

Christ in the Old Testament

June - December 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

Class Objective: Build students' faith in Jesus by revealing Christ's supreme role in the Bible's overall story. Equip students to study the Old Testament in ways that are productive, enjoyable, and fruitful.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms

Key New Testament Passage: **Luke 24:13-49**

Focus Statement: Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures in a powerful way. As we start to understand these ancient texts, we will start to understand Jesus better.

Function Statement: Introduce the structure of the Old Testament and demonstrate how it relates to Jesus.



- In a few words, how would you personally describe the Old Testament?

When we talk about the Old Testament, we're talking about those **39 books** from **Genesis to Malachi**. It was primarily written in **Hebrew**, though portions of **Daniel** and **Ezra** were in **Aramaic**. In our **English Bibles**, we organize the Old Testament into the following categories:

The Old Testament in English			
Law	History		Poetry
Genesis	Joshua	II Kings	Job
Exodus	Judges	I Chronicles	Psalms
Leviticus	Ruth	II Chronicles	Proverbs
Numbers	I Samuel	Ezra	Ecclesiastes
Deuteronomy	II Samuel	Nehemiah	Song of Solomon
	I Kings	Esther	
Major Prophets		Minor Prophets	
Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum	• 39 books in English • Composed over 1,000+ years • Primarily written in Hebrew
Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk	
Lamentations	Amos	Zephaniah	
Ezekiel	Obadiah	Haggai	
Daniel	Jonah	Zechariah	
	Micah	Malachi	

- **Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
Moses wrote this. It starts as **narrative**, telling the story from **creation** to the **exodus of the people of Israel from Egyptian slavery**. It then includes **over 600 laws** and even some **census information**, with additional **narrative** and **songs** throughout.
- **History:** Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
As we have them organized, these narratives essentially tell the story of **Israel from settling the Promised Land to returning from exile in chronological order**. (Except for I & II Chronicles, which retells a David and Judah-specific version of I Samuel – II Kings from the perspective of **after the exile**.) Many of these **authors never specifically identify themselves**, except for parts of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** written in the **first person**.
- **Poetry:** Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon
These books are distinguished by their **form**, relying on **rhythm and rhyme** or on the application of **wisdom** to life. Much of this seems to have originated at the time of **David and Solomon's reigns**, though some is much earlier and later.

While we tend associate “**prophet**” with predicting the future, it more specifically refers to being **God's spokesperson**. That may include foretelling future events, but it was primarily about **communicating God's judgment by applying His law to current events**.

- **Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel
These encompass God's messages to **Judah** from **700-500 B.C.**, before (**Isaiah**), during

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(Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel), and after (Daniel) their fall to Babylon. "Major" = longer, except for Lamentations, which tradition attributed to Jeremiah.

- **Minor Prophets:** Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

These encompass God's messages to both Israel (Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum) and Judah (Obadiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) roughly following chronological order, spanning 800 to 400 B.C. "Minor" = shorter.

The Old Testament was written over an 800-1,000 year period, from Moses and the exodus around 1400/1200 B.C. to over a century after the Babylonian exile ended around 400 B.C. We think of our founding documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution as being old, and they aren't even 250 years old yet. In Jesus' day, the latest Old Testament writings were already twice as old as our founding documents are now! Even during Bible times, the Old Testament writings were ancient!

- Who likes reading really old books, and why? Who doesn't, and why not?

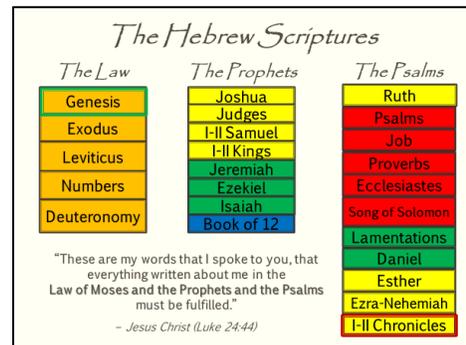
Depending on our inclination, it can mean we either love reading the Old Testament or we wonder if we really have to. After all, it takes nearly 57 hours for the average reader to read the Old Testament: that's a commitment! Do we want to spend that much time on something that Jesus isn't in? On the other hand, is it okay to just skip over nearly 80% of the Bible?

Let's look to Jesus for some direction. Read Luke 24:13-49.

- How did Jesus help His followers understand His death, burial, and resurrection?

In Jesus' day, the 39 books we refer to as "the Old Testament" were organized differently as "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms". This included:

- **Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- **Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, "The Book of Twelve" (Hosea – Malachi)
- **Psalms:** Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles



We see Jesus refer to the Hebrew Scriptures like this in different ways. Read Matthew 23:34-35.

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- **Where do we read the story of Abel's murder?**
Genesis 4.

- **Where do we read the story of Zechariah's murder?**
Read II Chronicles 24:20-22.

- **What were the first and last books of the "Law, Prophets, and Psalms"?**

When Jesus gives the examples of **Abel** and **Zechariah**, He is literally covering the **Hebrew Scriptures** from **beginning to end** in showing how the people **rejected God's messengers!** In fact, whenever we frequently (and famously) hear Jesus say, "**Law and Prophets**", we might think "**Old Testament**" or "**Hebrew Scriptures**" in our terms.

- **Matthew 5:17:** "Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."
- **Matthew 7:12:** "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the **Prophets.**"
- **Matthew 11:12-14:** "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For **all the Prophets and the Law** prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come."
- **Matthew 22:37-40:** "And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend **all the Law and the Prophets.**"

Now let's go back to what **Jesus said to His disciples** in **Luke 24:13-49**.

- **What did the risen Jesus say these "Law, Prophets, and Psalms" were about?**

There are **things written about Jesus** in the whole Old Testament, if our **minds are open** to it.

- **Think back to our Old Testament descriptions: did we mention Jesus?**

According to Jesus, we should! I worry when we **teach, preach, Bible bowl, or annually read the Old Testament** but **don't** come back to **Jesus**.

In fact, when the **apostles** and **evangelists** preached Jesus in **Acts**, the **only Scripture** they had to **preach from** was our **Old Testament!**

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- When **Peter** preached in **Acts 2**, he directly quoted **the Prophets with Joel 2** and **the Psalms with Psalm 16 and 110**. When he preached in **Acts 3**, he quoted **the Law with Deuteronomy 18** and **Genesis 22**. Law. Prophets. Psalms.
- When **Philip** preached to the **Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40**, he **started from Isaiah 53** and **"told him the good news about Jesus"**.
- When **Paul** preached to the **synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:16-41**, he referenced **the story of Israel** from the **Law** and quoted from **Psalm 89:20, I Samuel 13:14, Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3, Psalm 16:10, and Habakkuk 1:5**.

Consider the example of **Apollos**. Read **Acts 17:24-28**.

- What does it mean that **Apollos** was **"competent in the Scriptures"**?
- What else had he been taught? What else did he need to understand?

Once you knew the complete story of Jesus, you had everything you needed in the Old Testament to preach the gospel without anything else written! Read **II Timothy 3:14-17**.

- What were the **"sacred writings"** Timothy knew since childhood?

When you add the testimony of Jesus to the Hebrew Scriptures, you **believe**. So, they are **worth our time** to get to know; but, there's a right way to go about it on this side of the cross.

- If we approach them like **law**, it won't be helpful: it would be like an **American citizen** reading **Canada's law**. It isn't the law that you are under!
- If we approach them like **history**, it will be interesting for **some of us**, but it will **leave out others**. We might learn **people, places, events**, but we might have a **hard time applying it**.
- Yet, if we approach them just as **moralistic stories**, we'll have a **tough time**. The **good guys** did some **really sketchy things**. Does the fact that **Abraham** and **Rahab lied** or **David** had **multiple wives** make those things **"okay"**?

Yet, if we **position the Hebrew Scriptures** where **Jesus** put them, **we will see the story**. N.T. Wright proposes this outline to present the story of the Bible as a five-act play in his book *Scripture and the Authority of God* (Wright 121).

- Act 1: The Creation (Genesis 1-2)
- Act 2: The Fall (Genesis 3)

N. T. Wright's "Five-Act Model"

Act 1: Creation (Genesis 1-2)

Act 2: Fall (Genesis 3)

Act 3: Israel (Genesis 4 – Malachi)

Act 4: Jesus (Matthew – John)

Act 5: The Church (Acts – Revelation)

"[W]e are currently living in the fifth act, the time of the church...We must act in the appropriate manner for *this* moment in the story...We must be ferociously loyal to what has gone before and cheerfully open about what comes next"
(Wright 123).

Source: Wright, N.T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*

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- Act 3: Israel (Genesis 4 – Malachi)
- Act 4: Jesus (Matthew – John)
- Act 5: The Church (Acts – Revelation)

Approached this way, we can see the New Testament **not as a replacement** for the Old Testament but **a culmination of it:** exactly like Jesus said it would be. We read the Old Testament not to be **told what to do** but to **understand how we got here.**

Wright says, "When we read Genesis 1-2, we read it as the first act in a play of which we live in the fifth. When we read Genesis 3-11, we read it as the second act in a play of which we live in the fifth. When we read the entire story of Israel from Abraham to the Messiah (as Paul sketches it in Galatians 3 or Romans 4), we read it as the third act. When we read the story of Jesus, we are confronted with the decisive and climactic fourth act, which is not where we ourselves live – we are not following Jesus around Palestine, watching him heal, preach, and feast with the outcasts, and puzzling over his plans for a final trip to Jerusalem – but which, of course, remains the foundation upon which our present (fifth) act is based. Indeed, telling the story of Jesus as the climax of the story of Israel and the focal point of the story of the creator's redemptive drama with his world is itself a major task of the fifth act, which is why both the oral tradition of storytelling about Jesus and the eventual writing of the canonical gospels in precisely that narrative mode was, and remains, one of the great founding moments of this act.

"To live in the fifth act is thus to presuppose all of the above, and to be conscious of living as people through whom the narrative in question is now moving toward its final destination...This means...that our relationship to the New Testament is not the same as our relationship to the Old, and that we can say this with no diminution of our commitment to the Old Testament as a crucial and non-negotiable part of "holy scripture." The New Testament is the foundation charter of the fifth act...

"We who call ourselves Christians must be totally committed to telling the story of Jesus both as the climax of Israel's story and as the foundation of our own. We recognize ourselves as the direct successors of the churches of Corinth, Ephesus, and the rest, and we need to pay attention to what was said to them as though it was said to us. We cannot relativize the epistles by pointing out the length of time that has passed between them and us, or by suggesting any intervening seismic cultural shifts which would render them irrelevant or even misleading. It is an essential part of authentic Christian discipleship both to see the New Testament as the foundation for the ongoing (and still open-ended) fifth act and to recognize that it cannot be supplanted or supplemented. The fifth act goes on, but its first scene is non-negotiable, and remains the standard by which the various improvisations of subsequent scenes are to be judged. This is what it means for the church to live under the authority of scripture..." (Wright 124-126).

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- Instead “**firstborn of creation**” speaks to His **relationship to God** and the **rights and privileges** He enjoys because of that – despite being **fully human like us**. It’s another way of describing how He is **both Son of God** and **Son of Man**.

- What does it mean then that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God”?

- How do we see that in Genesis 1?

- What role does Paul say Jesus has in creation?

- According to Paul, why does it matter?

Paul’s point isn’t to give a **supernatural physics lesson**: it’s to **explain the preeminence of Christ**. That is meant to tell us the **role Christ should have** – in the **church** and in our **lives**. The Hebrews writer makes a similar point. Read **Hebrews 1:1-4**.

- Do you hear the similarities to what Paul said in Colossians 1?

<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
1:2 Son, appointed the heir of all things	1:15 firstborn of all creation
1:2 through whom also he created the world	1:16 all things created by, through, for him
1:3 radiance of His glory, exact imprint of his nature	1:15 image of the invisible God
1:3 he upholds the universe by the word of his power	1:17 in him all things hold together

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After that, the Hebrews writer draws on a lot of Old Testament passages – **II Samuel 7**, the **Greek translation of Deuteronomy 32**, and **several Psalms** – to describe Jesus' superiority.

- **Why do the New Testament writers emphasize so heavily Jesus' role in creation?**

Not only was Jesus present in creation, but He also brought to fulfillment what God began in creation. You see, "fulfillment" is about **bringing to completion**. It deals with more than just **closing the loop on predictions**. Jesus fulfilled God's purpose for humanity in His own life. He is fulfilling God's purpose for humanity through the church. Read **II Corinthians 4:1-6**.

- **What started in creation that is now being "fulfilled" by Jesus?**

We see all of these themes in the opening of John's gospel. Read **John 1:1-18**.

- **What does the opening of John's gospel account have in common with Genesis 1?**

As John shows us, what we saw begin in **Genesis 1** is only truly completed through Jesus – but that is because of how **sin entered the picture**, which we will get to soon.

- **So, to recap, where do we see Jesus in the biblical account of creation? Why does it matter?**

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This is part of why the apostles put so much emphasis on Christians not being idle but working hard. God's design is that we work and that our work brings glory to Him! Read **II Thessalonians 3:6-15** and **Colossians 3:22-4:1**.

- How is God's design— began in creation and restored to us through Christ – that we work different than worldly expectations?

But God's design isn't just about working: it's also about relying on God. Jesus makes this clear, too. Read **Matthew 6:25-34** and **Matthew 11:28-30**.

- How is God's design— began in creation and restored to us through Christ – that we rely on Him to meet our needs different than worldly expectations?

God not only created us to work: He created us for relationship. In **Genesis 1:27**, we're told "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." We see this happen in **Genesis 2:18-25**.



- How does our need for relationship reflect the image of God?

- What is different about the creation of woman?

Man and woman together project God's image, and together they are blessed to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion. Yet, that's not all. Now that Jesus has come, something else about marriage has been revealed to us. Read **Ephesians 5:22-33**.

- How does marriage – beginning with Adam and Eve – refer to Christ and the church?

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Tempted

Focus Statement: In the midst of God's good creation, there was an enemy tempting humanity to sin. He seeks to lure us away from God's design just as he first did them.



In Genesis 1-2, we see God's original design for humanity. We were made in **God's image** (1:26). We were created to **exercise God's dominion** in the world, and He **blessed us to be fruitful** (1:27-28). We had **work to do**, and all our **needs were supplied** (1:29-30, 2:15). There was **no death**: everything even ate plants (1:30, 2:17)! God determined **right and wrong**, He gave us **marriage**, and we **lived in His presence** and **with one another without shame** (2:16-18, 24-25). It was "**very good**" (1:31).

What happened? It's not like that today. It wasn't like that **2,000 years ago** in **Jesus' day**. It wasn't even like that **3,500 years ago** in **Moses' day**, when the Spirit inspired him to write Genesis. Now, having enough food is a struggle and work can be miserable. Now, we can't trust people, we feel shame, and we die. What went wrong? Read **Genesis 3:1-6**.

- **What indications do we have that this serpent isn't your average snake?**

- **What about the serpent's temptation appealed to Eve?**

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It is so easy for us to look at this and question Eve: what was she thinking?! They had everything, and all God said was not to eat of that one tree. Yet, the way Eve was tempted speaks to how we all experience temptation. Read **I John 2:15-17**.

- **How do we see what John says here in Eve's temptation?**

We also see this when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. Read **Luke 4:1-12**.

- **How was Jesus' temptation similar?**

- **What was different in Jesus' temptation?**

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, the effects are immediate. Read **Genesis 3:7-13**.

- **What do Adam and Eve experience within this passage as a result of their sin?**

When people reject God's way for sin, it changes whose image we bear. Listen to what Jesus said when many of the people wanted to accuse, arrest, and even kill Him over His relationship with God. Read **John 8:39-47**.

- **What does the devil desire, and how is it seen in people?**

- **How do we resist temptation?**

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Cursed

Focus Statement: Through Jesus, we can see God isn't the problem: sin is.

The effects of Adam and Eve's sin were immediate. Yet, even as awful as the loss of trust, the introduction of shame and fear, the hiding from God's presence, and the blaming of one another all were, the worst was yet to come. Read **Genesis 3:14-24**.



- What changed for humanity from life in God's "very good" creation to life after "the Fall"?

- What are things we struggle with today that resulted from "the Fall"?

The Apostle Paul made the relationship between sin and death clear. Read **Romans 5:12-14**.

- Why do we die? How does this relate to what God first told humanity about eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17)?

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Once humanity sinned, it got worse quickly. God warned Adam's firstborn son Cain that sin was "**crouching at the door**" before in jealousy he murdered his younger brother, Abel (**Genesis 4:7**). After Cain "**went away from the presence of the LORD**", his descendants grew more and more wicked. Read **Genesis 4:17-24** and **6:1-7**.

- **What sins characterized Lamech's and later humanity's overall wickedness?**

The net effect was that humanity didn't fill the world with God's image but with rampant wickedness. Read **Romans 1:18-32**.

- **Why did Paul say humanity is without excuse for our rampant sin?**

Our sin didn't just hurt us. Given that God created man to exercise dominion over creation, our sin brought a curse on all of creation. Read **Romans 8:18-25**.

- **How does Paul describe creation?**

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When we talk about sin, we aren't talking about arbitrary standards or subjective rules but departures from bearing God's image. When we encounter suffering and death, they aren't God's design for us but the consequence of the sin we brought into the world. So, when we see God fiercely punishing wrongdoing, we must recognize that sin and death are the baseline we have brought on ourselves and on everything He created. Yet, God always – in the Old and New Testament alike – shows His goodness in working with imperfect people who are willing to follow Him. In **Romans 11:22**, Paul describes it as the kindness and severity of God: **“severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in His kindness.”**

- Thinking back to Genesis 3, where did the clothes God provided Adam and Eve come from?

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Bruised

Focus Statement: Moments after the Fall, God set in motion His plan to redeem humanity from the curse of sin and death.



Let's look closer at the curse on the serpent in **Genesis 3:15**.

- On the surface, what did this curse do to the serpent?

- Yet, was this a typical serpent?

Consider again how John identifies the serpent in Revelation. Read **Revelation 12:1-17**.

