-7a).
- Forgiving . . . yet not leaving the guilty unpunished?
- How can that be? Perhaps there is still hope?

The Story of the Promise

There is hope, and it is in another focus we see in the Old Testament: **the story of promise**

- Yes, the Old Testament ends where we started in Genesis 3
- But it also gives us a promise of hope

How will God forgive, and yet not leave the guilty unpunished?

- It all comes down to His promise

And the story of promise begins in the most unlikely of places

- It begins in the words of God's curse, immediately after the Fall
- Adam and Eve had chosen to disobey God, and so he brought upon them the just punishment for their sin

But in the very sentence of condemnation, God makes a promise:

- “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel” (Gen 3:15).
- God promises to create division and opposition between His people, the seed of the woman, and Satan’s people, the seed of the serpent
- And He promises that one day a Son will be born who will defeat Satan and deliver His people from their sin
- God initiates that promise, immediately after sin!
- Adam and Eve have done nothing to merit it, yet He makes it

Notice the promise has two sides:

- The seed of the serpent will strike at the seed of the woman; yet the seed of the woman will triumph
- The story of the Old Testament is the story of that promise being placed in jeopardy again and again—but against impossible odds, God ensures that His promise prevails

Cain murders Abel—the line of the woman—but God preserves that line through Seth

Humanity is captured by sin and deserving of God’s judgment, but God’s promise endures and He preserves Noah and his family

- Then, to ensure His promise of deliverance is kept, God makes another promise—never again to destroy all humanity by flood

Centuries pass; people go from bad to worse

- But with Abraham, God picks up that eternal promise and begins to flesh it out
- “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:2-3)

A generation later, rivalry between Isaac’s two sons almost destroys Jacob

- But Jacob is the chosen seed, and the Lord preserves him
- But once again, God’s promise is challenged by a famine that threatens to destroy the whole family

How can God’s promise prevail if this family of the promise perishes?

- Amazingly, God uses Joseph’s enslavement, imprisonment, and suffering to save his family
- He takes what his brothers meant for evil and turns it into salvation and deliverance not just for the chosen family, but for the surrounding nations as well

Again, the seed of the serpent rears its head as the descendants of Jacob are enslaved in Egypt, and a whole generation of boys is slaughtered at Pharaoh's command

- Again, God is faithful and remembers His covenant with Abraham
- He preserves the life of Moses, and then uses him to deliver His people from their slavery

At Mount Sinai, God makes a covenant with Israel, in much the same way He did with Adam and Eve before the fall

- If the people obey, they will stay in the Promised Land
- But if they rebel, God will cast them out
- Of course, their rebellion begins almost immediately
- God judges His people, but He remains faithful to His promise to Abraham and to Adam

A new generation, led by Joshua, is raised up, and God gives them the land He had promised their forefathers

- Against all odds, they conquer the Canaanites
- Though the people continue to rebel, and God continues to punish them, He also raises up judges
- These are successors to Moses and Joshua who rescue the people and defeat their enemies

Finally, in an ultimate act of rebellion, the nation of Israel rejects God as their King, and asks for a king like all the other nations (1 Samuel 8)

- In mercy, God anoints a king after his own heart, David, who will be like a son to him
- But the serpent even tries to chase down and destroy David from within Israel itself—first through Saul and later through David's son Absalom

Yet God, who is gracious and faithful, makes yet another promise to David

- This is a promise that's really just an extension of His promise to Abraham and that gives further shape to the promise of Genesis 3
- God promises David that he will always have a son to rule on his throne, and that son will rule in righteousness (2 Sam. 7:11-16)
- The promised seed of Genesis 3 and 15 is in fact to be a king who will deliver His people

At first it appears that son is Solomon

- But it's not

Solomon proves unfaithful, and judgment follows

- Division comes first
- The kings in the north are progressively more wicked, until God sends the northern kingdom into an exile
- In the south there are periodic renewals, but the renewals are never complete, and they never last
- Finally, God sends Judah into exile, and it seems that His promise has failed

But even in the context of judgment and exile, God reveals that He has not forgotten and He has not failed

- The prophets are given a message of hope, that God will make a new covenant with His people (Jer. 31:31-34)
- After seventy years in exile, Judah returns to the Promised Land
- The walls are restored and the temple is rebuilt—but God never comes back to dwell in that temple
- The new covenant has not yet arrived
- When will God finally keep His promise?

Well, this is the expectation we are living in when, after four hundred years of silence, God speaks and the New Testament begins

Conclusion

So do you see how these pieces all fit together?

