



## **THE PROPHETS FROM AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE**

We are about to move into the prophets. More time will be spent on the Major Prophets than on the Minor Prophets, primarily because they are significantly longer and contain more. In addition, the information will help us understand areas in Part 2 of this book. We will dive into Isaiah through Daniel and then we will move on to Part 2.

The prophets served among God's people. We have seen the history; we have seen the writings of God's people and now the prophets from among God's people. Again I picture the prophets as God's commentaries on the story of God's people (the history of Israel). Through the prophets we see what God says along the way, what God was thinking, and how He spoke to His people.

Remember the historical context amidst these prophets. The time of the prophets was mainly during the united monarchy and the divided monarchy. This was a time of political, military, social, and economic upheaval on all fronts. It was a time characterized by much unfaithfulness to God's covenant. The deterioration that we saw in the book of Judges just continued, as kings dropped the ball and were disloyal to the covenant. It was a time of international shifts in the balance of power. There were 19 Northern kings who disobeyed God, and did not follow the Lord. So we are constantly seeing God announcing His covenant-loyalty and blessings to those who were keeping His Covenant, as well as Him announcing judgment on those who did not.

The prophets spoke of both the near future and the ultimate future. What we see when the prophet Isaiah comes on the scene is him speaking about things that were going on right then in the nation of Israel as they were about to be taken over by Assyria. He is also speaking farther into the future. Not in every case, but we are seeing both near future and ultimate future.

Remember also that much of the language of the prophets was poetic.

### **Isaiah**

#### ***Primary Information for Starters***

"Isaiah" means "the Lord saves." It is very similar to Joshua and to Jesus, as we see in the New Testament.

The time period is 760-680 B.C. This is where taking a look at the timeline every once in a while will be helpful. Remember the year that Israel was taken over by Assyria—722 B.C. Isaiah is prophesying and saying it is coming and he is mainly in Israel.

Historical Setting: Isaiah prophesied concerning the destruction of Israel by Assyria and the exile in Babylon. He is talking about what is coming in Assyria as well as the exile in Babylon. He said God's people and all nations are destined for both judgment and salvation. We see both of these themes throughout the book of Isaiah.

### ***Practical Advice for Study***

There are two primary sections that comprise this "miniature Bible"—which is something I like to call the book of Isaiah. There are 66 chapters in Isaiah and 66 books in the Bible. Isaiah 1-39 is talking about present judgment, the judgment that is coming on God's people. These are 39 books that display the effects of sin and the judgment of God. When you get to Isaiah 40:1, there is a completely different tone: comfort. God says, "Comfort my people." From Isaiah 40-66 we see a picture of future hope. These are 27 Books that describe the merciful servant and the comfort of God.

Present judgment and future hope. It is quite an interesting picture of what we see unfold in all of Scripture.

Look for four major ideas that are at the center of the book of Isaiah. First, the Lord is the "Holy One of Israel". That is a phrase that is mentioned 30 different times. He is Holy and He requires His people to be Holy. Second, Israel is the Lord's "holy people" (Isa. 62:12). Here we see a relationship between the two ideas—the Holy One of Israel and the people are the holy people of the Holy One. Third, Jerusalem is God's "holy city". We see this in Isaiah 48:2, a "holy mountain" (Isa. 11:9; 27:13). We see Jerusalem as the center, the apex, of God's holiness represented in the temple that is there. Fourth, the Lord is calling the Gentiles—the nations—to worship Him (Isa. 2:2; 56:7). We really see an emphasis in Isaiah 56 on the Gentiles.

Isaiah gives a rich picture of Christ. You have His birth. Isaiah 7 is foretelling the birth of Christ (Isa. 7:14). Next you have His Life. Jesus later quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4 saying, "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*" Then you have His death (Isa. 52:13-53:12). There are a variety of chapters in Isaiah that talk about Jesus as the suffering servant. Most notably Isaiah 52 and 53, "*He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... And by his wounds, we are healed*" (Isa. 53:4-6). Finally, you have His resurrection in Isaiah 55:3.

### **Jeremiah**

#### ***Primary Information for Starters***

"Jeremiah" basically means, "The Lord appoints" or "The Lord calls." Jeremiah 1 is a picture of God calling out to Jeremiah and saying, "I have a purpose for you and I have created you for this purpose."