- At what point does John hear it proclaimed that "the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down"?

On this side of the cross, we can see moments after the Fall, all the way back in **Genesis 3**, the first prophecy about Jesus!

- ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring."*** Doesn't Revelation 12 symbolically depict this? What do we know about the nature of Jesus' birth that fulfills this?
- ***"He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*** Jesus died – His heel was bruised – but in raising from the dead He crushed Satan's power.

Genesis 3:15 really represents the first proclamation of the gospel. Read **I Corinthians 15:1-28**.

- What did Paul say the gospel is?

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- **In what way is Christ like Adam?**

In fact, by destroying death, Jesus is destroying the power of our adversary, the devil. Read **Hebrews 2:14-18** and **I John 3:4-10**.

- **How does Jesus undo the effects of the fall and fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15?**

Genesis 1-3 gives us the controlling narrative for the entire Bible. Everything comes back to God's design for humanity, our rebellion, and God working within our imperfection to provide us a way back to His presence.

- It's the story of **Noah and the ark**, where Seth's descendant obeyed God and came through the water into a new creation – which is itself a type of our own baptism (Genesis 6-8, I Peter 3:18-22). God blessed Noah to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1).
- It's the story of **Israel's exodus**, where through the Ten Plagues God essentially uncreated Egypt before bringing Israel through the Red Sea, the wilderness and eventually into the Promised Land – where they could be fruitful, multiply, and shine God's light to the world. Like the cherubim guarding the way to the tree of life, the **ark of the covenant** was decorated with cherubim. Like God once walked in the garden in the cool of the day, the **tabernacle** and **later the temple** provided a physical representation of God's presence with the people.

Yet, only with Jesus does this narrative find fulfillment. Otherwise, in every instance **sin and death** still plagued humanity.

- Noah – a “**man of the soil**” – became drunk and Ham dishonored him (Genesis 9:20-25).
- “**God was not pleased**” with most of Israel, overthrowing them in the wilderness because of how they desired evil, committed idolatry, engaged in sexual immorality, and put the Lord to the test (I Corinthians 10:1-11). The ark was lost. The temple destroyed.

But not with Jesus. He defeated sin and death. In Him, we get to experience new creation. And as the Old Testament shows us, God brought it about in the most unlikely of ways.

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Believing God

Focus Statement: God worked through the most unlikely of people to bring Jesus into the world to accomplish His purpose. Their only qualification was that they trusted Him.

The Apostle John devotes much of his gospel account to Jesus' interaction with His apostles on the night He was betrayed. In response to Philip's request to "show us the Father", Jesus explained something critical about His relationship with the Father. Read **John 14:8-11**.

- **How did Jesus say we could "see the Father"?**

Philip requested a *theophany* – God revealing Himself to humans. Though originally part of God's design for us, sin caused our departure "from the presence of the LORD" (Gen. 3:22-24, 4:16). As a result, such appearances became rare and remarkable as seen throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, marking out critical junctures in God's plan to rescue humanity from sin and death. Read **Genesis 12:1-9**.

- **Why did the LORD appear to Abram?**

- **What had Abram done for God to choose him?**

- **What did Abram do when God chose him?**

- **What did God promise to do if Abram went?**

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Abram was far from perfect. No sooner had he responded to God's call, then he sojourned in Egypt due to a famine and hid his relationship with his wife Sarai for fear the Egyptians would kill him. Yet, he believed in God, and that meant everything. Read **Genesis 15:1-6**.

- What did the LORD add to Abram's understanding of His promise in making this covenant?

- What does it mean that God counted Abram's belief "to him as righteousness"?

On the basis of Abram's belief, God entered a **covenant** with him in **Genesis 15**. Such legal agreements were common between individuals (e.g. contracts) and nations (e.g. treaties), especially for a more powerful entity to pledge protection to a less powerful one. While covenants typically specify obligations between both parties, God counted Abram's belief as satisfying his part. God identified Himself and Abram presented a sacrifice to Him (15:7-11). Then in a dream, God foretold Israel's future affliction and rescue (which would have been current events when God inspired Moses to write this) and before making His promise. "**On that day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land...'**" (15:18).

Abram and Sarai didn't fully comprehend this and took it upon themselves to fulfill God's part of the covenant. Read **Genesis 16:1-6**.

- Even without a written law, how did Abram's and Sarai's action here go against God's design? What echoes from the Fall can we hear?

God appeared to Abram again years later, changing his name to Abraham, repeating His promises, commanding **circumcision**, and specifying Isaac as his offspring. Read **Genesis 17:1-27**.

- Did circumcision **make Abraham right before God**?

Christ in the Old Testament

June - December 2020

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- Where did Abraham take Isaac (Gen. 22:2)? _____

- Where did Solomon build the temple (II Chr. 3:1)? _____

Perhaps Moses was contrasting contemporary pagan practice with the one True God. Yet, that's not all! Remember, Jesus told Philip, "**Whoever has seen me has seen the Father**" (John 14:9).

- What Father allowed His Son to be sacrificed in Jerusalem (John 3:16)? _____

Even without being a "Messianic prophecy", Jesus opens our understanding to who God is and what His purposes are throughout the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. Read **Hebrews 11:17-19**.

- What did the Hebrews writer add to explain Abraham's motivation in offering Isaac?

- Having now seen Jesus, how can we know God better through this story?

Jesus changes everything, including the significance of the patriarch Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob. Just look at how Jesus addressed the Sadducees, who didn't believe in the resurrection and only acknowledged the Law as Scripture. Read **Matthew 22:29-33**.

- How did Jesus say this quote from Exodus 3:6 in the Law demonstrated resurrection?

While Paul made a point of showing in **Romans 4** that Abraham's standing with God was based on his faith, James used this story to show what faith is really all about. Read **James 2:14-26**.

- By using Abraham's example, what do Paul and James together tell us about the nature of genuine faith in Jesus?

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Flesh and Promise

Focus Statement: God accomplishes His purpose in ways we wouldn't expect, and through Jesus, we see that He always keeps His promises.

As the patriarch of the people of Israel, Abraham loomed large in both Israel's history and in the genealogy of Jesus. Read **Matthew 1:1, 17**.

- **Why does it matter that Jesus descended from Abraham?**

While proselytes were welcomed to Judaism – as evidenced by Jesus' own family tree including Rahab and Ruth – heritage was extremely important to the Jewish people. For some of them, it had even become too important. Read **Matthew 3:7-10**.

- **What issue was John trying to address in the Pharisees and Sadducees attitude with respect to being "children of Abraham"?**

Our fallen world wants to exalt itself and make its own determinations of good and evil. This is done through accumulation of wealth, through physical dominance, through lineage and inheritance. Even in a democratic system like the U.S., like at how much an influence money, experience, and name recognition have in our elections! This is no different than the ancient world. God has a very different picture, though. Read **Romans 9:6-33**.

- **How were God's choices different than those the world might expect?**

- **Why did God make the choices that He did? How should we understand them?**

- **How does Jesus help us understand those instances of God's wrath on display?**

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We see this over and over throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. God worked through family turmoil and world events to exalt Abraham's great-grandson Joseph over his older brothers and Egypt: **"God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today"** (Gen. 50:20). In fact, we see this in the blessings Israel, Abraham's grandson and Isaac's younger son, gave to his twelve sons before his death. Read **Genesis 49:8-12**.

- **What role did Israel say the descendants of his fourth born, Judah, would play?**

When God led Israel out of captivity to the Promised Land, He did not choose them because they were **"more in number than any other people"**, because they had superior power or might, or even because they were more righteous but **"because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers"** (Deut. 7:7-8, 8:17, 9:4). When Israel's first king, the Benjamite Saul, was unfaithful and had the kingdom taken from him, it was given to David from the tribe of Judah, who was Jesse's youngest son when anointed king (I Sam. 16:11-13). Likewise, Solomon was nowhere near next in line after David, yet God made him king (I Kgs. 1). This is a consistent part of God's character, and we see it in the New Testament, too.

- _____ were **"uneducated, common men"** who spoke boldly for Jesus (Acts 4:13).
- _____ was **"unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me is not in vain"** (I Cor. 15:9-10). Despite being advanced in Judaism, God sent him to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:13-17).
- **"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were _____ according to worldly standards, not many were _____, not many were of _____.** But God chose what is _____ in the world to shame the _____; God chose what is _____ in the world to shame the _____; God chose what is _____ in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no _____ might boast in the presence of God" (I Cor. 1:26-29).

Yet, many in Israel missed this about Him. Rather than recognize God's grace and purpose in His promises to Abraham, they made it about their heritage and worthiness. Had they really been seeking to know God, they never would have missed this: it was clearly on display during the life of Abraham himself. Read **Genesis 14:17-24** and **Hebrews 6:13-7:22**.

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The Apostle Paul also developed these themes. Read **Galatians 4:21-5:6**.

- In Paul's example, who is "the son of the slave" and who is "the son of the free"?

- What does this mean for how Christians are to live?

Teaching in the temple treasury, Jesus was confronted by this in His own ministry, even among those who believed in Him. Read **John 8:31-59**.

- Why were they upset by His teaching? On what did they base their relationship with God?

- How were they embodying "the Fall"? How was Jesus calling them back to God's design?

By invoking "I am", Jesus not only recalled Abraham but another pivotal person to Israel: **Moses**, with whom we will begin with our next lesson.

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Much like they did with Abraham, Jesus and His disciples would encounter fierce opposition from Jews who also misunderstood Moses' role in God's plan. Read **Acts 6:8-7:60**.

- **What were the major elements of Israel's history Stephen included in his speech?**

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>O.T. reference</i>
Acts 7:2-8		Genesis 12-36
Acts 7:9-16		Genesis 37-50
Acts 7:17-22		Exodus 1-2
Acts 7:23-29		Exodus 2
Acts 7:30-34		Exodus 3-4
Acts 7:35-43		Exodus - Deuteronomy
Acts 7:44-50		Joshua – II Chronicles

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When I See the Blood

Focus Statement: Through the Passover, God brought freedom to Israel. It's no accident that this holiday would take on special significance for Jesus, too.

As Pharaoh's heart grew harder through each of the **Ten Plagues**, God said it was so that "I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth" (Rom. 9:17-18; cf. Exo. 5-11, esp. 9:16). When the final plague, the death of the firstborn, was threatened, God established **the Passover** with Israel. Read **Exodus 12:1-51**.

- **What purpose did the Passover and eating unleavened bread initially serve?**

- **What purpose was the ongoing observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to serve?**

- **What did the Passover have to do with sin?**

The Passover was one of many sacrifices the Jewish people would come to observe, including the **Day of Atonement** (cf. Lev. 16). An annual observance every seventh month on the tenth day of the month, God said, "**For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins**" (Lev. 16:30). Atonement means to cover over someone's debt. Today it's known as Yom Kippur and falls during September or October.

Throughout the gospel accounts, we frequently see Jesus going to Jerusalem to observe these various holidays, including the week that He died on the cross. Read **Luke 22:8-15**.

- **During which festival did Jesus die on the cross?**

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Consider that this festival was more like our Independence Day: the day God overthrew their oppressors and brought them freedom. When it was observed during Jesus' day, the Romans were in power. Read **Luke 23:1-16** and **Matthew 27:15-23**.

- **What were some things happening in Jerusalem over the holiday different than the norm?**

This association would specifically influence how the apostles viewed Jesus' crucifixion. Read **John 19:31-37**.

- **When John quotes Scripture as saying, "Not one of his bones will be broken", he is quoting Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12. What are these passages about?**

Paul would develop this association, too. Read **I Corinthians 5:6-8**.

- **Given the context of addressing flagrant sexual sin taking place within the church, what did it mean that "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"?**

Atonement was a major part of Christ's sacrifice: in fact, He "**offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins**", ending the role of animal sacrifice (Heb. 10:12). Yet, the good news is about more than just Christ's sacrifice: it is also about how He rose from the dead and "**sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet**" (Heb. 10:12-13). This means freedom for those He rules over. Read **Exodus 4:21-23**.

- **What did God say His relationship with Israel was and why did He want to free them?**

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Spiritual Food, Spiritual Drink, But Evil Desires

Focus Statement: When Israel was faithless on the journey to the Promised Land, God was faithful. Through His faithfulness, we can see Christ.

Israel was suffering greatly in slavery when God sent Moses to deliver them. Read **Exodus 6:1-9**.



○ What was God accomplishing for Israel by leading them out of Egypt?

○ How does the Exodus continue the story God began in Genesis?

○ How had slavery affected Israel?

After the **Passover** marked the end of Israel's slavery, God Himself would lead the people to the Promised Land. Read **Exodus 13:17-14:31**.

○ Why didn't God lead Israel directly to Canaan from Egypt?

○ What did Israel need to do to be rescued from the Egyptians?

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- How is it that God “showed himself holy” through the waters of Meribah?

We must never forget the consequence of sin is death: it is purely by God's grace we are allowed into His presence. When we rebel against Him again, we should not act surprised that death follows. Read **Numbers 21:4-9**.

- How does this passage (and others like it) show God's holiness?

- How does this passage show God's grace?

These lessons would not only prepare Israel to obtain the Promised Land but to remain there. These stories became an important part of Israel's identity. Read **Psalm 78**.

- What was the psalmist Asaph trying to accomplish with this song?

- What does it mean that “God was their rock”?

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Much like Psalm 78 showed how Israel's story had led up to David's faithful reign, the Apostle Paul similarly showed how it ultimately resulted in the reign of the Son of David, Jesus Christ. Read **I Corinthians 10:1-5**.

- What is significant about Paul describing Israel as "our fathers" to the Corinthians?

- How was Israel's journey through the wilderness like the Christian life?

Also like **Psalm 78**, there was a very practical lesson Paul wanted the church to take from Israel's history. Read **I Corinthians 10:6-22**.

- What are Israel's stories meant to teach Christians?

- What does it mean that "the end of the ages has come" on us (10:11)?

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A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation

Focus Statement: God had a purpose for Israel, and achieving it meant dramatic changes to how they lived life each day.

After several weeks of traveling through the wilderness, Israel finally reached the mountain where the LORD spoke to Moses out of the burning bush (cf. Exo. 3:12). Read **Exodus 19:1-15**.

- Now that Israel had been rescued from slavery, what was God's ongoing purpose for them?

- Does this have any parallels to us today?

- Why did the people need to consecrate themselves?

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Once the people were consecrated and the third day came, God spoke the most famous laws in human history. Read **Exodus 19:16-20:20**.

○ Before and after God spoke, how are we told the people reacted to His presence?

○ What questions do you have about these Ten Commandments? What stands out?

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- **What do the Ten Commandments tell us about who God wants His covenant people to be?**

While the most famous, the Ten Commandments were hardly the only laws God gave that day. He also gave:

- Laws about the **altars** they were – and weren't – to build for Him (Exo. 20:22-26).
- Laws about being **right in their relationships**, including toward their slaves (Exo. 21:1-32).
- Laws about **restitution** when they – or their livestock – harmed another (Exo. 21:33-22:14).
- A wide variety of laws about **social justice** (Exo. 22:16-23:9).
- Laws governing their **observance of the Sabbath and festivals** (Exo. 23:10-19).

On that day on Sinai alone, God gave something like over 70 different commandments. Israel thought they were up to the task of obeying them. They wanted to keep the covenant but sought to do so without the presence of God. We will revisit this in the future.

Do All That I Say

Focus Statement: God gave Moses a lot more than Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. So how do we know which ones to keep?

God didn't just give Moses the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai: it was more like the Seventy-Plus Commandments, and that was just on Day One. Read **Exodus 23:20-24:8**.

- **What did God promise to do if Israel kept His covenant?**

- **How did the people respond?**

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As Christians, we are confronted with the issue of how we should view the Law of Moses today. Here are the basic (admittedly oversimplified) approaches:

1.) It is God's word, so we keep the Law. This approach says that because these laws came from God any person living at any time should follow them.

○ Are you following **Leviticus 19:19**? _____

○ Are you following **Deuteronomy 22:8**? _____

In reality, even the most faithful Israelites didn't take this approach.

○ What was different about what David wanted to do in **II Samuel 7:1-17** than what the Law said 400+ years earlier in **Exodus 26-27** and **35-40**? How did God feel about it?

○ How was the command in **Esther 9:20-32** different from the Law in **Exodus 23:10-19**?

○ What feast did Jesus observe and where did He observe it in **John 10:22-30**?

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Together, this shows us that the Law was something more than a static code meant to be observed the same way for all time by all people. It would be a mistake for followers of Jesus to treat it as immediately and directly applicable to us today – especially when there was flexibility within it for the Israelites themselves!

2.) Because we are Christians and not Israelites, we do not keep the Law. This approach says that as Christians, the Law that Moses gave to Israel simply does not apply to us.

- What does Paul write to the Jewish and Gentile saints in **Ephesians 6:1-4**?

When the Spirit-inspired Apostles quoted from the Law and directly applied it to Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus, it would be just as much a mistake for Christians to entirely dismiss the Law as it would be to insist on its strict adherence.

3.) Some of the Law still applies, but other parts do not. This approach reasons that the New Testament brought forward some commandments that we should keep, but we do not have to keep those that it left out. This might be the most common approach among our brotherhood, but it is not without a few issues of its own. The Pharisees similarly tried to show how the Law applied to their day, a thousand years after it was first given. We get to see how Jesus viewed their efforts.

One of their issues was related to vows. In **Numbers 30:1-2**, “**Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the people of Israel, saying, ‘This is what the LORD has commanded. If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.’**” The Pharisees had applied this so that if someone vowed their financial resources to God, they were released from their responsibility to care for their parents because keeping the vow mattered more.

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- What issue did Jesus see in their approach in **Matthew 15:1-9**?

At least when it comes to the Ten Commandments, it is not hard to see how they apply today, except for one: **"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"** (Ex. 20:8).

- When is **"the Christian Sabbath"**?

- According to Paul in **Romans 14:1-19**, is it sinful to observe the Sabbath?