- On the one hand, the Old Testament is a story that moves **sideways**, never progressing
- Solution after solution to our sin is suggested and tried, only to result in failure
- So by the end of Malachi we are no better off than we were in Genesis 3, except that we know for a fact that we cannot save ourselves

But on another level, the Old Testament *is* a story of **forward motion** because it's the story of promise

- God gradually reveals more and more of His perfect plan to redeem a people for Himself
- And as that promise takes shape, hope is born out of the despair of sin and the stage is set for Jesus Christ
- He would live as the perfect Israel, and die as our substitute, the perfect Passover lamb
- Through His death on our behalf and His resurrection from the dead, He would reconcile us to God

As Paul puts it in Romans 3, "**He would be just and the justifier of the one who faith in Jesus**" (Romans 3:26).

- Just and the one who justifies sinners?
- Forgiving and the one who does not leave the guilty unpunished?
- The promises God made through all those centuries find their answer in Jesus—the answer to the riddle of the Old Testament
- That is the message of the Hebrew Scriptures

Any questions?

- Let's take a 5 minute break
- We will discuss Genesis once we return

Genesis

With the background of the OT in our minds, we want to start looking at the book of Genesis

Genesis is the book of beginnings

- As a matter of fact, the very first word of the Hebrew Bible is בְּרֵאשִׁית
- “In the beginning”

The book of Genesis assumes God’s eternity

- Which assumes God’s existence

God is the main character in the book of Genesis

- Not Abraham
- Not Joseph

There are different ways to outline the book of Genesis

- 1-11 Primeval history
- 12-50 Patriarchal history

I say “**primeval**” because the first 11 chapters deal with the first events of the created world

- Creation (1-2)
- Fall (3-5)
- Flood (6-9)
- Nations (10-11)

I use the term “**patriarchal**” because of the focus on the four great men who are heads of families

- Abraham (12:1-25:8)
- Isaac (21:1-35:29)
- Jacob (25:21-50:14)
- Joseph (30:22-50:26)

How many of you were here while Paul preached through the book of Genesis?

- October 2011 – April 2014

I preached through Genesis while I was a pastor in Houston

- It is a fascinating book!

As you read through Genesis, there is a phrase that is repeated several times

- The phrase is, “**these are the records of the generations of...**”
- The phrase may be slightly different, depending on the English version of the Bible that you are using

The phrase is a translation of the Hebrew word *toledot*

- It is used of the following individuals
 - o Adam (5:1-6:8)
 - o Noah (6:9-9:29)
 - o Sons of Noah (10:1-11:9)
 - o Shem (11:10-26)
 - o Terah (11:27-25:11)
 - o Ishmael (25:12-18)
 - o Isaac (25:19-35:29)
 - o Esau (36:1-37:1)
 - o Jacob (37:2-50:26)⁵

It is the author's way of tracing a certain lineage throughout the book of Genesis

- The chosen lineage through whom the Messiah would come

The author doesn't trace every single person in Genesis

- The book would be massive!

So who wrote the book of Moses?

- (wait for an answer)

From a Divine perspective, **the Holy Spirit** is the author of all Scripture

- From a human perspective, **Moses** was the instrument through whom the Holy Spirit used to pen these words

The overwhelming evidence throughout the Scriptures is that Moses is, indeed, the author of the Pentateuch

- Both the OT⁶ and the NT⁷ attest to a Mosaic authorship

The greatest witness to the Mosaic authorship is Christ Himself!

- **"have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage about the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob'?" (Mk 12:26)**
- **"Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" (John 7:19)**

Jesus knew who wrote the Law, and it was Moses!

⁵ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 6.

⁶ Ibid., 6 (Exodus 17:14; Leviticus 1:1-2; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 1:1; Joshua 1:7; 8:31; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11-13; Malachi 4:4).

⁷ Ibid., 6 (Mathew 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; 24:27, 44; John 5:46; 7:22; Acts 15:1; 26:22; Romans 10:19; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 3:15).

Moses was uniquely qualified to write the Torah

- As Stephen proclaimed, “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22)
- God had providentially and uniquely prepared Moses so that he could record these vital truths with a level of credibility and veracity

Most scholars believe that Moses wrote the book of Genesis around 1445-1405 B.C.⁸

- Perhaps the only OT book that was written earlier than Genesis is the book of Job
- Not from a chronological standpoint, but from the perspective of date of writing

Of course, Moses was born far after the events of the book of Genesis

- Moses wasn't there when God created everything!
- God revealed these events and Moses recorded them

What we see in Genesis is God beginning to save a people for His own glory

- He calls a people to be His own (by His own initiative)
- He is faithful to that people, despite their sinfulness

So much time is covered in the book of Genesis

- Any guesses?

