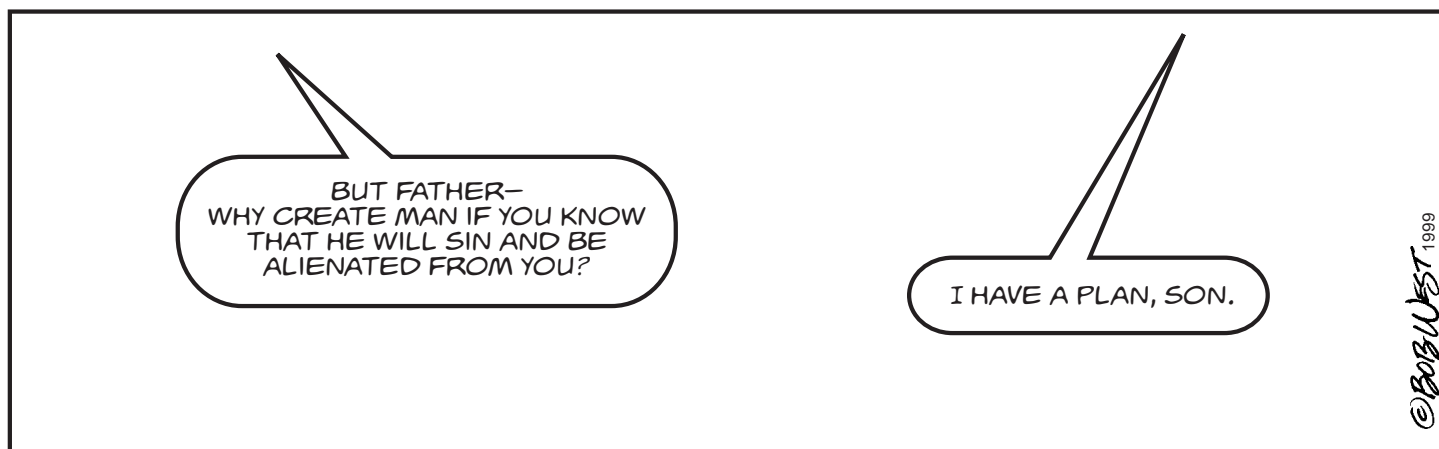


FATHER & SON



Getting to Know God

Lesson 2

The Promise of a Savior

After creating the world and everything in it as described in Genesis 1, God created man in His image with a soul that reasons, wills and feels the full range of emotions. Just as we are personal, relational beings, so is God. He enjoyed a personal relationship with Adam and Eve in the beautiful Garden of Eden until they succumbed to Satan's temptation and disobeyed the one commandment God had given to them -- not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree in the Garden.

Because of God's perfect holiness, Adam and Eve's sin necessitated a separation from him, both physically and spiritually. All of their descendants chose to sin (Romans 3:23), as well, and man became what Francis Schaeffer referred to as a "glorious ruin," still reflecting the image of God but in ruins compared to man's original glory as God created him.

Yet, as a result of God's great love for Adam and Eve and their descendants, he immediately set in motion a plan to restore the broken relationship and the glory ruined by sin. In Genesis 3:15 God made the first promise concerning the one who would redeem man from Satan's power, taking back the power he had usurped. The promise was that the "seed of woman" should bruise Satan's head but would have his heel

bruised in the conflict. As we will see in Lesson 4, this prophecy was one of many fulfilled in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Although many centuries passed before the promise was fulfilled, God continued to remember the promise and renew it for those within the bloodline of the coming "seed of woman" during the intervening generations. According to Genesis 6:5-6, man eventually became so wicked that God had to destroy the world with a flood and start over with Noah and his family. To Abraham, a descendent of Noah, God promised that "*all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*" (Genesis 12:3). As Abraham proved his faithfulness to God, God renewed the promise saying, "*through your offspring (seed) all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me*" (Genesis 22:18). The promise continued through Abraham's son, Isaac (Genesis 21:12) and Isaac's son, Jacob, to whom he said, "*All people on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring*" (Genesis 28:14). God later changed Jacob's name to Israel (Genesis 32:28), and his children and their descendants became the "children of Israel," whose history is recorded in the Old Testament.

One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers and ended up in Egypt where he was eventually exalted to a position second in command to the ruling Pharaoh. This allowed him to provide refuge for his father and brothers and their families during a devastating famine that spread throughout that area of the world. Just before his death in Egypt, Jacob pronounced prophetic blessings on

each of his sons, and to his fourth son, Judah, he said: *“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his”* (Genesis 49:10). In later years Judah became the leading and ruling tribe of the nation of Israel, and through him came David, Solomon and eventually Jesus, a descendant of David, who would be born of “the seed of woman” and bruise the head of Satan.