While there is a lot to commend about recognizing the differences between things before ("Old Testament") and after ("New Testament") Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, it still is not complete as an approach to the Law. If we simply make it about substituting one set of rules for a new set, we will struggle to explain why some things (e.g. holidays, instruments) were okay for Israel but not part of the plan now. It also does not explain instances when the Apostles would quote a Law but apply it in different ways, like when the Apostle Paul used a law about not muzzling oxen to justify paying preachers (Deut. 25:4, I Cor. 9:8-12).

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There is a better way to understand the Law: the way Jesus and the Apostles explained it!

4.) The Biblical View: **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”** (Romans 10:4). Within the larger context, Paul explains how despite the rejection of many in Israel of Christ, that does not mean God's word failed. Read **Romans 9:1-8**.

- What blessings did Paul say belonged to the Israelites as God's “kingdom of priests”?

- So how was the rejection of Christ by many of them not a failure of God's Word?

Paul goes on to explain how all of this was ultimately consistent with God's character and plan, placing Israel and the Law of Moses within the context of the larger story of what God is accomplishing for humanity. Read **Romans 9:27-10:4**.

Further clarification is needed, though. The word we translate “end” is from the Greek *telos*. More than just meaning “an end” – as in something was happening but now it has stopped – it carries a meaning of achieving the goal, reaching the finish line, completing the work, or achieving the outcome or aim (cf. I Timothy 1:5, I Peter 1:9). This is a great example of why it can be helpful to reference multiple translations when studying the Bible.

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Romans 10:4

<i>New International Version</i> "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."	<i>New Living Translation</i> "Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given."	<i>New Testament for Everyone</i> "The Messiah, you see, is the goal of the law, so that covenant membership may be available for all who believe"
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- o How does Jesus help us understand, interpret, and apply the Law of Moses?

This view is only possible when we see the Law not as a comprehensive code but as part of the story of God's rescue of humanity that led to Jesus. When we view it that way – the way Jesus and the Apostles viewed it – we can understand the Law in a way that sifting through the individual commandments for their continuing applicability just cannot accomplish.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-18).

"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith...But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 3:23-26, 4:4-7).

In fact, as we look at the Law itself, we will soon see that such a view was always God's intention for His Law.

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Question and Response

Focus Statement: We have covered a lot of ground so far studying Christ in the Old Testament, including God's original design for creation, sin's terrible consequences, and God's work to rescue us all by bringing Jesus into the world through Israel. So, what questions do you have? What lessons have you learned?

1: The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms 2: Everything Written About Me

Focus Statement: Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures in a powerful way. As we start to understand these ancient texts, we will start to understand Jesus better.

Key Verse: "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Lk 24:44).

- **What are ways we commonly think of the Old Testament? What changes when we see it as ultimately being about Jesus?**

3: In the Beginning 4: In the Beginning...Again 5: Workers 6: Helpers

Focus Statement: Through Jesus, we can see and understand God more clearly as He is revealed to us in Scripture and who He created us to be.

Key Verse: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Gen. 1:27-28).

- **When God created humanity, what was included in His design for our lives?**

7: Tempted

8: Cursed

9: Groaning

10: Bruised

Focus Statement: In the midst of God's good creation, there was an enemy tempting humanity to sin. He seeks to lure us away from God's design just as he first did them. Through Jesus, we can see God isn't the problem: sin is. Moments after the Fall, God set in motion His plan to redeem humanity from the curse of sin and death.

Key Verse: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

- **How do the consequences of the sin in Genesis 3 help us understand the story of the Bible and the suffering in our world to this day?**

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11: Believing God

12: Depending on Faith

13: Faith and Works

14: Flesh and Promise

15: After the Order of Melchizedek

16: Abraham's Children

Focus Statements: God worked through the most unlikely of people to bring Jesus into the world to accomplish His purpose. Their only qualification was that they trusted Him. God accomplishes His purpose in ways we wouldn't expect, and through Jesus, we see that He always keeps His promises.

Key Verse: "And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

- **What determined whether God worked through someone?**

17: I AM has Sent Me to You **18: When I See the Blood** **19: Led by God** **20: Learning to Trust God** **21: God was Their Rock** **22: The Rock was Christ** **23: The Bread of Life**

Focus Statements: God sent Moses to play a pivotal role in Israel's history. Yet, where he was ultimately leading them was to Jesus. Through the Passover, God brought freedom to Israel. It's no accident that this holiday would take on special significance for Jesus, too. When Israel was faithless on the journey to the Promised Land, God was faithful. Through His faithfulness, we can see Christ.

Key Verse: "He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap. In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light. He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep" (Ps. 78:13-15).

- **What problems are caused by believing in God's power to save but doubting in His care to provide for us?**

24: A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation **25: Do All That I Say**

26: Breaking the Commandment

27: Christ is the End of the Law

Focus Statements: God had a purpose for Israel, and achieving it meant dramatic changes to how they lived life each day. God gave Moses a lot more than Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. So how do we know which ones to keep?

Key Verse: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exo. 19:5-6).

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4).

- **How is the Biblical approach "Christ is the end of the law" different from other approaches to understanding the Law of Moses?**

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- What questions do you have? What have you learned (so far)?

As we begin to see Christ in the Old Testament, the implications for us are clear. Read **Hebrews 12:18-29**.

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The Torah

Focus Statement: What does it say that when God gives rules, He calls them "The Teaching"? Once we understand God's purpose - ultimately fulfilled in Jesus - His laws in Exodus through Deuteronomy make so much more sense!

After Moses read the **"Book of the Covenant"** to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, they said in **Exodus 24:7**, **"All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."** Moses then sealed the covenant with blood (Exodus 24:8, cf. Hebrews 9:18-20). Yet, God wasn't done. **"The LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction'"** (Exo. 24:12). The Hebrew word we translate as "Law" is **"Torah."**

- **What do you think of when you hear the word "law"?**

"Torah" also means _____ or _____. The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures are called "The Law", but its first third is stories: we are seventy chapters into it before the commandments start to be given! (Imagine if the U.S. Constitution began with biographies of the Founding Fathers.) Because God's intent was to teach Israel how to be like Him (and ultimately, bring Christ into the world), story continued to be important to the Law.

When Moses and his assistant Joshua left to go up to God on the mountain, they told the elders, **"Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them"** (Exo. 24:14). The people saw **"the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain"** as Moses entered the cloud surrounding it (Exo. 24:15-18). He then spent the next forty days and forty nights receiving commandments from God for how He would establish His presence among them.

- Exo. 25: Sanctuary Contributions, Ark of the Covenant, Table for Bread, Golden Lampstand
- Exo. 26: The Tabernacle
- Exo. 27: The Bronze Altar, the Court of the Tabernacle, Oil for the Lamp
- Exo. 28: The Priests' Garments
- Exo. 29: The Consecration of the Priests
- Exo. 30: The Altar of Incense, Census Tax, Bronze Basin, Anointing Oil and Incense
- Exo. 31: Enabling Oholiab and Bezalel to make what God commanded, the Sabbath

These extensive instructions created a way for God to be present with His people in a world still bearing the weight of sin, re-establishing what was lost in Genesis 1-2.

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Yet, "the Law" isn't just rules but instruction. Watch what happens next. Read **Exodus 32:1-6**.

- **How were the people violating their covenant with God?**

As cosmically disastrous as humanity's sin in Genesis 3 was for all of creation, Israel's sin in Exodus 32 was equally disastrous for their nation. God was so angry that He was prepared to destroy the people and make a nation of Moses, but Moses interceded. Read **Exodus 32:7-14**.

- **Why did Moses ask God to relent?**

Moses destroyed the calf and executed 3,000 of the men who had "**broken loose**" with help from his own tribe, the sons of Levi (Exo. 32:15-29). The people later suffered from a plague God sent, as well (Exo. 32:30-35). Yet the effects lingered beyond that. Read **Exodus 33:1-23**.

- **What was God still going to do for the people?**

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- **What was God not going to do?**

This is where “the teaching” comes in. This story is about more than God giving rules and people being punished (though that’s there, too). It’s about learning who God is. Read **Exodus 34:1-9**.

- **Who is God?**

Following this interaction, God renews the covenant with the people. Things go very differently this time when Moses comes down the mountain. Read **Exodus 34:29-35**.

- **How is viewing the commandments given and the stories involved in their entirety a different experience from other approaches to studying these passages?**

From here, work began to build the tabernacle, providing God’s presence among His people. Yet, the story doesn’t end there.

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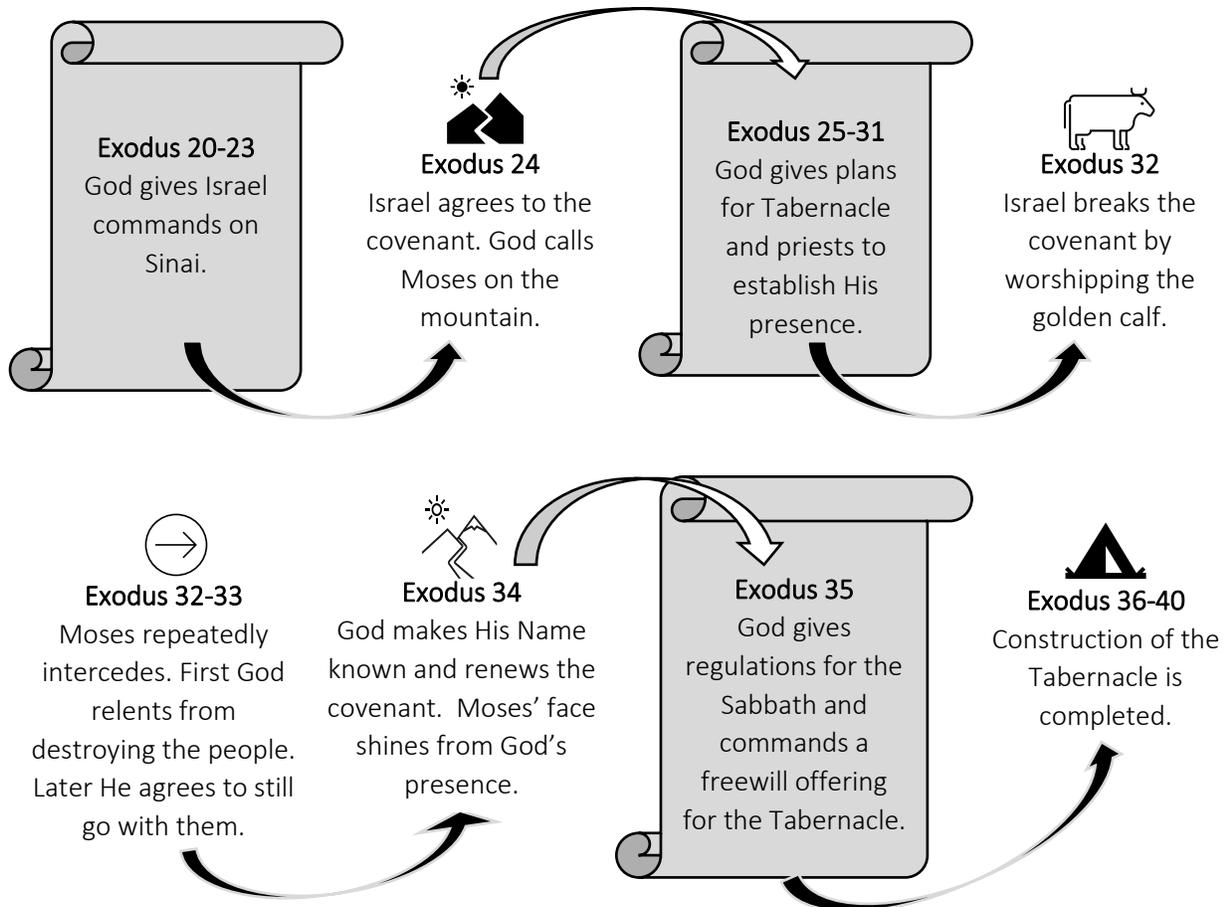
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Be Holy

Focus Statement: As God gave Israel His Law, it was meant to set them apart from their neighbors by teaching them to be holy!

_____ , the Hebrew word we translate "Law", also means **direction** or **instruction**. This is why it includes stories as well as commands. When we recognize this about its design and that Christ is the goal of the law (cf. Rom. 10:4), it starts to make a lot more sense!



This approach fundamentally changes things when it comes to reading "The Law"! Moses' commanded, "Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution" (Exo. 35:4-5). In the next chapter, we see the people's response. Read **Exodus 36:2-7**.

- How does knowing the story teach us more than the command by itself?

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Instead of being a hodge-podge of arbitrary rules, the commandments God gives are a crucial part of how He personally teaches Israel to be His **“treasured possession among all peoples...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”** (Exo. 19:5-6). Yet, as God told Moses in Exodus 33-34, this is a big responsibility that sinful people like us should not take lightly. We get a glimpse at this when the Tabernacle is finished and **“the glory of the LORD”** fills it. Read **Exodus 40:34-38**.

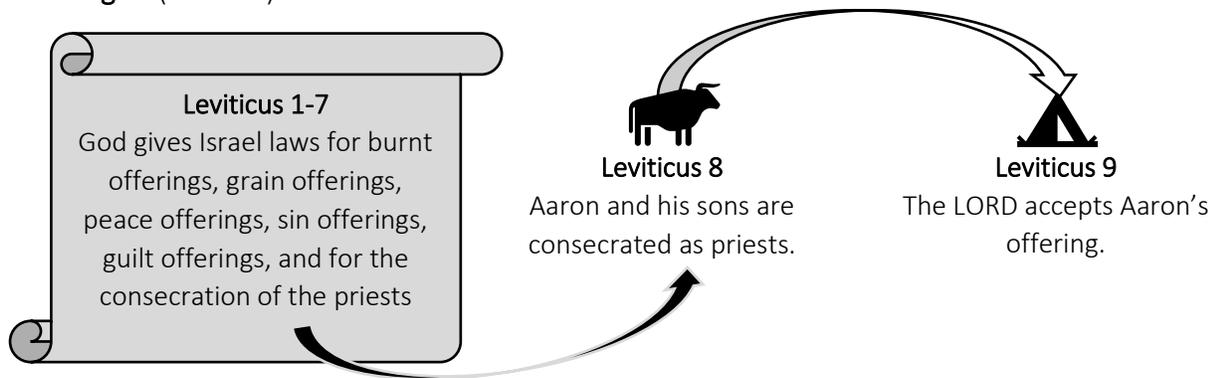
- How does this provide a fitting conclusion to this part of the story?

- What new problem does this introduce to Israel's story?

Read **Exodus 40:1-2**. When did this happen? _____

Read **Numbers 1:1**. When did this happen? _____

Can you begin to see where **Leviticus** fits in to what God is teaching? It is the book that bridges the gap between Israel being unable to come near and being able to move forward with God's presence! That's why it begins with, **“The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting...”** (Lev. 1:1)



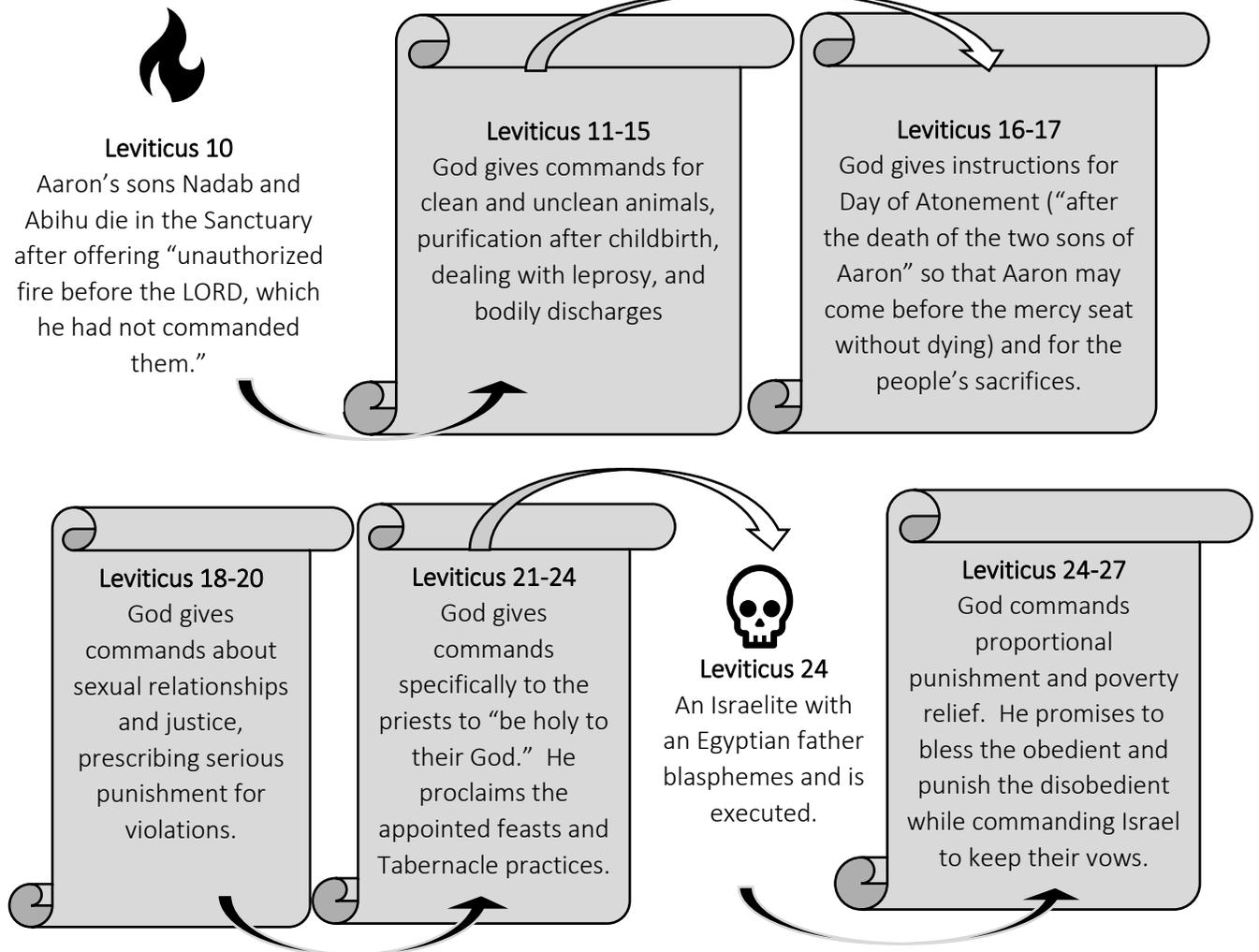
This solved the problem we were left with at the end of Exodus 40. **“Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people”** (Leviticus 9:22-23). Unfortunately, we immediately encounter a new problem, driving the next set of commandments given.