The time period is 626-586 B.C. The historical setting is his prophesying during the last 40 years of Judah's history, until its destruction at the hands of Babylon. Remember that Judah, Jerusalem and, the temple were destroyed in 586 B.C., and that is where Jeremiah ends. For 40 years, he is looking forward, looking ahead to the fact that the temple was going to be destroyed in 586 B.C. So over and over again there is a call to repent and return to covenant loyalty to God.

Key chapters—Jeremiah 7 is called "the temple address". It is Jeremiah confronting the people of God saying, "You have come to the temple over and over again, but you have missed the whole point." God has called you not to come and offer your sacrifices but to hear him and obey him and to walk with him (Jer. 7:23-24).

Then you have Jeremiah 31—"the new covenant". Jeremiah introduces the concept of a new covenant compared to what had been going on in the rest of the Old Testament.

### ***Practical Advice for Study***

Jeremiah is the longest book in the Bible. Some people think Psalms is longest book in the Bible. It may not be the longest, but it does have the most chapters of any book in the Bible. It is easy to get bogged down reading through it.

The overall structure goes back and forth between Jeremiah personally and what is going on in the nation. Personally he is called (Jer. 1), then national—messages to Judah (Jer. 2-33), then personal—Jeremiah's personal sufferings (Jer. 34-45).

I want you to see this. Jeremiah as a prophet of God is identifying with God's people. He is not giving a message, but he is identifying with it. It is personal for him as well as national for the people of Israel.

Don't forget he is also speaking on an international level—messages to the nations (Jer. 46-51), and yet again on a personal level—God's vindication of Jeremiah.

God's heart for His people is revealed through the heart of His prophet. This is one of the things that is most notable about Jeremiah as you read it. You begin to feel the weight that he felt as he looked and he saw the sin around him. Jeremiah is known as the "Weeping prophet" because he felt what God felt. He wasn't just this innocent bystander who was proclaiming condemnation on everybody and to repent. He felt the weight of their sin just as God did. God's heart for His people is revealed through the heart of His prophet.

There are several object lessons in book of Jeremiah—potter's clay (18), clay pots (19), baskets of figs (24).

## **Lamentations**

### ***Primary Information for Starters***

Lamentations is like Ecclesiastics in the sense that it is not a very exciting book to read. It is a depressing book to read. "Lamentations" literally means "funeral poems," and that is exactly what they are.

The time period is 586-585 B.C. The historical setting here is the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon in 586 B.C. These are funeral poems that are very, very sad, very weighty, and very heavy. If you can imagine the scenario, we as the people of Israel for example are taken over by Babylon. They come in and begin to murder, slaughter, rape, kill, take us all, spread us out and make us slaves. Everything is turned upside down, and it is a very heavy time. If we can't imagine, we will have a hard time understanding Lamentations.

It reveals the suffering heart of God over sin. It was most likely written by Jeremiah. Most people think Jeremiah wrote it, and that seems to fit with the whole theme that "He felt the heart of God's people."

### ***Practical Advice for Study***

Each chapter is a separate funeral poem. You have five different chapters and five separate funeral poems. What is interesting, and this is one of those things that we don't catch because we are reading in English and this was written in Hebrew, but the verses in each chapter are arranged in an acrostic where the first letter of each stanza (verse) corresponds to the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 verses in each one of chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 and there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse begins with a different letter.

Lamentations 3 is the climax, and is actually 66 verses long. For every letter in Lamentations 3, there are three different phrases that are used. You still get the acrostic, three for every letter, but it is the climax.

And here it is. I want you to look at Jeremiah in these two incredible verses. You should know these verses in the context of what we have just discussed. You might want to underline these verses.

Look at Lamentations 3. It is the climax. Feel the weight of the destruction of the people of God. In the middle of famine, thirst, cannibalism, rape, slaughter all that is going on, in the middle of this climactic poem, the author, most likely Jeremiah says this: "*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, the Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him*" (Lam. 3:22-24). That is thick. We talk about how the Lord's mercies are new every morning and we almost picture that being said in a time of prosperity. Yes, the Lord's mercies are new every morning, but the author of Lamentations proclaimed this in the middle of great suffering. He said, "Great is your faithfulness...my portion is in Him...I will wait for Him." This is an incredible picture of faith.