In the first 11 chapters of Genesis, nearly 2000 years is covered

- All of that in 1/5 of the length of the book!

The other 4/5 of Genesis covers less than 300 years⁹

Granted, God never designed the book of Genesis, or the Bible for that matter, to be a complete history of the world

- But where the Word of God teaches something, it will never contradict with scientific evidence
- Notice, I said scientific evidence, not hypotheses and theories

A neat way of looking at Genesis is that it records the first of everything, except the beginning of God

- God is eternal, and has always been
- He has no beginning and no end

⁸ MacArthur, 7.

⁹ Wilkinson and Boa, 7.

But so many things have their beginning in Genesis

- Creation
- Man
- Sabbath
- Marriage
- Sin
- Sacrifice
- Salvation
- Family
- Civilization
- Government
- Israel¹⁰

If you walk away from this lesson thinking that Genesis is only a good historical book, you have missed the point

- It is history
- But it is far more than that

I. Creation (1-2)

Look at the opening verse of Genesis with me

- (read Genesis 1:1)

Clearly God is the primary subject

- Not just of Genesis 1:1
- But of the entire Bible

In this opening chapter, we see several primary characteristics of God

- **Eternal** (no beginning, no end; no explanation of where God came from)
- **Self-sufficient** (He doesn't need creation; He doesn't need us; He is sufficient in and of Himself)
- **Sovereign** (what He determines to happen will happen! He has the power and authority over all creation)
- **Good** (7x in Genesis 1 God saw His creation and deemed it "good" because it reflected His own nature)

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

The book of Genesis is vital to the Christian mindset because of the creation account

- I don't intend to get into a deep discussion on creation here
- I just want to hit some of the highlights

God created the Earth in 6 literal 24-hour periods of time

- This is the natural reading of the text

Another amazing fact about the creation account is that God created everything out of nothing!

- This is called *ex nihilo*
- Creation out of nothing!
- He spoke and it came to be

The crown of God's creation was mankind

- He created man in His own image
- He designed man to bring Him glory

Let's read Genesis 1:26-28 together

- No other creation is said to be made "in Our image" (1:26)
- Every other creation was made "after their kind" (1:12, 21, 24, 25)

Man was created to be like God and represent God¹¹

- Even after the Flood, we read that man was still "in the image of God" (Gen 9:6)

Mankind has a distinct relationship to God

- We are made in His image
- We are made in His very likeness

Unlike any other animal, mankind can have a personal relationship with God

- This is an amazing privilege that we shouldn't take lightly or for granted

Part of the image of God is man's responsibility and authority over the creation

- Mankind is to rule over creation

Chapter 2 involves a re-telling of the creation account

- It specifies more details about the creation of man
- Unlike chapter 1, chapter 2 tells how the woman was fashioned out of a rib from Adam

In this place of perfect peace and rest, Adam and Eve fellowshiped with God

There was only one restriction for Adam and Eve

- They could not eat from the tree "of the knowledge of good and evil" (2:17)
- If they did, God said, "you will surely die"

¹¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 442.

God had allowed them to eat from every other tree

- But Adam and Eve were to show their love through obedience
- Specifically, obedience in not eating from that tree

God alone had the right and prerogative to determine what was right and wrong

So far, so good!

- God's perfect plan for gender, marriage, work, physical creation, government, relationship with God and relationship with one another is PERFECT
- But that is about to change in chapter 3

II. Fall (3-5)

Chapter 3 introduces us to "the serpent" (3:1)

- This is none other than Satan

Let's read Genesis 3:1-5

- (read these verses out loud)

His very first words here in Genesis are in the form of a question

- "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"
- He is challenging the very restriction that God had placed on Adam and Eve

Furthermore, the serpent open contradicts the reality of their death upon eating the fruit of the tree

- In verse 4, he says, "You surely will not die!"
- In verse 5, he tells Eve, "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"

God only had the right to tell Adam and Eve what was good and right

- Here is Satan claiming that God does NOT know what was good and right
- Furthermore, Satan claims to know what is good and right

Eve chooses to believe Satan over God

- She eats from the fruit of the forbidden tree
- Then she gives the fruit to Adam, who eats

Immediately, their eyes were open (3:7)

- They were aware of their nakedness, which they attempted to cover up

God immediately comes to them (He knows what happened)