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In a month, God had taught Israel how to live in His presence without being consumed, all in preparation for their journey to the Promised Land. When we learn to approach the Law as God's Teaching, it can bring clarity to an otherwise confusing book. Read **Leviticus 11:44-45**.

- What was God's reason for giving Israel these Laws?

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It wasn't just about religious ritual, either. The Law that God taught them affected every area of their lives, a fact which set them apart from their neighbors. Read **Leviticus 19:9-18**.

- **How does God show that He is teaching Israel to have good character with these laws?**

Even after we understand the big picture, some of the specific details of the Law can be odd or even troubling to us within our modern context. When we read the prohibitions in **Leviticus 18:6-23** against incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality, it makes us uncomfortable. We may even ask, "Why is that in the Bible?" Read **Leviticus 18:1-5, 24-30**.

- **Why is that in the Bible?**

The Bible Project offers free (and incredibly well-made) videos that are hugely helpful in exploring and understanding these concepts. Check them out!

- *The Character of God (Exodus 34:6-7)* at <https://youtu.be/nxwzq1PJImM>
- *Overview: Leviticus* at <https://youtu.be/IJ-FekWUZzE>
- *Holiness* at <https://youtu.be/I9vn5UvsHvM>

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For I am Holy

Focus Statement: Jesus brought to fulfillment the holiness God taught in His Law by perfectly embodying it and offering it to us!

As Leviticus taught God's people how to be like Him and to live in His presence in the midst of a sinful world, we ultimately see that fulfilled in Jesus. Read **John 1:9-18** and **Hebrews 3:1-6**.

- **How does Jesus ultimately fulfill what Leviticus teaches?**

Because of Jesus, we get to be God's house, personally experiencing His presence through the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 2:19-22). Yet, this means holiness matters for Christians (cf. I Peter 1:13-2:12).

- **Why are we often uncomfortable with personally being called holy?**

The Corinthians struggled like ancient Israel with idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, and grumbling (cf. I Cor. 10:6-11). Yet, the Apostle Paul – in no uncertain terms – made clear the importance of our holiness and how God accomplishes it. Read **I Corinthians 6:9-20**.

- **How does God make us holy?**

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- **Why does it matter that we personally be holy?**

Better

Focus Statement: When God teaches us His Law, it helps us to understand what He accomplished through Jesus. When that is clear, we see how He makes everything better.

Leviticus is a shadow of what Jesus would ultimately do for us. Read **Hebrews 8:1-13**.

- **What makes Christ a better high priest?**

Drawing heavily on the Law of Moses, the Hebrews writer goes on to describe everything that is better with Christ. Read **Hebrews 9:1-10:18**.

- **How was what Christ accomplished like what occurred in the “earthly place of holiness”?**

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- How is what Christ accomplished *better*?

When we realize this, it should have a dramatic impact. Read **Hebrews 10:19-39**.

- God's presence was meant to change Israel's daily living. How does Jesus change our lives?

People who God has taught see things differently. Read **Hebrews 12:18-29**.

- How has God opened your eyes to His Law and the nature of holiness?

Those who truly allowed God's Law to teach them recognized this about Jesus. As we learn to truly meditate on and delight in God's Law – as He always intended – we will see this, too.

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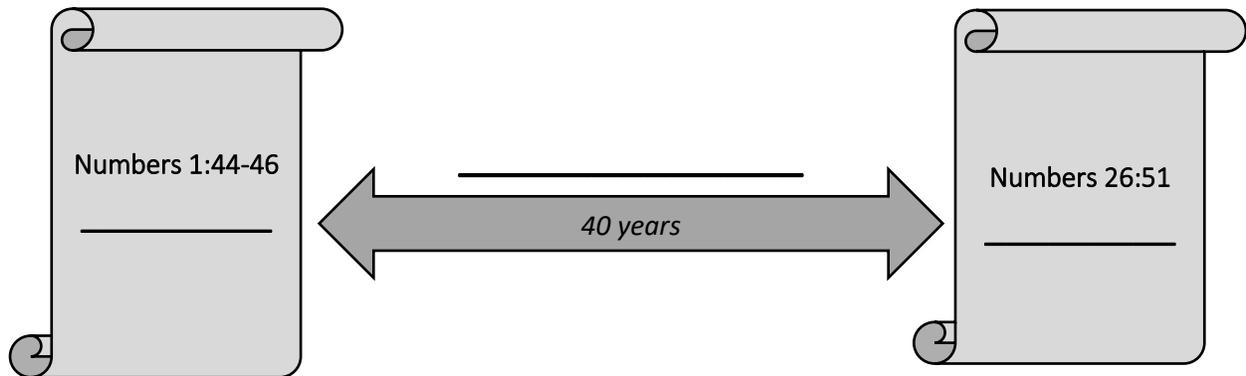
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Meditate on God's Law

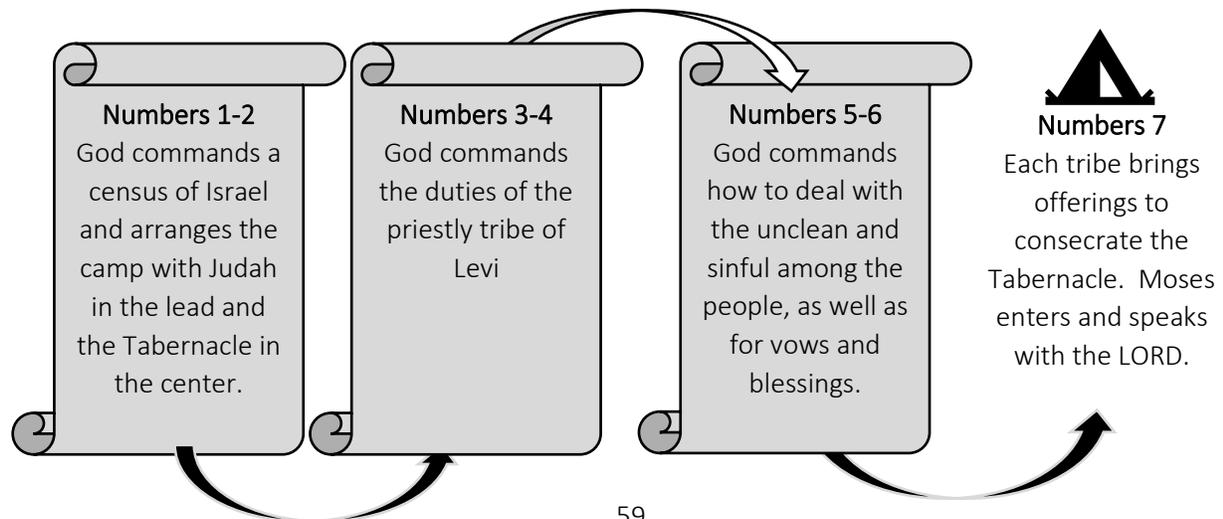
Focus Statement: God's Law is more than just a collection of rules and census figures. As we see in Numbers, His wisdom is meant to be meditated on, allowing Him to shape our hearts!

If Leviticus' detailed commandments were not already enough of a challenge, Numbers introduces a new dynamic to the stories and laws of the Torah: census figures!



- What would you expect a nation's population to do over 40 years' time?

Unlike our English title for the book (and the Greek title from which it was translated), the original Hebrew title is much more descriptive (and interesting): "In the Wilderness". It comes from the book's opening verse, "**The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt...**" (Num. 1:1). Much like Leviticus directly continued the story of Exodus, Numbers now takes the baton.

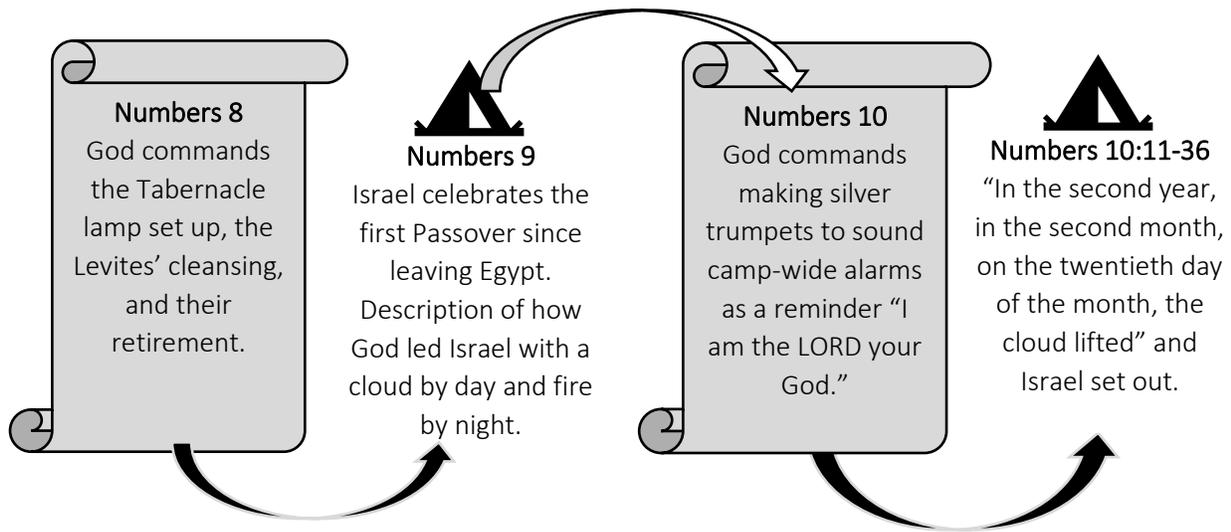


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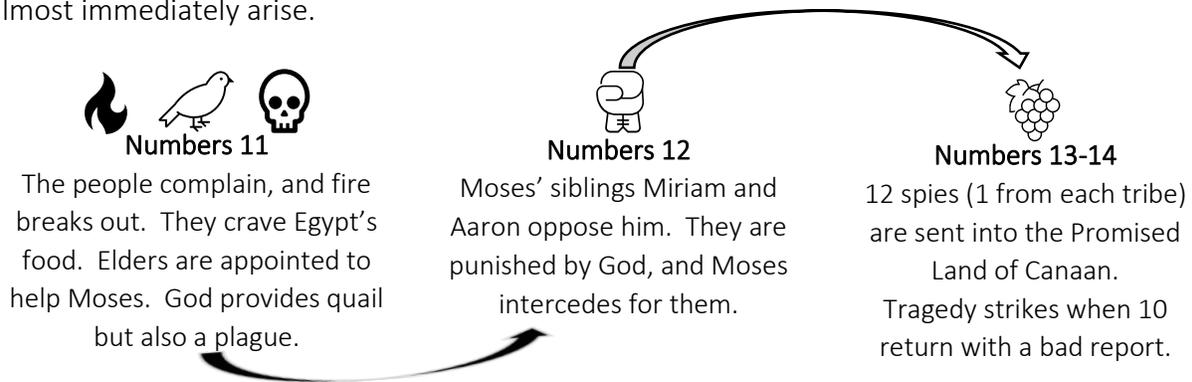
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In way that closely mirrors Israel's experience from the Red Sea to Sinai in Exodus, problems almost immediately arise.



When ten of the spies brought back a bad report from the Promised Land ("We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are"), it caused a rebellion, leading to a repeat of a now too familiar scene. Read **Numbers 14:11-25**.

- How do we see themes we've studied earlier in the Torah repeated here?

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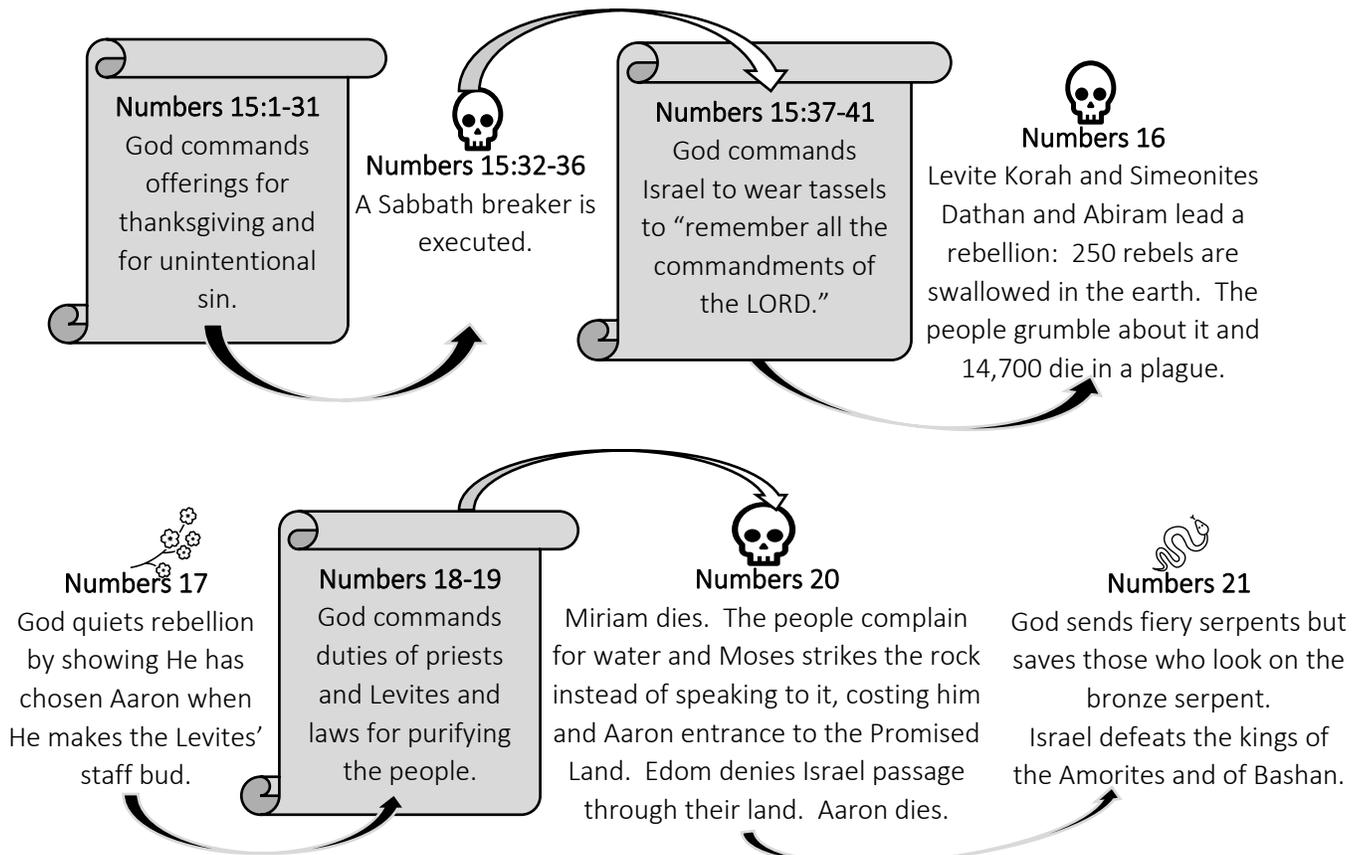
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While a precise list of what God was referring to when He said Israel put Him "to the test these ten times" (14:22), He is likely referring to at least some of these events.

1	Exodus 14:10-14	At the Red Sea
2	Exodus 15:22-27	Water of Marah
3	Exodus 16:1-12	Grumbling for Food
4	Exodus 16:19-21	Storing Manna
5	Exodus 16:27	Gathering Manna on Sabbath
6	Exodus 17:1-7	Waters of Massah and Meribah
7	Exodus 32:1-35	Golden Calf
8	Numbers 11:1-3	Fires of Taberah*
9	Numbers 11:4-35	Graves of Craving
10	Numbers 13:25-14:45	Rebellion at Spies' Bad Report

**The Talmud, which summarizes Jewish rabbinic teaching in the fifth century AD, leaves out the "Fires of Taberah" and mentions a second instance of doubting after crossing the Red Sea based on Psalm 106:6-7's reference to "at the sea".
Reference: <https://torah.org/learning/pirkei-avos-chapter5-6/>*

As we see through the rest of Numbers, this pattern continued in Israel's forty years in the wilderness. Even Moses and Aaron would eventually fall victim to it.