The key passage is Lamentations 3:22-24. Great is your faithfulness.

## **Ezekiel**

### ***Primary Information for Starters***

Ezekiel is a tough book to read. From the very beginning you might be thinking, "What in the world is going on here?" "Ezekiel" means "God strengthens." The time period is 592-570 B.C.

Historical Setting: Ezekiel is prophesying to the Jews that are held captive by Babylon. In 606 B.C., the Babylonians began deporting some of the Jews, and then there was a second group in 570. That is when Ezekiel was deported. He was taken into exile, and he is prophesying to the people who were held captive. His calling was based on the fact that he was being deported and God was going to use him to speak to the captives at that point.

Over 50 times Ezekiel says, "The Word of the Lord came to me..." What you see is the people in exile struggling, and they need the Word. "The Word of the Lord spoke to me;" "the Word of the Lord came to me."

Ezekiel's twofold purpose was first, promoting repentance and faith. It is time for us to repent. We are experiencing the judgment of our sin; it is time for us to repent. Second, it was stimulating hope and trust. There is something coming. God is going to restore us.

### ***Practical Advice for Study***

Overall structure. We see an introduction—God calls Ezekiel (1-3). We see the judgment against Judah (Ezek. 4-24). There is judgment against the nations (Ezek. 25-32), and finally the restoration of God's people (Ezek. 33-48).

It really reads like a picture book. That is not to say or give the image of a very simple picture book. It is a complex picture book filled with symbolic actions, visions, and allegorical pictures throughout. And it emphasizes the glory of God in His temple.

As we saw with Jeremiah, Ezekiel felt the weight of what he was preaching. Ezekiel lived out his prophecy. There were things that God called him to do to illustrate what He was doing among His people. We see Ezekiel playing at war (Ezekiel 4:1-3), laying on his side a

certain number of days (Ezek. 4:4-17), shaving his hair and beard (Ezek. 5:1-4), acting like someone fleeing from war (Ezek. 12:1-16), sitting and sighing (Ezek. 21:1-7), and enduring the death of his wife (Ezek. 24:15-27).

## **Daniel**

### ***Primary Information for Starters***

"Daniel" means "God is my judge." The time period is the late sixth century (535 B.C. ?).

Historical setting: Daniel had been deported to Babylon and served in three different kingdoms: Babylonia, Media, Persia. Daniel was written in both Hebrew and Aramaic. This is one of things that is interesting about Daniel and it was possible because it was a time when they were exiled, and he wrote things in Hebrew that were supposed to be communicated to God's people just as it had been done before. So he writes in both Hebrew and Aramaic.

The whole point of this book is that God is sovereign over all kings and all history. He is sovereign over all kings and that is why you see king Darius saying, "The God of Daniel needs to be praised." You see that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, needs to be praised. King Nebuchadnezzar says, "The God of Daniel needs to be praised." He is declaring that the God of these men, the Hebrews, needs to be praised. God is sovereign over all kings.

### ***Practical Advice for Study***

Overall Structure: We really have a personal history of court stories in Daniel 1-6. We have prophetic ministry through apocalyptic visions in Daniel 7-12. Daniel 7-12 could probably be described as the "Revelation in the Old Testament." They are a picture of apocalyptic visions of what is coming in the end times, and the implications of Daniel are significant to understanding Revelation.

Daniel's prophecy covers time from captivity of Jerusalem to Christ's return to earth to judge the nations and establish His kingdom.

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. There are notes for these books on the web. To give you an overview, you will see themes like judgment and blessing, social justice, immorality, idolatry and social issues over and over. Social issues are huge in some of the Minor Prophets, especially Amos. He talks about how the people of God oppressed the poor and missed the whole point.

## **WHY DID GOD GIVE US THE OLD TESTAMENT? The Old Testament as Theology**

In this Part, you will need your Bible close by. Instead of an overview, there will be times when you will have to refer to the Bible. I want you to look with me throughout the Bible.

Why did God give us the Old Testament? Why did God give us these 39 books? What is the point?

The key to understanding how to interpret the Old Testament is to understand why God gave us the Old Testament. This is big. It is the foundation to understanding the Bible. Let me say that one more time. The key to understanding how to interpret, how to understand

what all these stories mean is understanding why God gave us the Old Testament. What is the ultimate purpose?