- Adam and Eve hide from Him
- They start the "blame game"

Look at Genesis 3:12-13

- Adam blames Eve and God, “the woman whom You gave to be with me”
- Eve blames the serpent

God then provides the consequences of this sin

- For the serpent
- For Eve
- For Adam

The serpent is cursed (3:14)

- He is also promised continual hostility with the seed of the woman

Look with me at 3:15, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”

- This is a monumental verse, full of significance

This is the first mention of the Gospel

- The first hint that God would conquer over Satan, sin, and the effects of the Fall

Let’s pause for a second and praise God for His grace

- He could have ended the story right here
- He could have executed immediate justice and humanity would have ceased to be

But what we see is God’s grace, mercy, and compassion

- God promises that He will ultimately deal with sin and its consequences

Notice the two seeds

- “your seed” – the offspring of Satan
- “her seed” – the offspring of Eve (singular “seed”)

Notice the result of this struggle

- “He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”

Satan would “bruise” the heel of the seed of the woman

- But the seed of the woman would “bruise” Satan on the head
- The head is a more serious injury than the heel

This is a prophecy of the coming victory of Christ on the cross

- This is where Jesus crushed the head of the serpent

Notice that all of this

- Was promised immediately after sin
- Was initiated by God Himself, the very One who had been sinned against

So humanity immediately begins to ask the question, “Who is this seed of the woman who will conquer?”

- Satan was on the alert as well
- You better believe that he was constantly looking for this coming Conqueror – and would do anything possible to thwart His mission

In Genesis 4, we see Cain and Abel

- These are brothers, offspring of Adam and Eve
- Cain kills Abel

Adam and Eve have another son, Seth, in Genesis 4

- Offspring continue to be born
- But each of those offspring is a vile sinner, in desperate need of God’s grace

Genesis 5 is a genealogy

- Some of you may skip over such sections

But don’t skip over these verses

- They remind us of God’s promise and faithfulness
- They remind us of sin’s effects

The repeated reference to “**and he died**” reminds us that sin’s curse is still active

- The only exception to this was Enoch, who “**walked with God; and he was not, for God took him**” (5:24)

III. Flood (6-9)

Genesis 6 highlights the utter depravity of mankind at the time

- Look at Genesis 6:5-8
- (Read these verses out loud)

Things have progressed from bad to worse

- God’s justice is going to be manifested once again

God promises to send a worldwide, cataclysmic flood on the Earth

- But He warns Noah to build an ark to protect animals and a small number of humans

In the spite of such a devastating act of Divine justice, God still shows great grace

- He spares Noah and his family
- From the lineage of Noah and his family would come the Chosen One

God even sets a symbol in the sky, a rainbow, as a perpetual reminder of His promise never to destroy the Earth with a flood

- Every time you see a rainbow, think of God's promise
- Remind yourself of God's faithfulness

Soon after Noah leaves the Ark, we see his sinfulness as he is drunk and naked

- Yet another reminder of the sinfulness of mankind

Turn with me to 2 Peter 3

- The apostle Peter links the age in which he lived with the age of Noah
- In both ages, people were doubting various aspects of God's character

Let's read 2 Peter 3:1-7

- Peter is warning his generation to remember the generation of Noah
- Judgment is coming, so repent!

IV. Humanity after the Flood (10-11)

Genesis 10 is another genealogy

- Lots of people die
- The Chosen One hasn't been born yet

Genesis 11 is the familiar chapter dealing with Babel

- Where the people of the Earth wanted to make a name for themselves
- The people attempted to build a tower that reached to the very heavens

Why did God create humanity?

- For them to reflect His glory
- For them to make His name known throughout the Earth

In response to this, God thwarts their plans

- Different languages are given to humanity
- It was definitely a way to keep people from communicating with one another!

This is a fast recap of the first 11 chapters of Genesis

- Creation (1-2)
- Fall (3-5)
- Flood (6-9)
- Nations (10-11)

We would miss much if we didn't have these early chapters

- The rest of the Bible literally rests on these initial chapters

They give us a picture of God's justice followed by His grace

- This dispels the myth that God is only a God of wrath in the OT

Now we want to switch gears and look at the four primary individuals God would use in Genesis 12-50

- Abraham (12:1-25:8)
- Isaac (21:1-35:29)
- Jacob (25:21-50:14)
- Joseph (30:22-50:26)

We will be covering these chapters in less detail

- I am merely hitting a few of the major highlights from each of these sections

These 39 chapters of Genesis give us a glimpse into the life of Abraham and his lineage

- This is the person whom God would choose to father the nation Israel
- Through Abraham, God would bless the entire world

I. Abraham (12:1-25:8)

We are introduced to Abram in the last part of Genesis 11

- His father is Terah, according to verse 27
- They are from the land of Ur of the Chaldeans, according to verse 28
- Abram's wife was named Sarai and she was barren, without child {this is very important, as we will see in a few minutes}

We recall that Abram is born in an area called Ur of the Chaldeans

- He was a Gentile

So God does something amazing

- He takes a Gentile and makes him into the first Jew!