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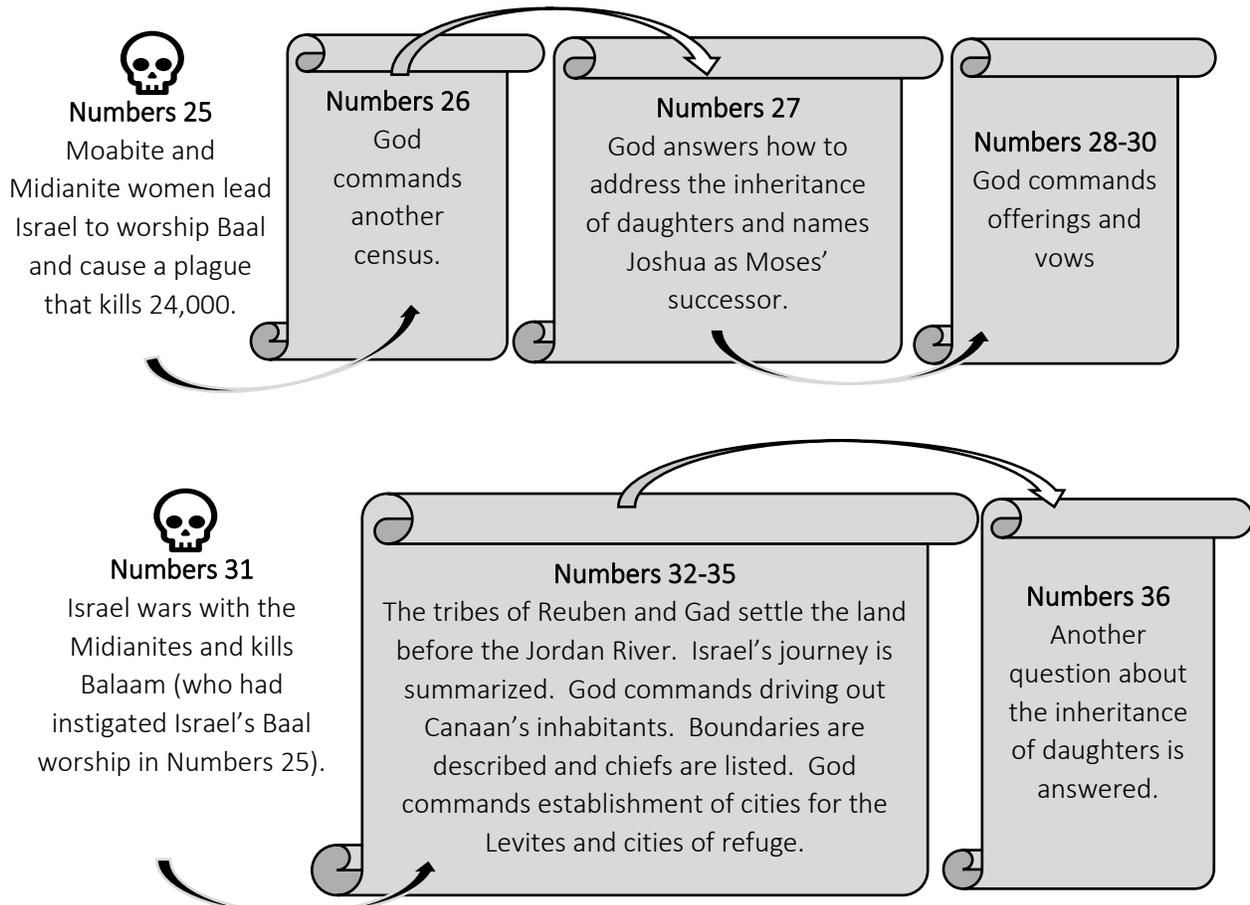
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While God's anger may make us uncomfortable, Numbers shows us how He is slow to anger: the harshest punishment only comes after repeated rebellion. When He does punish Israel, He is withdrawing His grace and returning them to the state they would have been in before: one of sin and death. As we have previously studied, Paul uses these accounts to make that point in I **Corinthians 10:1-13**, where he says, **"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall"** knowing that **"God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability"**. Though He will by no means clear the guilty, God keeps providing a way back for His sinful people by His steadfast love and faithfulness (Ex. 34:6-7).

While Israel rebelled, God was still working for their good in ways they did not realize. In **Numbers 22-24**, Moabite king Balak hired the sorcerer Balaam to curse Israel while they camped below. Balaam's willingness to speak for money made him a prototype for false prophets in the New Testament (cf. II Peter 2:15-16, Jude 11, Revelation 2:14). Yet, every time Balaam spoke, God made him bless Israel and curse their enemies. His final oracle is especially interesting: **"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor...who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth"** (Num. 24:15-17). Does that sound like anyone you know? **Jesus!**



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Seeing God's overall story deepened the meaning of Leviticus' commands for us. Similarly, instead of skipping over or speeding past the censuses of Numbers, we should ask what is God trying to teach us through them?

- What was different about the people counted in Numbers 26 compared to Numbers 1?

Yet, notice what happens if we directly compare the two censuses by tribe:

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Numbers 1 Census</i>	<i>Numbers 26 Census</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Reuben	46,500	43,730	-6.0%
Simeon	59,300	22,200	-62.6%
Gad	45,650	40,500	-11.3%
Judah	74,600	76,500	2.5%
Issachar	54,400	64,300	18.2%
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	5.4%
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-19.8%
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	63.7%
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	28.8%
Dan	62,700	64,400	2.7%
Asher	41,500	53,400	28.7%
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-15.0%
Total*	603,550	601,730	-0.3%

**Levites were not counted in Numbers 1. They were an additional 23,000 in Numbers 26.*

While Israel's total population stayed relatively flat over 40 years, there were massive changes within specific tribes. This is most pronounced with the tribes of Simeon and Manasseh, whose populations essentially flip-flop. Read **Numbers 25:1-15**.

- Is there anything within God's story to account for the change in Simeon's census?

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The change in Manasseh is less obvious; however, there is a specific situation that comes up twice in Numbers – including right after the second census – that gives insight. Read **Numbers 27:1-11** and **Numbers 36:1-13**.

- **What do these stories tell us about the character of the Manassites?**

You see, all of the Torah – the stories, the commandments, even the census figures – are part of how God teaches us! So, we might ask at this point: why haven't we seen that before? Maybe it makes sense to us now. Yet, why have we not only missed it but even viewed those elements – the commandments of Leviticus, the lists of Numbers – as a hindrance?

The key is in how we approach the Law. As God prepared Joshua to lead the people in taking the Promised Land after Moses' death, He would make this crystal clear. Read **Joshua 1:7-9**.

- **How is the approach to the Law that God tells Joshua to take different than how we commonly approach Bible study?**

This gets at something essential for us to understand about the Law of Moses: it is **meditation** literature. If we are going to see these truly remarkable things about it – learning from it who God is in such a way that it leads us to Jesus – we must deeply engage with it. As Moses prepared Israel to enter the Promised Land, he instructed them to do just that in Deuteronomy.

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Rules, Stories, and Knowing God

Focus Statement: In Deuteronomy, Moses explains what the Law's stories and rules are really about: knowing God! Yet, are we approaching them in such a way to let that happen?

The English title of the final book of the Law of Moses, **Deuteronomy**, comes from its Greek title meaning "Second Law." This reflects how it largely retells the stories and commands of the preceding books. The Hebrew title for it was *The Words*, coming from the book's opening verse (as was also the case with *In the Beginning*, *The Names*, *The LORD Called*, and *In the Wilderness*). "Words" made the book unique: Deuteronomy is mostly three different sermons by Moses.

- *Sermon:* " _____ " (Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)
- *Sermon:* " _____ " (Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19)
- *Sermon:* " _____ " (Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68)
- *Covenant Renewed* (Deuteronomy 29-30)
- *Joshua Commissioned and Moses' Farewell* (Deuteronomy 31-33)
- *Moses' Death* (Deuteronomy 34)

The New Testament directly quotes Deuteronomy more than any other book of the Law – 55 times by some counts¹! (Only the Psalms and Isaiah are quoted more.) As we listen in on Moses' sermons, he says what the Law is supposed to teach us with its stories, rules, and even censuses. If we learn what God is teaching, we will be ready to know and love Him!

Sermon: "Explaining the Law" (Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)

Israel was on the border of the Promised Land. It should have taken 11 days to travel from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea; but they rebelled there after the bad report by the ten spies in Numbers 13-14. As a result, it was now the fortieth year. Moses used this speech to remind the people how they got there: their refusal to enter the land, God's punishment, and now their recent victories through His faithfulness. Moses, who would not be able to enter the land himself, wanted them to remember to trust God completely: He will fight for them. Read **Deuteronomy 4:1-14**.

- **How did Moses relate "the rules" to "the story"?**

Notice that it is not "know the story" or "keep the rules": one leads to the other! As Moses concluded his sermon, he made this point in a powerful way. Read **Deuteronomy 4:32-40**.

¹ "Old Testament Passages Cited in the New Testament." *ESV Study Bible*. <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-study-bible/chart-ot-nt-passages/>

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- Sometimes, we focus on the story of God's love and dismiss rules, or we focus on the rules and pay little attention to God's story. How did Moses teach us to approach things?

When the Torah is approached this way, it has an effect! We see this 535 years later when one of Judah's few good kings, Jehoshaphat, reigned from 871-849 B.C. Read **II Chronicles 17:1-10**.

- What relationship did the Chronicler show between teaching the Law and national success?

Sadly, not every king would live that faithfully, eventually resulting in the people's exile from the Promised Land. Once they returned, however, resuming this sort of instruction would be critical to getting things right going forward. We see this in Nehemiah's example in 445 B.C., which was 960 years after Moses first preached these words. Read **Nehemiah 8:1-12**.

- How specifically did Jehoshaphat and Nehemiah accomplish the teaching of the Law?

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God's Words on Your Heart

Focus Statement: In the *shema*, God tells us what His Law is all about: it was, is, and always will be about our giving Him our hearts.

Sermon: "This is the Law" (Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19)

Moses' second sermon makes up most of Deuteronomy. Almost half of the New Testament's Deuteronomy quotes come from chapters 5-11! Chapters 12-26 give "the statutes and rules", preparing Israel to settle the land with commands rooted in who God is and what He has done.

In fact, Moses continually focuses on who God is, what He has done, and how the people should respond: which is love. This is especially seen in the *shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which sums up Moses' second sermon, Deuteronomy, and the Torah itself. Read **Deuteronomy 6:1-5**.

Hear, O Israel:

The LORD our God,

the LORD is one.

You shall love the LORD your God

With all your heart

And with all your soul

And with all your might.

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This was no abstract religious concept. Moses gave concrete instruction for how to practice it. The Jewish people took that instruction very seriously. Read **Deuteronomy 6:6-25**.

- **What kind of relationship would someone who really “hears” the *shema* have with God?**

God's intent with the *Torah* – the “*Law*” or “*Instruction*” – was always about shaping our hearts. In fact, when we learn this, we can see it clearly in the life of Jesus. Read **Matthew 4:1-11**.

- **What Scriptures did Jesus quote to resist Satan's temptation?**

Knowing God's word was so important. Yet, notice that the specifics – things like turning stones into bread or jumping off the Temple – were not explicitly prohibited by the “rules”. If we went looking in a concordance or on reference card, these passages would not pop up.

- **How did Jesus know those passages applied to these situations?**

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How was Jesus able to do this? We see this in Psalm 119, which repeatedly associates knowing and keeping God's command with the "whole heart". Read **Psalm 119:9-16** and **33-40**.

- **What are specific things these passages highlight about how we best engage God's word?**

As we have previously observed, the Torah is meditation literature. God's Law is meant to be deeply reflected on for the purpose of shaping our hearts. A great example of this is found in **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. This passage is stunning for the way it anticipates Israel having kings hundreds of years before its first king, Saul, was ever anointed. Yet even more remarkable is its focus on the king's character. Read **Deuteronomy 17:18-20**.

- **What was Israel's future king to do to learn to fear the LORD and keep his heart right?**

When we approach the Law the way Moses taught, our hearts are in tune with God. This is the approach Jesus took. When people recognized and received Him, it is because they took that approach, too!

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- **Why does Jesus say these are the greatest?**

The Apostles followed Jesus in approaching the Law in this way. The Gentile converts in Galatia had been falsely taught they had to be circumcised to be saved. Paul saw this as contradictory to what he had taught them and what the Law was leading to: salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law. Yet, it is critical to note that when Paul made this point, it was not by saying, "The Law doesn't apply to you." Read **Galatians 5:1-15**.

- **Why did Paul say the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised?**

Paul made a similar point to another community struggling with division along Jewish-Gentile lines. Read **Romans 13:8-10**.

- **Would Moses agree with Paul's interpretation here? Why or why not?**

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- **Why did God give the original command in Deuteronomy?**

- **How did Paul apply that principle to life in Christ's kingdom?**

In fact, this sort of meditation along with the Spirit's inspiration would even help explain exactly what Jesus did on the cross. Read **Deuteronomy 21:22-23** and **Galatians 3:10-14**.

- **How did Jesus' death on the cross relate to this command in Deuteronomy?**

This brings us to "the curse of the law". What exactly does that mean? This is a major part of the focus of Moses' third sermon in Deuteronomy and of our next lesson.

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The Curse of the Law

Focus Statement: Jesus has taken away the "curse of the Law". Yet this has nothing to do with the number or nature of the rules. It has everything to do with how He has defeated sin and death, a victory that He shares with us.

As a citizen of the United States, do you know how many laws you are under?

Sometimes, we think of the **Law of Moses** – the **Torah** in Hebrew, meaning "law" but also "instruction" – as being burdensome. We usually think this because:

When we approach God's Law as a list of rules instead of truly meditating on it to know who God is and to seek to obey that in our own lives, we reach some incorrect conclusions about it, Him, and ourselves. How can we know? Because the New Testament tells us! Read **Romans 7:7-25**.

- **What does the Apostle Paul say the problem with the Law really is?**

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We know that the covenant Jesus mediates between God and us “**is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second**” (Heb. 8:7). Yet instead of critiquing the rules' number, nature, or immediate penalty, God wants to show us what He has accomplished for us through Jesus!

In Moses' third sermon in **Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68**, he pronounced curses for breaking God's Law and blessings for obeying it as the people prepare to enter the Promised Land.

- **When do we first read of blessings and curses in the Torah?**

In this sermon, Moses pronounces twelve curses. The first eleven deal with specific violations of the Law in terms of idol worship, dishonoring parents, dishonesty, injustice, sexual immorality, and violence. Then he gives the twelfth curse. Read **Deuteronomy 27:26**.

- **Who is subject to this “curse of the Law”?**

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Early in the apostles' ministry, they would make this connection between Moses' prophecy and Jesus. Just listen to what Peter preached when a crowd gathered after he healed a lame man at the Temple gate. Read **Acts 3:11-26**.

- How did Peter see the various prophecies (e.g. the Christ, the Prophet) being fulfilled?

- Why would that be surprising for some of the people?

Saul of Tarsus was extremely zealous and advancing in Judaism beyond his peers, which led him to conclude that Jesus' church should be violently persecuted and destroyed (Gal. 1:13-14). That all changed once he saw the risen Christ for himself, and it was not long before he "**confounded the Jews...by proving that Jesus was the Christ**" (Acts 9:22). Through Jesus, he was now seeing the Scriptures in a new light, something he would share with others through his ministry as the Apostle Paul. Read **II Corinthians 3:1-18**.

- What makes the glory of Christ and the Spirit's ministry greater than Moses and the Law?

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What God accomplished through Christ and the Holy Spirit was sorely needed. Before Moses' death, he said: **"For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death...For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands"** (Deut. 32:27,29). He wasn't wrong: Israel's answer to his challenge to choose between blessing and curse, life and death forms the basis for the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Digging Deeper: According to these New Testament passages, how does Jesus bring fulfillment to these key statements from Deuteronomy?

<i>Moses' statement</i>	<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
Deuteronomy 18:15-19	John 8:28, 12:49-50 Matthew 17:5	
Deuteronomy 30:1-6	Colossians 2:6-15, Romans 2:28-29	
Deuteronomy 30:11-14	Romans 10:5-13	
Deuteronomy 34:10-12	Hebrews 3:1-6	

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Rest

Focus Statement: Even after settling the Promised Land, Israel would never get to rest long because of their unfaithfulness. Good thing God sent the Lord of the Sabbath to lead us into true rest!

Jesus referred to the Hebrew Scriptures as **"the Law and the Prophets"** (Matthew 5:17). The first five books of the Bible were that "Law" or "Teaching" – the "Torah" in Hebrew. The rest were the "Prophets" (or sometimes, "the Prophets and the Psalms" as in Luke 24:44).

Joshua picks up immediately where the Torah left off, with the LORD telling Moses's successor He will give Israel the Promised Land: **"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"** (Joshua 1:7-8). The book is a testimony to the truth of that, showing the incredible success God gave the people when they faithfully obeyed Him – and not just the people of Israel. Read **Joshua 2:1-14**.

- How does Rahab show that "believing God is counted as righteousness"?

Though there would be some sin in the camp needing addressed, the people generally remained faithful under Joshua's leadership. **"So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Israel according to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war"** (Joshua 11:23). In this way, the book provides important resolution to some key themes of the Torah. Chapters 13-22 describe each tribe receiving its inheritance. This fulfilled God's word to Moses (Numbers 34-35). It also fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-9).

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In fact, it fulfilled even more than that. Just as God “**finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done**” in Genesis 2:2, we are told that “**the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies**” as “**Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel**” (Joshua 23:1, 24:31, emphasis added). This gives a beautiful glimpse of God's original design from the first two pages of the Bible: He had a people who filled the world with His image and were settled with Him. This is what Israel's Sabbath observance was always meant to point toward (Exodus 16:35). Tragically, this rest would not last.

Judges, the next book, tells a very rated-R story. It is filled with sexual immorality and extreme violence – the very things the Torah showed were so against God's design and the reason the Canaanites were vomited out of the land (Leviticus 18-19). Because Israel did not drive out all of the land's inhabitants as God commanded, the very thing He warned them against happened. Read **Judges 2:11-23**.

- Why is what happened to Israel after Joshua's death not a surprise?

When the people repented, God would raise up a judge to deliver them. Yet, these judges were far from models of covenant faithfulness. In fact, they seemed to get worse as the story continued! Yet, God worked through these imperfect people to deliver Israel from their enemies, and “**the land had rest**” for a generation or two (Judges 3:30, 5:31, 8:28). As *Judges* progressed, the inspired author gave a reason for why this disobedience kept occurring:

“In those days there was _____ in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

In terms of faithfulness to God's covenant, *Ruth*, the next book in our English Bibles, presented a much different picture. Set during the time period of *Judges*, a famine forced an Israelite family from the land and brought death: just as Moses warned would happen in **Deuteronomy 28** if the people were unfaithful! When repeated tragedy left Naomi of Judah with only her Moabite daughters-in-law, she urged them to return to their families of origin: “**The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!**” (Ruth 1:9, emphasis added). Yet Ruth showed steadfast love and faithfulness, declaring: “**For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God**” (Ruth 1:16). Like Rahab, a foreigner demonstrated greater faithfulness to God than many in Israel!