Why do you think God gave us the Old Testament? Was it for historical information? We know that is not true because He doesn't give us all the historical facts. He doesn't fill in all the blanks. He definitely picks and chooses parts of history to give us. The purpose is not just so we would have a good history of the people of Israel that lead up to Jesus. That is not the point.

What about for moral lessons? Did He give us the Old Testament for character studies, to teach us about how to be courageous, wise, brave or strong? Or, did He give us the Old Testament for examples in life? Is that the purpose of the Old Testament?

The last three encapsulate what are probably the primary reasons we give that affect the way we interpret the Old Testament. This is what I mean by that. When we go to the Old Testament, most often we look at the stories and we use them as moral lessons, character studies, or examples for our lives. It starts when we are children growing up in Sunday school, or Bible study, or whatever it may be. We learn the story of David and Goliath, and we learn to have strength in our battles. We look at Abraham and we learn to have faith. We look at these different characters and we say, "We need to be like them. We should learn from them." As I mentioned earlier, I am not saying that it is not good to see some of these characteristics in these people, but I am saying we need to be careful not to make a quick jump from our lives to their lives. God was doing something much broader than just giving us some character studies. These people were playing a unique role in history.

What is interesting when we study the Old Testament and begin to look at characters is that we always identify with the hero in the story. Who studies David and Goliath and says, "Now we are the people who are scared to death in the background?" No one says that. You don't want to be that group of people. We are going to study Cain and Abel. Who are you going to choose? We always see ourselves in the role of the hero. Whatever applies to them also applies to us.

We look at Moses in Exodus 1, and see this baby that is born, and is saved from the destruction that is going on around him. We automatically think that God will take care of us and we equate ourselves with Moses instead of equating ourselves with the countless other Hebrew babies that did not make it through the destruction. What right do we have to identify with Moses and not to identify with the others? Here we begin to see how we can begin to misinterpret the Old Testament if we don't have an overall picture of why things unfold the way they do.

There is a much deeper purpose of the Old Testament than historical Information, moral lessons, character studies and examples in life. You might even say a much higher purpose. Take a look at the story of Moses in Exodus 1. We have three different levels in that story: We have a personal level or what God is doing in the life of Moses. We have a national level or what God is doing for this man and how He is providing for this man to lead his people out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Third, we have an even higher level or what God is doing and how He is using this story in the overall picture of the Old Testament. I want us to rise up and see the higher level. I want us to see the overall story.

There is a foundational purpose at the heart of Old Testament history. If that is true, if there is one story line, one overarching purpose in the Old Testament, and if there is a foundational purpose at the heart of it all, then we want to know it. It will affect the way we understand. It is going to keep us from fragmenting it. This is what we do! We take the Old

Testament, and we fragment it into all kinds of different pieces. Then we can't put it together, get frustrated, and we move on to the New Testament. That hampers our ability to understand what God desires to teach us. We need to know the story.

Also, we want to apply it. The beautiful thing is that as we look at God's work in history, we realize that the God who was working in their life is also the God that is working in our lives. To also realize that if there is a story that is begun in the Old Testament, then that story is still continuing today. We are a part of that story. We want to apply it to our lives. We want to know it. We want to be able to apply what God is doing in all of history. If God is doing something in all of history, don't you want to know so you can apply it to your life?

Finally, we want to proclaim it. There are all kinds of worldviews, ideologies, and world religions, in our culture today that are teaching things that are false and against the story of God. If we know the story and we proclaim it, then we can show its beauty, and its grace, and its truth amidst all the diverse and competing worldviews that are present today. So if there is this foundational purpose, we want to know it, apply it, and proclaim it.

If you had to nail it down to one foundational purpose, this is what I believe it is: The purpose of the Old Testament is to reveal how God redeems His people for His kingdom. Now there are two parts to that.

The first part is how God redeems His people. We used that word earlier when we talked about Genesis. God is restoring His people to Himself. That means He is recreating us in His image. From cover to cover, God is conforming us into the image of Christ. He is recreating us. He is redeeming us, restoring us. From the Fall in Genesis 3, through the remaining history of God's people, including His people today, He is restoring them to Himself.

