

God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 2: The Nation Of Israel

As we continue exploring the Bible story and God's eternal plan, we want to overview how God used a special group of people in a critical way for His eternal plan. In fact, the story of the Old Testament primarily deals with the way in which God used the nation of Israel to glorify His name and bring Jesus into the world. But, while there is a great deal that we can learn from the Old Testament story, we will be focused on how God is telling the story of redemption.

1) God's covenant with Abraham. As sin spread, God sent a worldwide flood to destroy wickedness and saved Noah and his family (Genesis 6-9). After the flood, God made it clear that He would do something special through Noah's son Shem (Genesis 9:20-27). One of his descendants would be the man named Abram (Abraham, Genesis 11:10-32). Then, God called Abraham to leave his homeland (Ur) and his family to go to the land God promised to give his descendants (the land of Canaan). Consider the three main promises God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15): To make a great nation of Abraham's descendants, to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan, and to bless all people of the earth through Abraham's Seed. This third promise, in particular, has direct implications to the unfolding of God's eternal plan – as it would be through Abraham's descendants (the nation of Israel) that God would bring Christ into this world, thereby blessing all nations with the opportunity of salvation! However, when God made these promises to Abraham concerning his descendants, he was 75 years old and childless (Genesis 12:4; 15:1-5). Yet, God blessed Abraham with a son named Isaac (Genesis 21:1-7). Later, God proceeded to test Abraham's faith by commanding him to offer Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22:1-2, though God stopped Abraham from actually killing him). Abraham obeyed, concluding God would keep His promises even if God would raise Isaac from the

dead (Hebrews 11:17-19)! For, God had promised to confirm the covenant with Isaac (Genesis 17:19).

Isaac went on to have twin sons (Jacob and Esau) and God extended the covenant to Jacob (Genesis 25:23; 28:12-15). Twelve sons were later born to Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel, Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-21). These twelve children would become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. Of these, God would bring kings (and ultimately Jesus) through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9-12). Much later, God would establish His covenant with David (from the tribe of Judah) and promise to establish an everlasting kingdom (as the Messiah/Anointed One would come through his lineage, Psalm 89:3-4).

2) God's covenant with the nation of Israel. God gave the nation of Israel that came through Abraham's descendants a written law to live by (Exodus-Deuteronomy). Ten commandments served as the foundation of this Law (Exodus 20:1-17). The law also consisted of regular sacrifices and a priesthood (from the tribe of Levi) to administer them. The people of Israel entered into this covenant with God, agreeing they would be His people and obey His laws (Exodus 24:3-8). Though God would always keep His part of the covenant, Israel was warned of consequences if they failed to keep their part and blessings if they did keep it (Deuteronomy 5:32-33; Leviticus 26). However, this Law was not designed to be a permanent system (Galatians 3:23-26). It was added because of transgressions until the Seed would come (Galatians 3:19). This Seed is Jesus (Galatians 3:16). Therefore, the Law of Moses was designed for a specific purpose, fulfilled that specific purpose, and has now been taken away (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:7-13). In fact, the sacrifice of bulls and goats could never take away sin and give life (Hebrews 10:4; Galatians 3:10-14, 21-22). Instead, the Law of Moses was a shadow of better things to come under the Law of Christ (Hebrews 9:1-10:18)! For, the Law of

Moses was designed to lead the Israelites to faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:23-26).

3) A brief history of the nation of Israel. If we break the Old Testament story into a quick summary, we can see six major parts to the story. Part 1: The beginning. This tells of the creation of the world, the spread of sin, the promises made to Abraham and his descendants, and how these descendants come into the land of Egypt. Part 2: The exodus. This tells of how the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, brought out of Egypt, entered a covenant with God, and rebelled against God so as to wander in the wilderness. Part 3: The promised land. This tells how God brought His people into the land of Canaan and the oppression they experienced when they disobeyed God. Part 4: The united kingdom. This tells how three kings (Saul, David, and Solomon) ruled over a united nation of Israel and how the temple was built in Jerusalem. Part 5: The divided kingdom. This tells of how the nation of Israel divided into two separate nations (called “Israel” and “Judah”) and the frequent rebellion of both nations against God. Part 6: The exile and return. This tells of how God punished Israel for their disobedience by delivering them into Assyrian captivity, punished Judah for their disobedience by delivering them into Babylonian captivity, and then allowed a remnant to return to the land after this.

God’s eternal plan is unfolding. We have watched its development through the promises and story of the Old Testament. Particularly, we have seen how God is telling His story of salvation through the nation of Israel. How would God use the nation of Israel to fulfill His greatest promise made to them (the Seed promise)? In the next lesson, we will learn about the Messiah God sent through Israel to save the world from sin!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God’s service?