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God's providence led Ruth to Boaz's field, a **"worthy man"** who actually observed **Deuteronomy 24:19's** command to leave sheaves for **"the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow"** when harvesting. Naomi rejoiced when she heard of it: Boaz was also a relative who could redeem and marry Ruth according to **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**. Do you know what Naomi's hope for Ruth was in doing this? **"My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?"** (Ruth 3:1, emphasis added). While the nation as a whole suffered due to their unfaithfulness, *Ruth* tells a story of how God still blessed a faithful family that obeyed His commands.

As Boaz and Ruth married and welcomed a son (which delighted Naomi), this family's story of finding rest by being faithful to God would impact the entire nation. **"And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David"** (Ruth 4:17). Ruth was the great-grandmother of David, Israel's great king and answer to the problem in *Judges!*

In fact, Ruth's faithfulness impacted her family, the nation of Israel, and all the families of the earth. Read **Matthew 1:1-6**.

- How does Jesus increase the significance of the individual stories of Rahab and Ruth?

Isn't that amazing? That's still not all. The individual stories fit together more than we realize, and it all comes back to rest. Read **Matthew 11:25-12:14**.

- While the Pharisees debated Sabbath-keeping with Jesus, what was He really accomplishing?

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An Eternal Throne

A Man After God's Own Heart

Focus Statement: There's a reason Jesus is identified as "Son of David." A thousand years before Jesus' birth, David set the standard for Israel's kings as "a man after God's own heart."

Matthew opened his gospel account by showing Jesus' ties to some of the Jewish people's giants of the faith. "**The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**" (Matt. 1:1). Being the **Son of David** was about more than genealogy for Jesus. He would frequently be referred to that way in the gospel accounts by all different sorts of people:

- **Matthew 9:27** _____
- **Matthew 12:22-23** _____
- **Matthew 15:22** _____
- **Matthew 20:29-30** _____
also Mark 10 and Luke 18
- **Matthew 21:9** _____
- **Matthew 21:15** _____

David lived a thousand years before Jesus. While David was Israel's greatest king, he was not its first. The story of his rise and reign is chronicled in **I Samuel** and **II Samuel**, which were treated as a single book in the Hebrew Scriptures. The book opens with and is named for Samuel, Israel's last judge. Through his leadership, God delivered Israel from the Philistines and gave them peace with the Amorites (I Sam. 7:12-17). Yet, Israel wanted a king over them "**that we also may be like all nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles**", even though God warned they were rejecting Him and a king would be a source of hardship for the people (I Sam. 8:19-22). Nevertheless, they persisted, and God led Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel's first king. Read **I Samuel 10:17-27**.

- **What made Saul seem like a good candidate to be king?**

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- What was concerning about him?

Saul experienced some success early on. Yet his cowardice and arrogance would lead him to be unfaithful to God repeatedly, with grave consequences. After Saul made an unlawful sacrifice, Samuel told him, **“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you”** (I Sam. 13:14).

Remember, Moses had anticipated that Israel would one day want a king like the nations, so he gave instructions for that king to **“learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment”** (Deut. 17:19-20). Saul did not live up to this. God would ensure Israel's next king would be different. Read **I Samuel 16:1-13**.

- How was the anointing of David to be king different than that of Saul?

- Did David immediately start reigning as king after being anointed?

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From his triumph over Goliath to his repeated refusal to harm Saul despite being fiercely persecuted by the mad king, David was a model of heartfelt covenant faithfulness. In II Samuel, he even mourned for Saul when he was killed in battle (II Sam. 1). Because of this faithfulness, God gave unprecedented success during David's 40-year reign. He took **Jerusalem** after Israel's earlier failures and made the heavily fortified city once ruled by Melchizedek to be the capital. (II Sam. 5:6-10; cf. Josh. 15:63, Gen. 14). He decisively defeated the Philistines (II Sam. 5:17-25). Then David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, establishing the city not only as the political but also the religious center of Israel. God would then make a covenant with David that gave the term "**son of David**" its significance. Read **II Samuel 7:1-17**.

- What is God's covenant with David, and what prompted Him to make it?

- What does "Messiah" (Hebrew) or "Christ" (Greek) mean?

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Digging Deeper: In what ways was Jesus anointed?

<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
Luke 4:14-21	
Acts 10:34-43	

How does Jesus reign?

<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
Matthew 28:16-20	
I Corinthians 15:20-28	

How are Jesus' followers anointed, and how will we reign?

<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
II Corinthians 1:19-22	
Revelation 1:4-6 Revelation 5:6-10 Revelation 22:1-5	

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Crying Out to God

Focus Statement: The Psalms are more than just pretty words from the pen of King David and other inspired men. Though composed centuries earlier, these heartfelt cries to God find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Singing has always been important to God's people. One of the very first things we see Israel doing after crossing the Red Sea into freedom from Egyptian slavery is singing (cf. Exo. 15). As the Torah concluded, Moses taught them a song God gave to **"confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring)"** (Deut. 31:19-22, 32:1-47). So, it should be no surprise that there is an entire book of the Bible consisting of nothing but songs. With songs like **Psalm 90** being attributed to Moses and **Psalm 137** referencing Judah's Babylonian exile, **The Psalms** were composed over a thousand-year period by many different authors.

Out of 150 psalms, _____ are directly attributed to David by the title, while **Acts 4:25** tells us he also wrote _____ and **Hebrews 4:7** says _____ was his, too. He indirectly influenced another 24 psalms by organizing the sons of Korah and appointing Heman, Ethan, and Asaph – all psalmists – to music ministry (I Chronicles 9:19-22, 15:16-17). The Psalms were a major part of David's legacy: at the end of his life, he was described as **"the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel"** (II Samuel 23:1).

The Psalms cover the full range of human experience, and they often give us a glimpse at the heart of the "man after God's own heart." _____ is a joyful anthem declaring David's love for God after being delivered from his enemies (cf. I Sam. 21:10-22:1). _____ expresses his deep sorrow after Nathan the prophet confronted him over his sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 11-12). Yet, they were not just David's words: **"the Holy Spirit says"** is how the Hebrews writer quotes Psalm 95 before later attributing it to David, too (cf. Hebrews 3:7, 4:7).

Because they are inspired, the Psalms give us godly ways to express all kinds of emotions, something we see in the example of Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 27:46). Yet, it does not stop there: as with the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, the things written in them are ultimately fulfilled by Jesus (cf. Luke 24:44-49). Read **Psalm 2**.

- **What would this Psalm have originally meant to David? Who would "Anointed" and "Son" have applied to first?**

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The apostles saw how what the Spirit inspired David to write was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus. (They also set a great example for us of a way to pray the Psalms.) Read **Acts 4:23-31**.

- How was this Psalm ultimately fulfilled by Jesus?

Later in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, the Apostle Paul preached, **“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’”** (Acts 13:33). That was not the only psalm he saw Jesus' resurrection fulfilling: he also quoted, **“You will not let your Holy One see corruption”** (Acts 13:35). Read **Psalm 16**.

- If you knew nothing about Jesus, what might you think this Psalm was about?

Psalm 16 played a pivotal role in how Peter explained – for the first time! – how Jesus' suffering and rising from the dead fulfilled what was written. Read **Acts 2:22-36**.

- According to Peter, what made David more than just a thousand-year old songwriter?

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- **How does Jesus complete the Psalm more than reading it without Him?**

The way the apostles treated these songs as prophetic was not something new. Read **Psalm 110**.

- **What about the situation of the Jewish people in the first century AD would have made them hope this thousand-year old song of David was prophetic?**

Without Jesus, there were some serious issues harmonizing their hope for the Son of David with what the Scriptures actually said. Read **Matthew 22:41-46**.

- **How was what God was doing with the "Son of David" different than what they expected?**

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Digging Deeper. Practice what we learned by reading **Psalm 22** and **69 twice**: once to see how we understand it without Jesus, and once to see how the story of Jesus fulfills it.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Read Psalm 22 .	If you knew nothing about Jesus, what would you think this was about?
Re-read Psalm 22 .	Based on what you know about the story of Jesus from memory, what are things that you see Him fulfilling from this Psalm?
Read Psalm 69 .	If you knew nothing about Jesus, what would you think this was about?
Re-read Psalm 69 .	Based on what you know about the story of Jesus from memory, what are things that you see Him fulfilling from this Psalm?
Read Matthew 27 & John 19 .	What details from these Psalms did the inspired apostles see Jesus' fulfilling? Were there any you missed? Were there any you noticed that they did not specifically label in these passages?

Bonus: Read **John 2:13-17**, **John 15:18-25**, and **Acts 1:15-20** for other ways Jesus and His Apostles saw His story fulfilling these Psalms.

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Building a House

Focus Statement: David's son Solomon possessed great wisdom and built one impressive temple; but he had nothing on Jesus.

By his great love for God, David set the standard for kings in Israel. His reign was not spotless, though. His affair with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband was so egregious it earned a passing mention in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:6; cf. II Samuel 11-12). It affected more than just his legacy, too: the later years of his reign were full of sexual immorality, murder, conspiracy, and rebellion that often began with his own children.

Like **I-II Samuel**, **I Kings** and **II Kings** were a single book in the Hebrew Scriptures. Together, they told the story of all of the nations' rulers, starting with David's son Solomon around 970 B.C. and ending with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Given God's promise to David to establish the kingdom of his son in **II Samuel 7**, things go really well at first. Read **I Kings 4:20-5:7**.

- **How does this description of life in Israel during Solomon's reign fulfill things we read about from the Torah?**

It is no surprise that much of the Bible's "wisdom literature" is associated with this period. While scholars sometimes debate the precise dates and authorship of these books, they each state connections to the wise and prosperous reign of Solomon.

a collection of wise sayings showing how life *should* work, where godly conduct is rewarded and ungodly conduct suffers its consequences.

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a sermon by "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" who surpassed all who came before in wisdom and riches and found it all empty without God.

an emotionally charged "Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" describing the romantic relationship between a beautiful shepherdess and her beloved.

The other book of "Old Testament wisdom literature" has a much different setting. Yet at a key moment, the main character quotes God in 28:28, "**Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding,**" showing it is right at home with the other books.

a discourse on the problem of suffering among a godly man who suffers terrible tragedy; his friends who come to comfort him and try to explain why the suffering happened; and God Himself.

When considered with **the Psalms** (with Psalms 72 and 127 attributed to Solomon), the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures spans the human experience and shows how to live it all in a godly way. While the Psalms are one of their most quoted books, the New Testament writers do not directly quote from the other wisdom books often. Still, the impact of these books is felt. From childhood and through His ministry, Jesus stood out for His wisdom, personally embodying these books (cf. Luke 2:40, 52; Matthew 13:53-54). The Apostle Paul wrote, "**And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'**" (I Corinthians 1:30-31). The New Testament letter of **James**, Jesus' half-brother and a leader of the church in Jerusalem, was a lot like Proverbs: "**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him**" (James 1:5).

Yet, wisdom is about much more than giving and receiving good advice: it has to do with living in God's presence. This is a theme we see throughout the Bible.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Who was in God's presence?</i>	<i>How do we see wisdom, abundance, & God's presence?</i>
Genesis 1-3		
Exodus 29:43-46 Exodus 33:12-16 Deuteronomy 4:5-8		

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So, consider how fitting it is that after describing Solomon's wisdom, God's rich blessings, and the rest they experienced that the next thing we see is the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. Read **I Kings 8:1-30**.

- What did having this temple accomplish for Israel?

As Solomon continues his prayer of dedication, he prays over specific situations the people could encounter – and in fact, situations they *would* encounter throughout the rest of I-II Kings!

- I Kings 8:31-40 _____
- I Kings 8:41-43 _____
- I Kings 8:44-53 _____

Solomon then concluded his prayer with a benediction. Read **I Kings 8:54-61**.

- How did this prayer reflect some of the Torah's highest hopes for God's people?

Humanity's sinfulness – including Solomon's – meant it would be 1,000 years before his prayer would be fully realized. When a Son of David did realize it, though, He went all the way. In **Matthew 12:1-8**, Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees for how His disciples plucked grain to eat on the Sabbath. He responded with an example from David's life (cf. I Samuel 21:1-6) and compared it to the priests' "work" in the temple. He then made a stunning statement in 12:7:

"I tell you, something _____ than the _____ is here."

Later in **Matthew 12:22-42**, when the crowd wondered whether Jesus was the promised "Son of David", the scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign from Him. Jesus replied in 12:42:

"The _____ of the _____ will rise up in judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the _____ of _____, and behold, something _____ than _____ is here."

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Now that Jesus has come, the abundance and wisdom made possible by the presence of God is with us in a way beyond the wildest dreams of Israel's kings.

Digging Deeper: For all the importance the Jewish people placed on their physical temple (which by Jesus' day 1,000 years after Solomon had been destroyed, rebuilt, and extensively renovated), they had missed the reality of God's presence with His people. Read **John 1:14-18** and **2:13-22**.

- How did God "dwell with His people" through the true temple, Jesus?

When we recognize this about Jesus, it changes how we see ourselves as His followers. Read **Ephesians 1:3-23** and **2:18-22**.

- What is God's temple now and how is it built?

Through gift of the Holy Spirit, we experience God's presence with all of the wisdom and abundance that brings. Read **Colossians 1:9-14** and **3:12-17**.

- What are some of the specific things Paul instructs us to do to experience the wisdom and abundance that comes from being in God's presence?

Christ in the Old Testament

June - December 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

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Neither Solomon's sin nor God's anger were sudden: God showed how He is "**merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**" (Exodus 34:6). God tolerated many things, though they ultimately contributed to Solomon's downfall.

- I Kings 3:1 _____
- I Kings 3:2-4 _____
- I Kings 9:24 _____
- I Kings 10:23-29 _____

Notice how these transgressions set the stage for his unfaithfulness as he clung to his foreign wives in love. There is much we can learn here about God's character. He is very patient, and His grace covers a lot. Yet, when we consistently choose to do things our own way instead of His, it will ultimately produce a heart "**not wholly true to the LORD.**"

So it was that Israel's "rest" with God ended: "**And the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon**" (I Kings 11:14). In fact, He raised up three, the most damaging being Jeroboam the son of Nebat. An industrious official working under Solomon, Jeroboam would receive the ten northern tribes that God was going to take from Solomon's heirs as punishment for his unfaithfulness (I Kings 11:26-33). God was upfront with Jeroboam: He wouldn't afflict David's house forever, but He would build Jeroboam a "**sure house**" like David's too, if he would obey Him (I Kings 11:34-40). Jeroboam chose otherwise, making two golden calves and appointing his own priests for fear that the people would abandon him if they went back to Jerusalem to worship (I Kings 12:25-33). This sin of Jeroboam would stain Israel for the next 200 years: every king who followed continued it, until Israel was finally overthrown by Assyria in 722 B.C.

Solomon's son Rehoboam did not do much better, committing more sins "**than all that their fathers had done**" as idol worship at the high places and male cult prostitutes were allowed in the land (I Kings 14:21-24). Unlike Israel, Judah would periodically be ruled by a son who did right like David, though. Read **I Kings 15:1-15**.

- **How do we see God's character through His dealings with Abijam and Asa?**

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From the Division of the Kingdom to Fall of the House of Ahab (930 - 841 B.C.)

Prophets of Israel

Rulers of Israel (930 - 722 B.C.)

Rulers of Judah (930 - 586 B.C.)

Prophets of Judah

	<p>Jeroboam (I Kings 12:25-14:20) reigned 22 years, "this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth"</p>	<p>Rehoboam (I Kings 12,14:21-31) reigned 17 years, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD"</p>
	<p>Nadab (I Kings 15:25-32) reigned 2 years, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father"</p>	<p>Abijam (I Kings 15:1-8) reigned 3 years, "walked in all the sins that his father did"</p>
	<p>Baasha (I Kings 15:33-16:7) reigned 24 years, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of Jeroboam"</p>	
	<p>Elah (I Kings 16:8-14) reigned 2 years Zimri (I Kings 16:15-20) reigned 7 days, "walking in the way of Jeroboam"</p>	
	<p>Omri (I Kings 16:21-28) reigned 12 years, "did more evil than all who were before him"</p>	
	<p>Ahab (I Kings 16:29-22:40) reigned 22 years, "did more to provoke the LORD... than all the kings of Israel who were before him"</p>	
<p>Elijah (I Kings 17 - II Kings 2)</p>	<p>Ahaziah (I Kings 22:51-II Kings 1:18) reigned 2 years, "walked in the way" of his father Ahab, mother Jezebel, & Jeroboam</p>	<p>Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:41-50) reigned 25 years, "He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. Yet the high places were not taken away"</p>
<p>Elisha (II Kings 2 - 13)</p>	<p>Jehoram/Joram (II Kings 3-8) reigned 12 years, "evil...but put away the pillar of Baal"</p>	
	<p>Jehoram (II Kings 8:16-24) reigned 8 years, "walked in the way of" father-in-law Ahab: "Yet the LORD promised to give a lamp to [David]"</p>	
		<p>Ahaziah (II Kings 8:25-10:36) reigned 1 year, "walked in the way of the house of Ahab"</p>

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From the Fall of Israel to the Fall of Judah (722 - 586 B.C.)