The second part is He redeems His people for His kingdom. I want you think about the idea of kingdom. A kingdom involves at least three different facets: There is a people who are ruled by the king. In order for someone to be king, there has to be someone under him, people who are being ruled. We have people who are ruled by the king. Then, there is a place where the king has dominion. I am king over these people in this place. A king has a people who are ruled by him, a place where he has dominion. Finally, there is a purpose for the king and his kingdom. We have people who are ruled by the king. We have got a place where the king rules and you have a purpose for the king and his kingdom. That kind of gives an overarching picture of what it would mean for a king to have a kingdom.

In light of that, I want you to think about God's kingdom. Could it be that in the Old Testament we are seeing a story of God bringing His people to His place for His purpose? The King of the universe is bringing His people to His place for His purpose.

The Secret Church study guide includes a map, "The kingdom of God—A Map for Understanding the Storyline of the Old Testament." The purpose of the map is to allow you to fill in areas of information as we progress through Part 2. For each section of the map there are corresponding notes (these notes can be found on the web). When you study the map and corresponding notes, it would be beneficial to make the same notes in your Bible. The map has three different sections: people, place and purpose.

God is bringing His people to His place for His purpose. And what you will see on the left side at the top of the map are the different eras in the History of the Old Testament. As you go down the map, you will get to the anarchy after monarchy, which is basically the divided Monarchy when they were ruling themselves and then going into exile. Then you get to Jesus. At this point, you must understand the map. There are two things about the map

(again these notes can be found on the web): First, it is a progressive story. It is a progressive map, and by that I mean that every single thing, as we move down the map, builds on all the other things. It is like building blocks coming together as we go down the map. It is a progressive map.

Second, it is an incomplete map. It is a progressive story and an incomplete map. That is why you will see the New Testament, Jesus, the present and future. In order to get the story line in the Old Testament, we can't leave it in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is a story without an ending so we have to bring it to Jesus, then to us today and then the future.

I am going to take us on a journey using this map to trace each of these different areas. I want you to see that God is bringing His people to His place for His purpose all throughout the Old Testament, and He is doing the same thing in our lives today. It is going to unfold in ways that will allow us to see why the Old Testament is invaluable.

## **EDEN (Genesis 1-2)**

### **People - God's Blessing on His People**

We have a picture of God's blessing on His people. That is what is going on in Genesis 1-2. It is God's ultimate and total blessing on His people. They are experiencing His blessing.

The sovereign King creates man and woman as the summit of His creation. We are God's prized creation. Everything builds to creating man in His image. He is the summit of creation and we see that reflected at other points throughout His creation narrative. God is King, and we are His subjects, and God has made us to be His prized creation.

Two complementary accounts of creation display a unique relationship between God and man in Genesis 1-2. I don't know if you have ever noticed it. Look at Genesis 1-2. You actually see this in Genesis 1. Everybody knows the first verse: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and earth*" (Gen. 1:1). We have that at the very beginning so we know that this is the story of creation.

Then you get to Genesis 2, and it says, "*...By the seventh day God had finished.*" And then you get Genesis 2:4, and it says, "*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. No shrub of the field...*" and it starts a whole other story. Are there two worlds? No, these are not two worlds, and there is not an alien world. What we have here is two different perspectives on creation.

The first account in Genesis 1 is more cosmic and universal in its scope. It has the entire creation of the world, step by step, with man being the summit of creation. When you get to Genesis 2, you see another story unfold; it is a different account and a different perspective. Genesis 2 is decidedly anthropomorphic, which basically means man-centered. It is not focused on what is going on universally, but what God is doing with the summit of His creation, His people. What we have is a picture of man in Eden constantly enjoying the love of God. He is perfectly enjoying the love of God. God saw all that He had made and it was...good. Everything was good. God's people were experiencing His blessing.

### **Place—Perfect Fellowship**

The very best place of all, Eden, is the garden of paradise. Eden is a place where all relationships are perfect. Between God and man everything is perfect. Between man and woman everything is perfect. Between man and his environment everything is perfect. So God and man, man and woman, and man and his environment, as they come together in perfect fellowship. That is the picture Eden is giving us.