Let's read Genesis 12:1-3

- (read this together)

Notice the multiple promises of God to Abram

- "{go} to the land which I will show you"
- "I will make you a great nation"
- "I will bless you"
- "(I will) make your name great"
- "I will bless those who bless you"
- "the one who curses you I will curse"
- "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"

The three main promises can be summarized by three words

- Land
- Seed
- Blessing

Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden

- But here God is promising a **land** for Abram and his descendants

Abram wandered around the rest of his life, awaiting the fulfillment of this promise

- At his death, the only plot of land that he owned was the grave plot for his wife

The **seed** refers to Abram's offspring

- Remember, Sarai is barren at this time
- Abram is 75 years old (12:4)
- God would do something remarkable in giving him children

It would be through Abraham's lineage that the Chosen One would come

- That promise that was made back in Genesis 3:15

Let's fast-forward to Genesis 15

- Let's read 15:1-6

God promises that Abram would have descendants like the stars of the heavens (15:5)

- Notice that Abram responds in belief (15:6), despite the old state of his body and the body of his wife

For God to count Abram's faith as "**righteousness**" (15:6) is remarkable, especially considering how sinful he and his offspring will be

- The NT will reference this verse on three different occasions as a promise to anyone who believes, just like Abraham (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; James 2:23)

Keep in mind the following about Abram's declared righteous state

- There was no Law for him to follow
- He was not circumcised

Abram was justified on the basis of faith – and faith alone

- That same principle applies to us as well!

God also promises a worldwide **blessing** to Abram

- Through this one man, God would bring about a blessing to every nation
- Not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles

Let's turn briefly to Galatians 3:6-8

- "Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.'"

Look at verse 8 and tell me

- The subject of the verse ("the Scripture")
- The verb ("preached")
- The direct object ("the Gospel")

This worldwide blessing, according to the apostle Paul, included the future promise of Gentiles coming to know and understand the Gospel!

- Remember, the first Jew was actually a Gentile

Back in Genesis 15, God enters into a covenant with Abram

- Animals were killed and cut in half
- Imagine a walkway or separation between the animals

This is strange to us, but it was a common way of entering into a solemn covenant or commitment with another person

- You were signifying that if one party failed in his covenantal responsibilities, then he would become like those animals
- Dead!

Notice a few things briefly

- 15:12 – Abram is in a deep sleep
- 15:17 – God alone walks through the animals

This signifies that God, and God alone, obligated Himself to fulfill these covenant promises

- Abram would be the beneficiary

What an amazing promise and demonstration of God's grace!

- One would think that Abram and Sarai would never doubt God's goodness, right?

In Genesis 16, we find Sarai telling Abram to have children through her maid, Hagar

- Instead of relying on the promises of God, he goes into Hagar and she conceives Ishmael

13 years after Ishmael is born¹², God appears to Abram again and changes Abram's name to Abraham

- "exalted father" to "father of a multitude"

¹² Abram is 75 when he leaves Haran (12:4), 86 when Ishmael is born (16:16), 99 when God institutes circumcision (17:1), and 100 when Isaac is born (17:17).

This time, Abraham doesn't respond with immediate belief

- Rather, he responds in laughter (17:17)
- In chapter 18, Sarah responds in laughter (18:12, 15)

II. Isaac (21:1-35:29)

Isaac is born in chapter 21

- Does anyone know the meaning of the name Isaac?
- "He laughs"

What a fitting reminder of their response to the promise of God

- God was faithful, in spite of their unbelief

Isaac marries Rebekah in chapter 24

- She gives birth to Jacob and Esau

Isaac is not the firstborn child of Abraham and Sarah, but he would be the one through whom the promises of God would be carried on

- Esau was the firstborn, but his wasn't the chosen lineage

This is the doctrine of election that we see throughout Scripture

- God chooses individuals for His purposes

In the case of Jacob and Esau, both were sinful

- Yet God had chosen Jacob before they were even born, according to Romans 9:10-12