<p align="center">Hezekiah (II Kings 18-20) reigned 29 years, <i>"did what was right...according to all that David had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent..." "He trusted in the LORD...so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him"</i></p>	<p>Isaiah</p>
<p align="center">Manasseh (II Kings 21) reigned 55 years, <i>rebuilt high places, erected idol altars (including in the Temple), burnt his son, and led the people "astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel". Became cause of Babylonian exile.</i></p>	
<p align="center">Amon (II Kings 21:19-26) reigned 2 years, <i>did evil "as Manasseh his father had done"</i></p>	<p>Zephaniah Habakkuk</p>
<p align="center">Josiah (II Kings 22:1-23:30) reigned 31 years, <i>"did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left". Repaired the temple, read the Law, removed idol altars (including Jeroboam's in Bethel), and kept Passover for the first time since the judges.</i></p>	
<p align="center">Jehoahaz (II Kings 23:31-35) reigned 3 months, <i>"did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p align="center">Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:36-24:7) reigned 11 years, <i>"did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p align="center">Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:8-9) reigned 3 months, <i>"did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p>BABYLON CAPTURES JERUSALEM (II Kings 24:10-17)</p>	<p>Jeremiah Lamentations Daniel Ezekiel Obadiah</p>
<p align="center">Zedekiah (II Kings 24:18-20) reigned 11 years, <i>"did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p>FALL OF JUDAH TO BABYLON (II Kings 25)</p>	
<p>BABYLONIAN EXILE</p>	<p>Haggai Zechariah Malachi Joel (?)</p>

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At key moments in the story, God delivered messages to the kings of Israel and Judah through His **prophets**. As Israel's end drew near amidst their persistent continuation of Jeroboam's sin, many of these prophets pair their proclamation of God's coming judgment with hope for the eventual rebuilding of David's tent. One such messenger was **Amos**, who announced God's impending judgment during the lengthy and prosperous reign of **Jeroboam II**, over 750 years before the birth of Jesus. By his own account, he was **"no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'"** (Amos 7:14-15). Wasn't that a great background for someone with a prophecy about David? Read **Amos 9:7-15**.

- What does "raising up the booth of David" mean to a divided people facing destruction for unfaithfulness?

The prophet **Micah** delivered a similar message a short time after Amos. Tensions were high as Israel allied with Syria to wage war on Judah; but Micah foresaw destruction for the wicked and rescue for Zion's faithful. His prophecy included the rising of a David-like king who oversee a **"return to the people of Israel"** and of peace. Read **Micah 5:1-5a**.

- How does Micah tie this coming ruler to David without saying the great king's name?

Isaiah prophesied around the same time. Even as God lopped off the branches of the wicked, his vision of the son who would shoot forth to sit on the throne of David and bring together all peoples was glorious. Read **Isaiah 9:1-7** and **10:33-11:10**.

- How are these prophecies ultimately fulfilled by what Jesus accomplished?

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Prophets and Kings

Focus Statement: The biblical prophets were a wild crew selected by God Himself to deliver important messages to people who often didn't want to hear them. There was healing for those who did receive them, though – especially now that Jesus has come.

We classify the final 17 Old Testament books in our English Bibles as the **Major and Minor Prophets**. The primary distinction between the Major Prophets (**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations** – which is traditionally attributed to Jeremiah, **Ezekiel**, and **Daniel**) and the Minor Prophets (**Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi**) is not their importance but their length: the Major Prophets are longer. The Hebrew Scriptures as Jesus knew them organized things differently. Our Minor Prophets were contained in a single book called “The Book of Twelve”. In fact, everything after the Law was simply called “**the Prophets**” or “**the Prophets and the Psalms**” (cf. Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44).

While we associate “prophecy” with “predicting the future”, that was not the only – or even the primary – role the Hebrew prophets fulfilled. They were God's spokespeople, delivering messages that applied His Law (especially Deuteronomy's blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience) to the people's present situation. Current events were a major part of the message, and many of the prophetic books opened with references to who reigned at that time (Isaiah 1:1, Jeremiah 1:1-3, Ezekiel 1:1-3, Hosea 1:1, Amos 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1, Haggai 1:1, Zechariah 1:1).

You became a prophet by God choosing you. Some variation of “**the word of the LORD came**” often kicks off the action in I-II Kings and the prophets' books. After Jeroboam set up his golden calves for Israel in 930 B.C., “**a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel**” (I Kings 13:1). Around 740 B.C., Isaiah saw a vision of the LORD asking, “**Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?**” to which he responded with his freshly purified lips, “**Here I am! Send me**” (Isaiah 6:1-13). “**The word of the LORD came**” to Jeremiah around 627 B.C., telling the young man “**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations**” and promising to “**put my words in your mouth**” (Jeremiah 1:4-10).

The prophets could be pretty wild characters. God often called them to act out their prophecies in dramatic, attention-grabbing, and even scandalous ways.

- _____ married a prostitute to symbolize Israel's unfaithfulness (1:2)
- _____ walked naked for three years to speak against Egypt & Cush (20:1-6).
- _____ strapped on a yoke bar to command submission to Babylon (27:1-11).
- _____ acted out carrying his baggage into exile (12:1-16).

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When people would receive the word from the LORD, He would relent of the disaster the prophets foretold, even in the case of Gentile cities like Nineveh (Jonah 3-4). This shows how prophecy is about more than "predicting the future": the future could change based on how people responded to God's word. As it was, the prophets' messages were often rejected. When Judah's good king Jehoshaphat made peace with Israel and planned a joint-campaign to free a city from the Syrians, he wisely told Israel's wicked king Ahab, **"Inquire first for the word of the LORD"** (I Kings 22:5). **"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil'"** (I Kings 22:8). The unfaithful kings often viewed the prophets as traitors, while the predictions of national calamity were unpopular with the people.

This is why Jesus concluded the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount by saying, **"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you"** (Matthew 5:11-12). As Stephen said before the Jewish Council stoned him, **"Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it"** (Acts 7:52-53).

Our "Major and Minor Prophets" were not the only active prophets in Israel and Judah. Many prophets were unnamed, simply being described as a "man of God", "prophet", or "sons of the prophets" (I Kings 13:1, 20:13, 20:35). One of Israel's most famous prophets was active almost a century before the prophetic messages began to be written down. Read **I Kings 17:1-24**.

- **How do we see the Torah being applied through Elijah's prophetic ministry?**

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Elijah's ministry set wicked Israel on fire – *literally!* Ahab had added to the “sin of Jeroboam” the worship of Baal. Elijah famously confronted Ahab in **I Kings 18**, proving who the true God is by calling fire from heaven in a dramatic (and somewhat comical) contest with the 450 prophets of Baal. This high point was soon followed by a deep low when the wicked Queen Jezebel forced him to run for his life. Yet, when he arrived on Mount Horeb (i.e. Sinai) in **I Kings 19**, Elijah witnessed wind, earthquake, and fire before hearing the voice of the LORD in a low whisper.

“**Have you found me, O my enemy?**” Ahab later asked when Elijah returned to confront him over the murder of Naboth for his vineyard (I Kings 21:20). Because of this evil, God declared, “**Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel**” (I Kings 21:21). This disaster was delayed until the days of Ahab's son, though, because Ahab humbled himself before God upon hearing it (I Kings 21:27-29).

The prophet dressed in “**a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist**” called down fire from heaven on the soldiers sent by Ahab's equally wicked son Ahaziah (II Kings 1). Elijah's story ended when “**chariots of fire and horses of fire**” took him “**up by a whirlwind into heaven**” (II Kings 2:11). Elijah was such a prominent figure for the people of Israel, that Jesus brought him up during one of His very first public sermons. **Read Luke 4:14-30.**

- **How was the reaction Jesus received similar to that of Elijah?**

By quoting Isaiah and referencing Elijah, Jesus made a clear statement about Who He is and what His ministry would accomplish. In fact, it was where the Law and Prophets had been leading all along.

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God's Messenger

Focus Statement: The prophet Elijah may have literally set Israel on fire through his ministry, but it was all just a preview of what was coming next.

Elijah was more than just a man living in the wilderness who dressed in **“a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist”** (II Kings 1:8). His impact on unfaithful Israel during the wicked reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel was legendary. It's hard not to think of Elijah upon hearing Isaiah's prophecy about a **“voice in the wilderness”** a century later. Read **Isaiah 40:3-5**.

- What would God accomplish for His people by fulfilling this prophecy?

The people were eager for that **“glory of the LORD to be revealed”**. During Isaiah's ministry, the northern kingdom of Israel would fall to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Despite repeated warnings from prophets like Elijah, Elisha (Elijah's successor), Amos, and Hosea, **“they would not listen, but were stubborn”** (II Kings 17:14). As Hosea had said, **“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols”** (Hosea 11:1-2). Like the nations around them, they worshipped idols, sacrificed their children, and used divination; and it all started when Jeroboam set up the golden calves for them to worship (cf. II Kings 17:15-23). **“Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only”** (II Kings 17:18). Assyria eventually resettled other peoples to live in the cities of Israel, later bringing some Israelites back to **“teach them the law of the god of the land”** (II Kings 17:24-28). This resulted in a people of mixed heritage who **“feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children”** (II Kings 17:41). These people were the ancestors of the Samaritans in Jesus' day.

Judah had its problems, too. **“Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced”** (II Kings 17:19). While that nation outlasted Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah eventually fell, too. Between 400-500 years before the birth of Jesus, Malachi (whose name means “Messenger of God”) was a prophet to Judah after Jewish exiles had returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. Recognizing God still wasn't present with the people as He had promised and the people were repeating some of the same failings of earlier generations, Malachi prophesied a day when the LORD would set the wicked ablaze. Who better to associate with such a day than Elijah? Read **Malachi 4:1-6**.

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- Recognizing that Malachi is the final Old Testament book in our English Bibles and likely the final prophetic book chronologically, what would faithful Jews be looking for next?

This prophecy led many in Jesus' day to be looking for Elijah to come (Matthew 16:14, 17:10, 27:47; Mark 6:15; John 1:19-28). At the time, they didn't know that the angel Gabriel had told the old priest Zechariah that his barren wife Elizabeth would miraculously conceive a baby who would go before the Lord **"in the spirit and power of Elijah"** (Luke 1:17). So, when John the Baptist **"came preaching in the wilderness of Judea"** wearing **"a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist"**, he turned some heads (Matthew 3:1,4). Read **Luke 3:1-21**.

- How was John's ministry like that of Elijah and the other prophets?

Jesus would make the relationship between John and Elijah crystal clear to Peter, James, and John. Appropriately enough, He did this right after they witnessed Him speaking to Elijah himself. Read **Matthew 17:1-13**.

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The Servant of the LORD

Focus Statement: Isaiah the prophet spoke words of hope to God's people struggling in a rapidly changing world. Now that Jesus has come, those words can mean even more to us.

The prophet Isaiah was active in the southern kingdom of Judah from 740 to 681 B.C., during the reigns of good kings Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah and of exceptionally bad king Ahaz (II Kings 15:1-17, 15:32-38, 16:1-4, 18:1-18). During this 60-year period, the world as they knew it was changing and the pressure on God's people was growing. When Israel (i.e. "Ephraim") under wicked king Pekah formed an alliance with Syria, they really turned up the pressure on Judah and its wicked king Ahaz. Read **Isaiah 7:1-17**.

- **What would this prophecy originally have meant for King Ahaz?**

- **How does Jesus ultimately fulfill this prophecy?**

Isaiah's prophecy came to pass within decades when Syria and Israel both fell to Assyria. God had a purpose, and He wanted to accomplish it through Judah choosing to be faithful and just. Yet if they wouldn't, He would work through a faithful remnant or even the pagan world powers.

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When Jesus and His apostles walked the earth 700 years later, Isaiah's messages about God's purpose and hope resonated so much that the New Testament writings directly quoted him 105 times. Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah are the Old Testament books that the New Testament quotes most. A particular favorite was Isaiah's "servant songs". Read **Isaiah 42:1-9**.

- How would the servant of the LORD be different from other people?

It seems obvious to us that Jesus fulfills these prophecies, but we have the advantage of reading **Matthew 12:15-21**! These "servant songs" were not originally associated with the "Son of David". Many Jews read them as prophetic descriptions of Israel's vocation as God's people, who like "the servant of the LORD" suffered a great deal. Once you know the story of Jesus, though, these prophecies take on a much different character. Read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**.

- What is missing if we read this prophecy as only being about Israel?

- How does the story of Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, several threads were being woven that would culminate in the person of Jesus Christ – not only in the details of His life but in what He accomplished. As **Isaiah 44:3** said, "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." The ultimate answer to Israel's – and all of humanity's – problem with sin and death was found in Jesus' sacrifice for sins and in the coming of the Spirit who would raise Him from the dead and transform hearts.

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A New Heart

Focus Statement: Disaster came to Judah when God handed the nation over to Babylon in punishment for their unfaithfulness. Yet even in exile, the prophets spoke with hope that God was preparing a new covenant that would bring with it a complete change of heart.

The northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. A few decades later, the prophet **Nahum** foretold the eventual fall of Nineveh, Assyria's capital. Yet even as God demonstrated His mastery over history – using Assyria to punish Israel's unfaithfulness while still eventually punishing Assyria for its own persistent wickedness – Judah was reigned by Manasseh, a king who set records with the length of his reign and its total wickedness (cf. II Kings 21). During his 55-year reign (686-642 B.C.), **“he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD”**, including:

- Rebuilding the high places (which his father, good king Hezekiah, had destroyed) (21:3);
- Worshipping idols, including in the Temple itself and burning his son as an offering (21:3-6);
- Using fortune-telling, omens, mediums, and necromancers (21:6); and,
- Shedding innocent blood **“till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another”** (21:16).

Things fared no better during the brief reign of his son, Amon. Yet, the tide turned when his grandson Josiah reigned from 640-609 B.C. The prophets **Zephaniah** and **Habakkuk** denounced wickedness in Judah just as Josiah undertook a major reform effort (cf. II Kings 23). The results were significant: **“Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him”** (II Kings 23:25). Josiah embodied what the Torah taught kings to be.

“Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there’” (II Kings 23:26-27). They did not have to wait long. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem during wicked king Jehoiakim's reign and brought back some Temple vessels and young people from the royal family and nobility, including **Daniel** and his friends (cf. II Kings 24:1-7, Daniel 1:1-4). In 597 B.C., he besieged Jerusalem again and carried away the wicked king Jehoiachin, many officials and royal family members (including the prophet **Ezekiel**), and treasures from the Temple and palace (II Kings 24:10-17, Ezekiel 1:1-3). When wicked king Zedekiah later rebelled against the empire which appointed him, Babylon besieged Jerusalem a final time. A famine began, Zedekiah was captured, his sons were slaughtered, the Temple and every great house in Jerusalem were burned, and the city walls were broken down. Babylon left only the poorest behind as **“Judah was taken into exile out of its land”** in 586 B.C. (II Kings 25:21).

Lamentations captured the mood well: **“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess**

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among the provinces has become a slave” (Lamentations 1:1). Yet, hope remained. “**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him’**” (Lamentations 3:22-24). This curse for unfaithfulness paired with hope for forgiveness and blessing had deep roots. Read **Deuteronomy 30:1-20**.

- What did Moses say God would do when the people returned to Him?

- Why couldn't the people keep God's commandments, and what was God's answer?

Judah's prophets eagerly awaited fulfillment of this promise. “**The word of the LORD**” came to **Jeremiah** in 627 B.C. when he was just a young man living under Josiah's reign in Judah, and his prophetic ministry continued until the Babylonian exile (1:1-8). As Judah's wicked kings reigned and false prophets deceived the people, Jeremiah's message of the impending disaster brought him fierce persecution. Popular or not, he was right: Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem nearly two decades before it happened, while proclaiming that captivity would last 70 years as God made Judah, the surrounding nations, and eventually even Babylon drink the cup of the wine of His wrath (25:1-29). Yet as desperate as that was, there was hope for what God would do next. Read **Jeremiah 31:31-34**.

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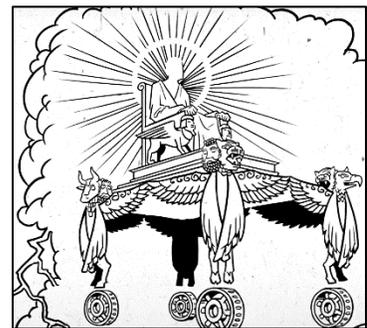
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- What would be different about the new covenant God would make with Israel?

- What is God's part in making this new covenant, and what is our part?

Ezekiel communicated a similar message through his startling visions. Living in exile with the first group of captives taken by Babylon in the years leading up to the fall of Judah, he saw a vision of cloud, fire, wheels, four living creatures, and a gleaming human appearance seated on a throne that was **"the likeness of the glory of the LORD"** (1:28). Because of Judah's unfaithfulness, the glory of the LORD – which had filled the Temple when Solomon brought the ark of the covenant into it back in **I Kings 8:10-11** – left Jerusalem until that time when God would gather His people back and give them **"one heart, and a new spirit"**, removing **"the heart of stone"** and giving them **"a heart of flesh"** (10:1-11:25).



"Likeness of the glory of the LORD"
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/ezekiel-1-33/>

By the end of the book in **Ezekiel 40-48**, he would have a vision of a new temple that the glory of the LORD would not only fill but from out of it would come a river that brought life to the desert region all around (43:1-5, 47:1-12). In the prophecies in between, God showed how He planned to accomplish this massive change.

Digging Deeper: How did the Apostle Paul in **II Corinthians 3** and the Hebrews writer in **Hebrews 8-10** see God fulfilling these promises?

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Personally seeking His lost sheep and setting up David to shepherd them was not all God was going to do. Read **Ezekiel 36:16-38**.

- Even though sending Israel into exile was just, why was God going to act?

- How was God going to vindicate His holiness?

In that passage and all throughout the book, God addressed Ezekiel as “**son of man**” – a poetic way of saying “human”, as David also used it in **Psalm 8:4**. He'd say it again when the Spirit of the LORD set him down in a valley and showed him a startling vision. Read **Ezekiel 37:1-14**.

- Why would there be a valley of dry bones, and what did that represent?

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The Son of Man

Focus Statement: Jesus referred to Himself as "Son of Man" more than any other title, but it really just meant "human"...didn't it? One of Daniel's visions while in Babylonian exile powerfully shines a light on just who Jesus really is.

Out of all the ways Jesus described Himself, He used **"Son of Man"** more than any other.

- **"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"** (Matthew 8:20).
- **"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"** (Mark 10:45).
- **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"** (Luke 19:10).
- **"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man"** (John 5:26-27).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the phrase "son of man" just meant "human", as in **Psalm 8:4: "what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"** The phrase was used over 90 times in Ezekiel as God addressed the prophet. It was a basic – though poetic – descriptor. Isn't it interesting that Jesus associated it with some of His especially mighty works?