### **Purpose—God’s Glory Multiplied to All Peoples**

God's glory multiplied to all peoples. I want you to see how this unfolds. Look in Genesis 1:26-28 at how these verses give us a picture of the purpose of God. We have God's people and God's place for His purpose to multiply His glory to all peoples. Genesis 1:26 reads,

*... God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*

And what you have in these verses is a picture of man created in God's image. Because man is created in God’s image, man represents God himself as sovereign over all creation. That is what it means to be in His image. It doesn't mean that we have His facial features. It means that we reflect and represent His Glory to all of creation. That is what we were created to do in the Garden of Eden.

Therefore man's purpose, and you see it unfold, is to enjoy a relationship with God (Gen. 1:26- 28). God has created him as the summit of His creation to enjoy a relationship with him. Also, man is to rule over all creation (Gen. 1:26b). You see that emphasized over and over again. You are going to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the livestock, over all the earth. God is King, but He is sharing His reign with man, who was created in His image. You have God essentially saying, "You will Rule. You will be stewards of my kingdom. You will reign with me." That is an incredible picture. Third, man's purpose is to reproduce God's glory to the ends of the earth (Gen. 1:28)—"Be fruitful, increase the number, fill the earth and subdue it."

That is the picture we have of man. God's people, God’s blessing, and God's place all point toward perfect fellowship for God's purpose. God is essentially saying, "I have created you to fill the earth with my glory. Represent my glory to everything in creation." That was the initial picture of the kingdom.

## **THE FALL (Genesis 3-11)**

### **People—God’s Blessing and Judgment through Adam and Eve**

After Eden is the Fall. Everything changed. Eden: as oppose to God’s blessing on His people, what we have now has progressed to God's blessing and judgment, through Adam and Eve.

The place is now a place of disrupted fellowship. It is now God's blessing and judgment through Adam and Eve and disrupted fellowship as opposed to perfect fellowship. Instead of God's glory being multiplied to all peoples, God's glory is now marred for all peoples. His glory, His image in man, is marred by the Fall. I want you to see this unfold in Genesis 3-11. Think about the people and God's blessing and judgment through Adam and Eve.

There are two primary results of the Fall. First, there is righteous judgment. It is not possible for God to be true to Himself, His character and His holiness, and at the same time tolerate dethronement by His creatures. It is not possible. His justice would not allow that. Judgment is a necessary result of the Fall. It is inevitable, and it is radical. It is deep. God had said, "If you disobey me you will die. But if you follow me, you will experience life." Now we usher in not just a picture of God blessing the people, but we have an entirely different line. We have God's judgment.

Second, there is undeserving grace. Thankfully, the Old Testament does not end at Genesis 3. Praise God that this is not what happens. God comes to His people and He pours out His grace on them. Amidst the judgment, there is grace.

What you see lining up is that salvation and judgment are now inseparable and complementary aspects of the action of God in bringing in His kingdom. Everything changed. You will see God's blessing and judgment throughout. They are now complementary acts, and they are inseparable. They are going to go together throughout all eternity. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, we are going to see the blessing of God and the judgment of God on His people, on His creation.

I want to show you the two lines of human development. There is an ungodly line expressing human sin and inviting God's judgment, and there is a godly line showing God's purpose of grace to make a people for Himself. We see it unfold as soon as we get to Genesis 4. When you get to Genesis 4, Cain and Abel, come together and Cain says to his brother in Genesis 4:8, "*Let's go out to the field.*" *While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*" We see the results of the Fall here, and what happens in the rest of the chapter gives us a picture of immorality and sin in the line of Cain. So you have a line of ungodly people who are experiencing the judgment of God.

But then you get to Genesis 5 and you have a different picture. You have the line of Seth who raises up for his brother Abel. What you have in Genesis 5 is a godly line that is not experiencing what is going on in Genesis 4. So you have two lines. You have the line of Cain and the line of Seth. It all leads up to the point where you get to the flood and you have someone from Seth's line named Noah. See how the godly line continues here? The blessing continues through Noah. Out of all of the sin that caused the flood, one man is spared—Noah. Noah is exactly ten generations from Adam.