God appears to Isaac in chapter 26 to reaffirm the promises He made to Abraham (26:3-5, 24)

- As God was with Abraham, so He will be with Isaac

III. Jacob (25:21-50:14)

Jacob has a twin brother, Esau

- They will be at odds with one another at various stages of their lives

With the help of his mother, Jacob deceives his own father in Genesis 27

- Isaac wanted Esau to go out hunting, kill an animal, and prepare a savory dish for him
- Of course, Rebekah hears this and puts a different plan into action

Esau was a hairy man, so Jacob had to put a disguise on to fool his father

- Remember, Isaac's eyesight was very poor at this time of his life (27:1)

Rebekah fixed a meal for Isaac while Jacob got into costume

- Even though Isaac was suspicious for a number of reasons (how quick the meal was prepared, Jacob's voice didn't sound like Esau, etc.), Isaac took the bait

Isaac ends up blessing Jacob instead of Esau

- When Esau returned from the field, he discovered that he was too late
- His father told him that he and his descendants would serve his brother

Esau vowed to kill Jacob because of this act

- Once again, Momma Rebekah overheard this and told her son, Jacob, to go away from that land

In Genesis 29, Jacob meets the family of Laban

- He falls in love with Rachel
- He served Laban 7 years for the privilege of marrying Rachel

But on the morning after his wedding night, he awoke to find out that Laban had given him Leah (Rachel's sister)!

- He ends up marrying both sisters

Jealousy and envy consumed these two sisters

- They have Jacob marry their two maids
- Many children are born as a result of these four women

God is certainly growing the nation of Israel

- Abraham's lineage is becoming more and more like the stars of heaven

Jacob leaves Canaan, only to be pursued by Laban

- On the way back to Canaan, Jacob has to deal with Esau (32:1-33:17)
- He wrestled with God at night (32:24-32)
- His daughter is raped and his sons execute vengeance on the people of the land (34:1-31)

In Genesis 35, God renames Jacob to Israel

Israel wouldn't die until Genesis 50

- But the camera switches from Jacob to Joseph

IV. Joseph (30:22-50:26)

The life of Joseph is fairly well known

- His life is a series of ups and downs
- But God was with him all the while

Joseph has a series of dreams that he conveys to his family

- That his family would bow down to him

Of course, this doesn't set well with his brothers

- They throw him into a pit
- Then they sell him to some traders who are passing by
- They tell their father that a wild animal killed Joseph

While in Egypt, Joseph is working for Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh

- He was well respected in that house

But Potiphar's wife made multiple advances at Joseph, but he continually turned her down

- One day, she forced herself on him, and he fled
- She told everyone that Joseph had been the one initiating the advances

Joseph is imprisoned (39:19)

- But the Lord was with Joseph (39:21)

While in prison, he became responsible for the inmates

- He was left in charge

One night, the former baker and cupbearer for Pharaoh had a dream

- Joseph was there to interpret both dreams

And things turned out exactly as Joseph said

- The cupbearer was restored to office
- The baker was killed

It was two YEARS later that the cupbearer remembered Joseph

- Pharaoh had a dream, but no one could interpret it
- The cupbearer told Pharaoh that Joseph would help him

Joseph interprets the dream rightly

- Pharaoh elevates Joseph as 2nd in command of Egypt

Preparations are made as a great famine was coming

- People traveled far and wide to buy grain from Egypt, due to Joseph's planning

Part of the group that traveled to Egypt was Joseph's own family

- Of course, he recognized them
- But they didn't recognize him

Through a series of interactions, Joseph finds out that his father is still alive

- They are reunited
- Joseph has them move to Egypt so they would have food to eat

After the death of Jacob, Joseph doesn't hold a grudge against his brothers

- He said these famous words, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." (50:19-20)

There is a problem as we come to the end of Genesis

- Israel is no longer in the promised land!
- Didn't God promise a land to Abram?

Getting the people of Israel out of Egypt will be the story of Exodus, which will discuss next time

Genesis is the book of beginnings

- It is a fascinating plot of God's dealings with His people

God's grace and kindness are clearly on display

- But so is His justice and righteousness

God's promises are being made

- But their fulfillment will be in the future

I have thrown a lot at you this afternoon

- There is so much that I skipped over

Right now, I would encourage you to write down one thing that you want to go back and study some more in Genesis

- Write that down
- Then go back sometime over the next few weeks and study it some more

We will be studying Exodus and Leviticus next month

- I hope you will be with us as we continue to march our way through the Old Testament

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me!