- **"For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath"** (Matthew 12:8).
- **"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic— "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home"** (Mark 2:10).
- **"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised"** (Luke 9:22).
- **"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"** (John 1:51).

Throughout the gospel accounts, "Son of Man" would be used to describe Jesus over 80 times – most often by Jesus Himself.

- **What does calling Himself "Son of Man" tell us about Jesus?**

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The title "Son of Man" did not have any particular prophetic significance to the people. In fact, when Jesus asked, "**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**" the disciples summarized popular opinion by replying John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (Matthew 16:13-14). Peter used the title for Jesus that is most familiar for us when he confessed, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (Matthew 16:16). When Jesus later foretold how He would be "lifted up" to die on a cross, the crowd responded, "**We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?**" (John 12:34). Contrasted with frequent prophetic references to a coming Messiah, there was nothing about the "Son of Man" – except for one critical prophecy.

Of all the Major Prophets in our English Bibles, odds are you know **Daniel** the best. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were youths from Judah's nobility that Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar carried into exile in 605 B.C. You may have heard about their refusal to defile themselves with the king's food, an act of faith that ultimately resulted in them not only being the healthiest but also the wisest of all those who stood before the king (**Daniel 1**). Daniel would stay there over a 70-year period – even after the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medo-Persian Empire – living out his faith in the one true God even as an exile.

That faith was put to the test when Nebuchadnezzar ordered anyone who did not worship his golden image be thrown in a fiery furnace and later when Darius the Mede ordered anyone who did not pray to him be cast into a den of lions (**Daniel 3, 6**). That wisdom was on display when Daniel alone could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of an image with a gold head, silver chest and arms, bronze middle and thighs, iron legs, and iron mixed with clay feet being smashed by a stone and the later king Belshazzar's vision of writing on the wall (**Daniel 2, 5**).

Yet, you would be forgiven for thinking Daniel only has six chapters, because most of our focus in Bible study and sermons tends to end there. In Daniel chapters 7-12, we see much more in the way of dramatic and even troubling visions. Read **Daniel 7:1-28**.

- How does Daniel help us understand his vision?

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- What is significant about “a son of man” being given dominion by the Ancient of Days?

The full significance of this was made plain during the Jewish Council's trial of Jesus. They wanted Jesus to say He was “the Anointed One” so they could bring Him to Pilate as a rebel to be executed. By replying as the “Son of Man”, He said something even more outrageous to them. Read **Matthew 26:57-68**.

- In light of Daniel 7, what was Jesus claiming, and why were the leaders outraged?

- What are ways we struggle today with the dominion of Jesus Christ?

While not “messianic prophecies” as we usually think of them, the rest of Daniel's visions showed God moving through earthly kingdoms to establish His everlasting kingdom. **Daniel 8-12** included astonishing detail about the Persians and the Greeks in the coming centuries, including:

- Amazing facts in **Daniel 8** about Alexander the Great's reign 300 years before Jesus' birth;
- Details in **Daniel 9** about a coming “abomination of desolation” seen in: 1.) the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews desecrated the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem over 160 years before the birth of Jesus; and, 2.) the coming destruction of the Temple by the Romans as Jesus foresaw it in **Matthew 24:15-28**;
- Predictions in **Daniel 9** that after the seventy years of exile Jeremiah foretold, it would be another “seventy weeks” (“seventy sevens”= 70 X 7= 490) before iniquity was atoned.

When just over 500 years later the rulers of this age crucified the Lord of glory, God gave dominion and glory and a kingdom to our King, Jesus (cf. I Cor. 2:8)!

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Your King is Coming

Focus Statement: The Jewish exiles returning to Jerusalem soon grew discouraged when everyday life did not live up to their hopes. Yet, their King was coming – and as we grow in our understanding of Jesus, we will have reason for hope, too.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem at the start of Passover week, there was a definite buzz in the air. Read **Matthew 21:1-11**.

- **What were the Jews expecting and why?**

The prophet that Matthew quoted is one you might not be very familiar with: **Zechariah**. While Judah spent 70 years in exile after falling to the Babylonians, the Babylonians themselves fell to the Medo-Persians. During the reign of Cyrus, Persia achieved such dominance that in 538 B.C. he proclaimed, **"The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth"** (II Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-2). Cyrus took a different approach to maintaining dominance than the Babylonians had: he allowed exiled peoples to return to their homelands and restore their worship practices. **"Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel – he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem"** (Ezra 1:3-4). Incredibly, this fulfilled a prophecy by **Isaiah** from over 200 years earlier, when God said Cyrus by name **"shall fulfill all my purpose; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid' ...I name you, though you do not know me"** (Isaiah 44:28, 45:4).

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While exile officially ended in 538 B.C., restoring the nation – including rebuilding the Temple, rebuilding the city wall, and reinstating observance of the Torah – would be a long time coming. Many exiles – like **Esther** who by God's providence for the preservation of Israel became Queen of Persia in Susa in 478 B.C. – never returned to the Promised Land. Those who did return – the first wave coming in 538 B.C., the second in 458 B.C. under Ezra, and the third in 445 B.C. under Nehemiah – had a tough time.

The book of **Ezra** records the efforts of Jeshua the Priest and Zerubbabel the Governor of Judah (and descendant of David) in leading the returned exiles and rebuilding the Temple. Local opposition soon arose, though, accusing the Jews to the king of planning to rebel. If the people of Judah had not already been made "**afraid to build**", the order from the king did the trick, stopping construction until 520 B.C. (Ezra 4:4-6, 24).

It was at this time that **Haggai** and **Zechariah** prophesied. God's messages through them acknowledged that the people's present situation was a far cry from the hope they heard from the prophets, but God's promises for their restoration would be realized if they remained faithful. Chief among these promises was the coming of the Messiah. Read **Zechariah 9:9-13**.

- **How was the coming King different from other leaders?**

Despite the people's hopes for the coming Messiah, God revealed a harsh reality: when He did raise up His shepherd for the people, they would reject Him. Read **Zechariah 11:4-17**.

- **Why would anyone reject a good shepherd and follow a foolish shepherd?**

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This potentially odd-sounding passage takes on deeper meaning when you consider it through the lens of Jesus Christ. Read **Matthew 27:1-10**.

- How do the events surrounding Jesus' death fulfill Zechariah's prophecy, both in the details and in the overall purpose?

Despite the tragic rejection of His shepherd, God still worked through it all for His purpose. Read **Zechariah 12:10-13:9**.

- How does knowing the story of Jesus change the rejection of the Messiah from a tragedy to a story of lasting hope?

- What are our ways our hope starts to fade, and how does knowing "Your King is coming" change things?

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The Stone the Builders Rejected

Focus Statement: The Jewish leaders' harsh rejection of Jesus led to His crucifixion. Yet, this rejection was part of God's plan and foretold in the Scriptures. Now, we have a choice to make.

While many in the crowds joyously welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem and eagerly listened to Him teaching in the Temple, His final week before His crucifixion involved a great deal of conflict with the Jewish leaders. Read **Matthew 21:23-46**.

- **What motivated the chief priests and elders in Jerusalem, and how can you tell?**

Living almost 600 years after the exile officially ended, these leaders in Jerusalem had inherited a much different situation than the people had known before. As recorded in **Ezra**, the Temple had been rebuilt in 516 B.C., though the Temple itself and the ceremony dedicating it were a fraction of what they had been under Solomon (Ezra 6:16-18, II Chronicles 7:4-10). In the next century, God put it on the heart of **Nehemiah** to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, a project which was completed around 445 B.C. By the time **I and II Chronicles** were written, a Jewish community and regular Temple services had been restored in Jerusalem (I Chronicles 9:1-33).

Since **I and II Chronicles** were written after the return from exile, they are among the last Old Testament books to be written. Instead of giving a more comprehensive history of Israel like **I Samuel through II Kings**, I and II Chronicles focused on the house of David and the Temple. They uniquely emphasized examples of repentance from unfaithfulness, appropriate for a community trying to faithfully rebuild (I Chronicles 21; II Chronicles 12, 33). In the arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures as "**the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms**" in Jesus' day, they were the final books. We can lose this with our English Bible's arrangement, making them seem redundant.

In the 400 years between that time and Jesus' day, a lot changed. The Persians gave way to the Greeks who gave way to the Romans. After a dark period of persecution two centuries prior followed by a period of independence (chronicled in the apocryphal books of *I and II Maccabees*), the Jewish people eventually enjoyed several privileges as a client kingdom of the Roman Empire. Herod the Great initiated a massive expansion of the Jerusalem Temple that lasted for decades and built a magnificent – and well-funded – structure (cf. John 2:20; Matthew 17:24, 24:1). Having built such a life for the nation, the Jewish leaders had every incentive to keep the peace with Rome. Prophetic in ways he did not realize, this priority was shown when –

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Barabbas is an Aramaic name meaning “_____of the _____.” So, Pilate presented the Jewish leaders with a choice between the “Son of David”, “Son of Man”, and “Son of God”, who had humbly proclaimed peace and offered freedom to all in a different sort of kingdom; and, Barabbas, a rebel guilty of murder. Whom did they choose?

Jesus had warned His disciples earlier that week of signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in **Matthew 23**, **Mark 13**, and **Luke 21**. This came about when war broke out between the Jews and Rome from AD 66 to 70. The Jewish historian Josephus describes some of the absolute atrocities that took place during the siege and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem:



Roman "Aquila", the symbolic eagle of Roman legions

It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food...for what was otherwise worthy of reverence, was in this case despised. Insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths: and, what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants. And when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives. And while they eat after this manner, yet were they not concealed in so doing. But the seditious every where came upon them immediately, and snatched away from them what they had gotten from others. For when they saw any house shut up, this was to them a signal that the people within had gotten some food. Whereupon they brake open the doors, and ran in, and took pieces of what they were eating almost up out of their very throats, and this by force. The old men, who held their food fast, were beaten: and if the women hid what they had within their hands, their hair was torn for so doing. Nor was there any commiseration shewn either to the aged, or to the infants: but they lifted up children from the ground, as they hung upon the morsels they had gotten, and shook them down upon the floor." (Josephus. *The Wars of the Jews* 5.10.3)

Josephus graphically described a mother who had fled to Jerusalem when the war began and became so desperate in the famine that she killed, roasted, and ate her nursing son (*The Wars of the Jews* 6.3.4, cf. Matthew 24:19-20). Even the Romans were rattled by the report of this:

"But for Cæsar he excused himself before God, as to this matter, and said, that 'He had proposed peace and liberty to the Jews, as well as an oblivion of all their former insolent practices: but that they, instead of concord, had chosen sedition; instead of peace, war; and before satiety and abundance, a famine. That they had begun with their own hands to burn down that temple; which we have preserved hitherto: and that therefore they deserved to eat such food as this was. That however, this horrid action of eating an own child ought to be covered with the overthrow of their very country itself; and men ought not to leave such a city upon the habitable earth, to be seen by the sun, wherein mothers are thus fed, although such food be fitter for the fathers, than for the mothers to eat of; since it is they that continue still in a state of war against us, after they have undergone such miseries as these.'" (Josephus. *The Wars of the Jews* 6.3.5).

This horror fulfilled Moses' warning over 1400 years before. Read **Deuteronomy 28:45-57**.

- How does the choice to accept or reject Jesus – nationally for Israel and for us as individuals – bring the entire story of the Bible to a head?

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Tell Me the Story of Jesus

The Story of the Bible

Focus Statement: The Old Testament is so much more than 39 books full of difficult names, ancient history, and outdated rituals. From beginning to end, it is a powerful story about who God is, who we are meant to be, and how far He is willing to go to help us achieve it.

The Hebrew Scriptures

The Law

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

The Prophets

Joshua
Judges
I-II Samuel
I-II Kings
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
Isaiah
Book of 12

The Psalms

Ruth
Psalms
Job
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Lamentations
Daniel
Esther
Ezra-Nehemiah
I-II Chronicles

"These are my words that I spoke to you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

– Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44)

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Fulfilled by Jesus

Focus Statement: In both the smallest of details and God's most overarching purposes, Jesus fulfills the story of the Bible.

It seems so obvious to us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the story of the Bible. Yet it was nowhere near so obvious to the people Jesus lived among each day. Read **John 7:1-52**.

- **What issues did the people have with believing in Jesus?**

After giving a detailed family tree – showing Jesus' lineage as **Son of Abraham, Son of David** – the Apostle Matthew shows us just how much the birth of Jesus fulfilled the story of the Bible. Read **Matthew 1:17-2:23**.

- **How did Jesus' birth fulfill specific prophecies and the overall story of the Bible?**

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All of this significance unfolded just in Jesus' first years on earth! The extent to which Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures became even more apparent once His ministry began. In a dense couple of chapters, Matthew presents to us the full significance of Jesus' ministry to the story of the Bible. Read **Matthew 12:1-13:58**.

- **How did Jesus' life fulfill specific prophecies and the overall story of the Bible?**

When the "**sign of Jonah**" did come to pass, it revealed how absolutely Jesus really is the fulfillment of the story of the Bible. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled a variety of prophecies in stunningly specific detail. He also accomplished what the Scripture said must happen. Read **John 19:1-20:10**.

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- How did Jesus' death fulfill specific prophecies and the overall story of the Bible?

Jesus fulfills the story of the Bible, but that story does not end with His death, burial, and resurrection. When we obey the gospel, we become a part of the story. That's where the New Testament – and the story of our own lives – come in!

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Making All Things New

Focus Statement: The New Testament writers frequently quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures to explain the significance of what Jesus accomplished. As we learn to appreciate the connections between the Old and New Testaments, we will grow more and more excited for how the story ends – and for how it doesn't.

By the first century AD, the Hebrew Scriptures were already ancient, ranging from 400 to 1,400 years old. Yet, the **Law**, the **Prophets**, and the **Psalms** – the three major groupings of its books in Jesus' day – were a vital part of how Jesus and His apostles explained the reality of who He is and the significance of what He accomplished. We can see this clearly in how the Spirit inspired them to write the **gospel accounts** of **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John** and the **history** of **Acts**. As what the apostles had been preaching about Jesus was committed to paper, it was full of references to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Though there is some subjectivity in identifying what constitutes a direct quotation – there are so many paraphrases and allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures they are impossible to tabulate – the four gospel accounts alone have nearly **200 direct quotations** from:

- the **Law**: **68 quotes**, of which 27 were from **Deuteronomy**
- the **Prophets**: **70 quotes**, of which 39 were from **Isaiah**
- the **Psalms**: **56 quotes**, of which 43 were from **Psalms**

These quotations appear in a variety of ways:

- The gospel writers quoted from the Old Testament over **30 different times** as they narrated how Jesus – or the reaction He received – **fulfilled** some element of the story of the Bible.
- As the crowds tried to make sense of who Jesus was or as the scribes conversed with Him, the Scriptures would be **quoted another 40 times** in these **discussions**.
- Appropriately, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms were on Jesus' lips more than anyone else, as the gospel writers show Him quoting these sacred words around **120 times** as He **prayed, taught, and preached** them.

The apostles and early church leaders clearly picked up on this about our Lord and adopted it themselves: nearly all of the **40+ Old Testament quotations in Acts** appear in their **prayers, sermons, and teaching**.

As they turned to **letter writing** to teach people all over the world how to follow Jesus, the Hebrew Scriptures continued to play a vital role in their communications. The Old Testament is directly quoted 225 times in their letters, especially in:

- Paul's letter to the **Romans**, which has **70 quotes** in its 16 chapters;
- The anonymous writer's letter to the **Hebrews**, which has **50 quotes** in its 13 chapters; and,

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- Peter's letter of **1 Peter**, which has **29 quotes** in its 5 chapters.

As the church became made up of more and more Gentiles over the decades, we see Paul, whom Jesus appointed as the Apostle to the Gentiles, going to great pains to stress that the Gentiles' faith in Jesus made these ancient Jewish writings their own history now (cf. Gal. 2:8, 3:21-29). Instead of making lists of which commands still applied, he stressed "**Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes**" (Rom. 10:4). This enabled him to use the Hebrew Scriptures to explain who Jesus is and the kind of life His followers should lead without forcing Gentiles to become culturally Jewish (cf. Rom. 13:8-14:23). Many of the early Christians did not grow up knowing the Scriptures: they had to be taught. The key was they were taught it as a way of understanding Jesus, not as a set of rules they needed to keep.

- **How did Jesus, His apostles, and the early church use the Hebrew Scriptures differently than we often do today?**

Without the story of Jesus and the church in the New Testament, so many threads are left dangling in the story of the Bible presented in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms ended with **II Chronicles 36:22-23**, which gives Cyrus' proclamation allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem. The Old Testament in our English Bibles ends with **Malachi 4:5-6**, God's promise to send Elijah the prophet to prepare for the day of the LORD. Talk about a cliffhanger! We need Jesus as the culmination of the story. The interconnectedness of the Old and New Testaments is especially clear in the **Revelation** of Jesus Christ, the final book of the Bible. Read **Revelation 1:4-7**.

- **What are ideas from our study of "Christ in the Old Testament" that get referenced here?**

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In fact, as appealing as a New Temple was to the Jewish exiles of Ezekiel's day, the temple Christ has built is far greater than anyone could have imagined. Read **Ezekiel 40:1-4, 43:1-12, 47:1-12**.

- What would this vision of a new temple have meant for Jews living in exile?

- How do Jesus' followers experience the building of a new temple?

Having these images in mind can heighten our appreciation for what John saw. Read **Revelation 21:9-22:5**.

- Given many similarities, how is John's New Jerusalem greater than Ezekiel's New Temple?

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Having learned to see Christ in the Old Testament, the end of the Bible becomes incredibly exciting. Read **Revelation 22:6-21**.

- What are things from this passage that stand out more to you when you think about the entire story of the Bible?

- What should a follower of Jesus reading these words do next?