After the death of Jacob the children of Israel remained in Egypt where they were enslaved and mistreated by the Egyptians to such an extent that God directed Moses to lead them out and into the land of Canaan in fulfillment of a promise he had made to Abraham hundreds of years earlier (Exodus 6:5-8; Genesis 15:12-16). Following the ten plagues which God sent on the Egyptians to convince Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, God, through Moses, led the children of Israel safely out of Egypt, through the Red Sea on dry ground and toward Mount Sinai (Exodus 7-18).



While the Israelites were camped at the base of Mount Sinai, God delivered His law to them through Moses. The law consisted of the Ten Commandments as well as many other instructions that blended to form the nation’s civil and religious law which they accepted as their covenant with God. The second half of the book of Exodus and the entire book of Leviticus record the contents of this law, including all of the detail given regarding building and furnishing the tabernacle, the priests’ clothing and duties, the behavior expected of the people in their daily lives and sacrifices required on particular occasions and for various sins.

In addition to providing for the nation’s health and well-being through laws which protected them from exposure to infection and disease, the laws concerning ritual purity constantly reminded the

people of God’s holiness, and the sacrifices reminded them of their sin which had cut them off from God’s presence. When they disobeyed God’s laws and broke his covenant with them, God’s justice brought them under the sentence of death, but in his mercy God allowed them to offer a perfect and blameless animal in their place as a temporary substitute until the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would pay the sin debt in full once for all time (1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 7:26-27; 9:11-15).

God’s original intent after giving Israel his law and finalizing his covenant with them was to lead them directly into the “promised land.” However, because the people rebelled and refused to trust in God’s leadership, he punished them by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 years, until those who had been 20 years old or older when they grumbled against him had died (Numbers 14:26-35). The balance of the book of Numbers records God’s dealing with the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings.

In Deuteronomy Moses reminded Israel of their history, of all that God had done for them and of the laws they needed to obey as his chosen people. He also described in detail the blessings of obedience and curses for disobedience and then assisted them in renewing their covenant with God before turning over his position of leadership to Joshua who would lead the people into the promised land (Deut. 28-31).



The book of Joshua is the story of Joshua and the nation of Israel as they, with God’s help, quickly conquered the land which God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They then divided it among Jacob’s descendants who were known as the children of Israel or the 12 tribes of Israel (Joshua 21:43-45). Before his death, Joshua helped the people once again to renew their covenant to serve and obey the one true God (Joshua 24).

The book of Judges tells of Israel's history between the death of Joshua and the ministry of Samuel during which time judges (actually military heroes) ruled the tribes of Israel. The events during this era followed a predictable pattern within the nation of Israel: (1) enjoying a time of peace while loving and serving God; (2) forgetting God in their prosperity and turning to idol worship; (3) being punished by God sending a neighboring nation to conquer and rule over them; (4) turning back to God and asking for forgiveness; and (5) being forgiven and saved by God who sent a judge to help conquer their enemy. There were a total of 15 judges, of which Deborah, Gideon and Samson are the more well-known. The next Old Testament book relates the story of King David's great-grandmother and one of Jesus' earthly ancestors, Ruth.

Immediately following Ruth is the book of I Samuel which begins with the birth of Samuel and his training in preparation for leading Israel as a prophet and its final judge. It was during Samuel's later years that Israel rejected God as their king and demanded an earthly king so that they could be like other nations (I Samuel 8:4-21). The remainder of the book tells of Saul's reign as king and his disobedience which resulted in God's rejecting him as king and choosing David (of the tribe of Judah) as his successor.

II Samuel describes David's 40-year reign and how Israel, with God's blessing and David's courageous leadership, subdued its enemies and enjoyed its greatest territorial expansion. While David was making plans to build a temple for God to replace the tabernacle which had been central to Israel's worship until that time, God sent Nathan the prophet to tell David that he would build a house for him. He was not promising David a physical house but rather that God would establish David's lineage as the one through whom the promised seed would come.

Therefore, God's promise regarding a savior which was first made after Adam and Eve's sin and later renewed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah was now extended to David. Abraham's seed, through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed, would be of the house of David; the kingdom of this seed (descendant) would be established and he would rule upon the throne of that kingdom forever (II Samuel 7:11-17). Although part of Nathan's prophecy had an immediate fulfillment when Solomon, David's son and Israel's next king, built the magnificent temple in

Jerusalem, portions of his prophecy are quoted in the New Testament and applied to Jesus Christ. Speaking to the group of Jews (Israelites) who had gathered on the first Pentecost after Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter said, "*Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that He would place of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ...*" (Acts 2:29-31).