Then you see the story of the flood. When you get through the flood and God's covenant with Noah and to the end of Genesis 9, you begin to see Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. What you see are the two lines beginning again. Ham begins to carry out that ungodly line of judgment. But then you see the line of Shem that goes all the way through the end of Genesis 10, and into 11. In Genesis 11:10, you get to the end and it leads into Genesis 12 to a man named, Abram. Now Noah was exactly 10 generations from Adam. Abraham just happens to be 10 generations from Noah. What we are seeing is the presence of a godly line that is experiencing the blessing of God that leads up to Genesis 12. On the other hand, there is an ungodly line that is in a pattern of stopping and going. You have both lines, and the one line is going to lead us to Abram.

## **Place—Disrupted Fellowship**

The place is that picture of disrupted fellowship as opposed to perfect fellowship. All relationships are now disrupted. The relationship between God and man was perfect. Now there is discord between God and man. In Genesis 3, you see three different effects of the Fall of man.

Guilt (Gen. 3:7)—when you look at it, after they had sinned in Genesis 3:7, it says, *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."* They knew they were guilty. The first effect of sin was their guilt. Discord between God and man results in guilt.

Then you get to Genesis 3:8, where it says, *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden."* The second picture you are seeing is the picture of shame. They don't see how they could be in God's presence, so they have to hide from Him.

And then you get to Genesis 3:9-10 and it says, *"But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'"* You see guilt, you see shame, and finally you see fear.

These are the results of the Fall on man as opposed to this perfect fellowship. You have a fellowship that is disrupted by guilt, shame, and fear because of sin. Man is now outside the garden, separated from his relationship with God. But there is not just discord between God and man. There also is discord between man and woman (Gen. 3:16). In Genesis 3:16, you see God say, *"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* Here, you see discord coming about.

Finally, you see discord between man and his environment (Gen. 3:17). Adam is told, *"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life."*

Here is what I encourage you to do if you are a fan of writing in your Bible. You might put at these different points a little note: Place, People and Purpose. As you go back and study it and read it on your own you will see how the place is disrupted by the Fall. Fallen man is now outside the garden.

## **Purpose—God's Glory Marred In All Peoples**

Man is now only free to be what he is—a sinner who hates God. All men, and women, are free to be the only thing they can be—sinners who hate God. They have a nature that is turned against God and all of us are recipients of that nature. Every single one of us has a sinful human nature that opposes God, and it is the result of the Fall. It is a picture of what we have received from Adam.

We see the picture of man, after the Fall, unfold in Genesis 11. Remember the tower of Babel? See how it relates to the purpose. They are supposed to multiply and make the glory of God known among all the earth. That was their purpose. See how it is messed up. Look in Genesis 11:2—*"As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there."* You don't see them filling the earth any more. They are settling. They say, "We are going to stay back." They are disobeying the purpose of God. Continuing in Genesis 11:3-4,

*"They said to each other, 'Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'"*

You now have total disobedience to the purpose of God (Gen. 11:2) and total disregard for the glory of God (Gen. 11:4). God's glory is marred in all peoples. Now you have a problem. You had God's people in God's place for God's purpose. Now you have God's people experiencing blessing and judgment and disrupted fellowship in God's place. They are banished out of the Garden of Eden now, and you have God's glory marred in all peoples. This is where the story line changes to God redeeming His people for His kingdom. I want you to see it unfold.

## **PATRIARCHS (Genesis 12-50)**

With the patriarchs we are going to see God's blessing and judgment throughout. We see God's blessing and judgment through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are wandering around in different places, but there is a promised fellowship. Not a disrupted fellowship but a promised fellowship. God has promised to be with them. He says that over and over to them. God's Glory is being made known to all peoples through His faithfulness.

So that is God's people, God's place, and God's purpose. He is showing His blessing and judgment through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There is a promised fellowship. And for the purpose, He is going to make His glory known to all people through His faithfulness. You will see that unfold.

### **People—God's Blessing and Judgment through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**

God establishes a covenant people (Israel). This is where the covenant begins with Abram (whose name is later changed by God to Abraham). And He says these words in Genesis 12:2-3: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you..." Do you get the point of God's blessing there? Over and over again He is saying to Abram, "I am going to bless you. I will make you a great nation and I will bless those that bless you." God promises to bless Abram and his descendants. It is a promise that continues in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. Over and over again He promises to bless them (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-27).

God's promise is received by grace alone, through faith alone. Let me show you this in Genesis 15:6, but we will start in 15:5 to give you a picture of the blessing, and then go to 15:6. The Bible says, *"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."*

He trusted God. That is why he was going to be the recipient. It was promised to him that he was going to receive this blessing. He believed the Lord. God's promise is received by grace alone through faith, and that leads us to the place.