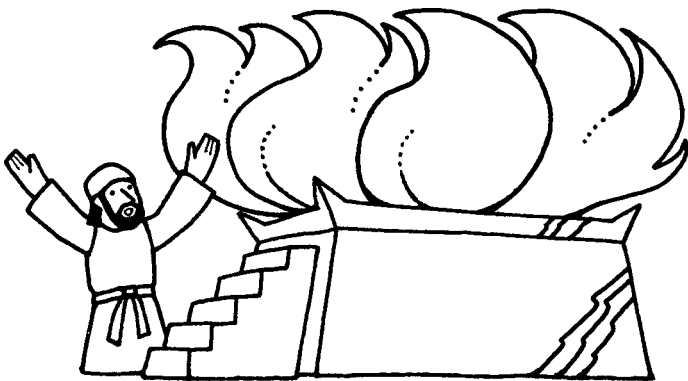
David established Solomon as king of Israel shortly before his death in I Kings 2 and charged Solomon to "*be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires.*" Solomon started off well, but he eventually disobeyed God by marrying foreign women who turned his heart away from the one true God and to idols (I Kings 11). Consequently, God split the kingdom immediately upon Solomon's death and gave the northern tribes (known as Israel) to Jeroboam, leaving Solomon's son, Rehoboam, to rule only Judah.

The remainder of I Kings and all of II Kings follow the history of the divided kingdom, including its mostly evil kings and the faithful prophets such as Elijah and Elisha who tried to convince the people to destroy their idols and be true to God and his covenant. Old Testament prophets Amos and Hosea warned the northern kingdom of Israel to return to God or face the consequences set out by God through Moses in Deuteronomy 28. Unfortunately, Israel chose to ignore the prophets' warnings and was taken into Assyrian captivity in about 722 B.C. Judah had a few good kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah who did their best to initiate reforms and convince the people to

return to God so their decline was not as swift. However, in spite of their efforts and those of prophets such as Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, the changes were only temporary, and Judah was conquered by Babylon between 606-586 B.C.



God did not leave his people without hope, however. The prophets Ezekiel and Daniel were among the exiles in Babylon, and they assured their fellow Israelites of their return and of the future glory of God's kingdom. God also told them through the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah that the captivity would last for 70 years, and then Babylon would be conquered by the Medes and Persians whose ruler, Cyrus, would allow them to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10-14; Isaiah 44:24-45:13). The books of I and II Chronicles, which were written for the exiles who returned to Israel following the captivity to remind them of their heritage and of God's faithfulness to His covenant, end with Cyrus' proclamation which allowed that return (II Chron. 36:22-23). Ezra begins with the same decree and, along with Nehemiah and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, tells of the Jews' return from exile in Babylon and the challenges they faced in rebuilding the walls and the temple and restoring the purity of their lives and worship.



Not only did the Old Testament prophets seek to warn the Israelites of the consequences of disobeying their covenant with God and to offer hope for a return of God's blessings following their captivity and repentance, but they also communicated hope by including a multitude of prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, all of which were fulfilled by Jesus. For example, we are told that he would be born of a virgin (hence the "seed of woman") in Bethlehem (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2) and that his kingdom, which would never be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14), would be established during the days of the Roman empire (Daniel 2:44). This king would enter Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13), be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5), and reign on David's throne and over his kingdom forever (Isaiah 9:6-7). There are also many verses in the Psalms which the New Testament writers apply to Jesus as the Christ.

As we will see more clearly in Lessons 3 and 4, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise of a savior which God made to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob, to Judah, to David, to Israel through the prophets -- and to us.

References

Alexander, David and Pat, editors. *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible* (Berks, England: Lion Publishing, 1973).

Hailey, Homer. *From Creation to the Day of Eternity* (Las Vegas, NV: Nevada Publications, 1982).

The Promise of a Savior

Name _____

Address _____

What broke Adam and Eve's fellowship with God? _____ What is there about God's nature that required God to separate himself from Adam and Eve at this point?

What motivated God to immediately set in motion a plan to restore the broken relationship between himself and man?

Who are some of the Old Testament characters who were in the bloodline of the promised savior?

Even though the Old Testament records historical events involving many nations, which group of people does it focus on?

Some of the Old Testament laws provided for the nation's health and well being by protecting them from exposure to infection and disease. What purpose did the laws concerning ritual purity and sacrifices serve?

The Old Testament plainly shows the importance that God places on man's obedience to him. Give two examples of consequences which resulted when people in the Old Testament rebelled against God.

List five of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

Please complete and return this page in the enclosed envelope.

Feel free to write on the back of this page any Bible questions which you may have, and we will do our best to provide Bible answers.