### **Place—Promised Fellowship**

When God calls Abram in Genesis 12:1, He is establishing a covenant place. He says, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." He says, "I am going to give you a land." We see the place coming about here. God establishes a covenant place.

God continually gives seeds of promised fellowship in the land. He not only tells Abram, but Isaac and Jacob as well. He makes the same promises to them. Let me show them to you. Look at Genesis 26. See what God is saying to Isaac now about the land and about the place. Genesis 26:2,

*The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws."*

You see how He is saying, "I am going to give you all these lands. I promised to give you all these lands", and through that, the "place" is being emphasized?

The same thing happens to Jacob. Look at Genesis 28. Jacob stops and has a dream in Genesis 28:13-14:

*There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."*

That is a very stout promise considering Jacob was a single guy at this point. He didn't have a wife, and he was going to have all these descendants. That is good news for Jacob. He is going to have all these lands and all of his descendants are going to be spread out there. It is a promise.

Then you have Joseph. We won't go there, but do you remember Genesis 39? It doesn't appear to be a good situation. There is famine in the land and all of Jacob's sons are experiencing threat, and wondering what is going to happen to them. And it just so happens that through the evil of his brothers, Joseph is now risen to a place where he can help provide for his family. They come to him and they receive help from him. The promise of the land is continued through Joseph and he says at the end of this book, "What you had done for evil, God intended for good." You never know what God is doing. Even in pain, He brought Joseph through to His purpose so He could fulfill the promised fellowship that is still alive through Jacob's son Joseph.

### **The Purpose—God's Glory Made Known to All Peoples Through His Faithfulness**

What did He say in Genesis 12:3? He said, "*I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*" God's glory is going to be made known to all peoples through His faithfulness to Abraham, through His faithfulness to Isaac, and through His faithfulness to Jacob. He says over and over again "all

nations will know that I am good because of the way that I bless you." That is His purpose. He is calling out Israel, but that doesn't mean that He loves Israel and He hates the nations. He is calling out Israel because He wants to show His grace, His mercy, and His power to the nations through Israel. They will be the conduits of His grace to all peoples. As He shows Himself faithful to the people of Israel, the people of Israel will show the goodness and the greatness of God. That is the very purpose of Him calling out the people of Israel. This has huge ramifications for our lives. That was their very purpose in being called out. We are going to see that continue. He is going to show Himself faithful so that people will know that He is good.

Thus, God provides a sacrifice for His promise to be realized (Gen. 22). Abraham waits for a really long time. Sarah has gotten pretty old, and then it just so happens that she does have a child, the promised child, Isaac. Then God says, "Go and sacrifice him." If we study this passage, there is a great temptation for us to walk away and do a whole Bible study on how we need to be like Abraham. And yes, I do believe that Abraham is a model for faith in this picture. Don't hear me not saying that. But that is not the ultimate purpose. That is what is going on in Abraham's life.

Naturally, God is going to provide. God provides so that the line of Abraham continues. Ultimately, and even more significant than that, He is going to provide to accomplish His purpose. He is going to show His faithfulness to His people when Abraham is about to sacrifice His son. He is going to come down to provide a ram in the thicket, and Abraham is going to look at that ram and say, "My God provided for me here. God is faithful to me here." God's overarching promise is still going. His purpose is still being accomplished. Now that is the broader picture than just being like Abraham. It is a bigger picture and it affects our interpretation. So, God provides a sacrifice for His promise to be realized.

And then God promises to establish His kingdom for all nations through His people (17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:9-10). Look at Genesis 35:9. I want you to see this. When we looked at Genesis 49, remember what Jacob promised Judah about His descendants? Look at what happens here in Genesis 35:9-11,

*"After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.' So he named him Israel. And God said to him, 'I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and...'"* What will come from your body? "...kings will come from your body."

This is the entire picture of the kingdom of God, the sovereign King of the universe. He is going to use His people to make His kingdom known, to make His greatness known in all the nations. And He is going to do it through raising up kings through this line.

That is the picture we have in the patriarchs—blessing and judgment through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, promised fellowship and God's glory made known to all peoples through His faithfulness.

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