

The books of Genesis to Deuteronomy, in fact the entire Bible as we shall see, follow the unfolding of this promise. As we read the Old Testament we can read each book with these questions in mind; are the people of God a great nation? Are they being blessed? Where are God's people living? God's promise to Abraham forms the backbone of the Old Testament story.

Spend some time as a group reading Galatians 3.6-9; 15-18 and Romans 4.1-25. In light of what you have read, why is the following statement false: "In the Old Testament you are saved by Law, in the New Testament you are saved by grace"

It would be impossible to cover Genesis 12-50 in one night. You may like to as a group divide up the book, read a section over the coming week and report back next week. You may find it helpful to read one of the sections that is structured by that repeated phrase '*This is the account of ...*' Don't be surprised if you find in your reading both examples of faith and failure.

To end this study read Hebrews 11.1 – 12.3.

What picture emerges from the lives of those who trusted in God before us?

How might that colour our expectations as Christians?

Hopefully over this series we will begin to appreciate the Old Testament afresh and how Old and New Testament hold together. While we might still not know how to pronounce the names of people and places in the Old Testament, hopefully we will appreciate them and draw both encouragement and warning from their examples. After all,

<sup>13</sup> All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

**Hebrews 11:13-16**

## **BIBLE OVERVIEW**

### **Study#2 Genesis 12-50**

While at times difficult to appreciate, the Bible tells one great story. But how does it? Granted that God created the world, that he made some promises to Abraham, that he gave some stone tablets to someone called Moses and that Jesus death and resurrection are really important – what relationship do these events have to one another?

At first glance the division between Old and New Testaments appears to speak against the Bible having one coherent story. Further, the amount of books within the Bible and their different literary genres appears again to question whether the Bible can really pull off one coherent message.

Yet one person who had great confidence in the clarity and the coherence of the Scriptures was Jesus Christ. After his resurrection from the dead he said to his disciples, 'Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms' (Luke 24.44).

Several aspects of Jesus' comment deserve attention. Firstly, Jesus' reference to the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms can be seen as a shorthand way of referring to the entire Old Testament. The Law of Moses would have been understood as a reference to the first five books of the Old Testament, the reference to the Prophets would have reminded Jewish people of everything from Joshua through to Malachi and the Psalms would be readily understood as a reference to the category of 'The Writings' in the Hebrew Old Testament. A modern analogy could be the way in which we describe an entire newspaper by the shorthand 'News, Sport and Weather'.

Secondly, Jesus was convinced that the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms spoke about him. Thus a key component, if not *the* key component to the coherent message of the Bible must be Jesus Christ.

Over this series, we will seek to understand the essential story line of the Bible. Along the way we will find customs that we are not accustomed to, names by which it is no longer popular to be named and places that seem so far away.

So where do we start?

We will start at the beginning but before we do, we should get some directions.

When Jesus began preaching he said that 'the time has come...the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news' (Mark 1.15).

So as we begin to survey the entire Bible, attempting to understand how it all fits together, it will be helpful to keep in mind these words from Jesus. Jesus told people that God's kingdom was near and that this was indeed good news. In order to enter this kingdom Jesus asked people to trust God and to stop ignoring and rebelling against Him.

This week we are continuing our survey of Genesis.

The story so far has been ...

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...and it was very good' (Gen 1.1, 31). God made man and woman in his image (1.26-28) and placed them in the garden (2.8). The phrase 'image of God' distinguishes humanity from God's other creatures and signals their importance within the creation. Man and Woman had an important role to play as they 'ruled' over the creation (1.28), 'worked and cared' for the garden (2.15) and made babies! (1.28). However, man and woman were not to be independent of God but trust and obey his word.

However, the undoing of this paradise begins with the question, 'Did God really say...?' (Gen 3.1). Our familiarity with the story that follows, as well as our own sin, works against our ability to see this sinister plot and its terrible effects. The Serpent's question was in effect a challenge whether God could be trusted. The resulting curses (Gen 3.14-19), to put it simply, reveal the reality that sin before a holy God will be judged. The doubt that had been raised over whether God's character is trustworthy resulted in disobedience which was in effect a denial of God. Although God's word had created the 'heavens and the earth', it was disobeyed by Adam and Eve in the garden. Further the order of creation had been reversed. Instead of God being obeyed by Man and Woman as they rule over creation, the Serpent had found the interest of Eve who in turn offered the fruit to her silent Adam and God had been pushed out of consideration.

Creation (serpent)  
Woman  
Man  
God

The curses of God's judgment affected humanity's relationship with God, humanity's relationship with the creation and humanity's relationship with each other. Yet even within God's word of judgment, there is a glimmer of hope in the rather ambiguous statement to the serpent 'he (the offspring of the Woman) will crush your head and you will strike his heel' (3.15).

### **The downward spiral**

The seriousness of sin now being in the world is documented by the following chapters. Murder (Gen 4), death (Gen 5), wickedness and evil (Gen 6.5) leads us to the Flood (Gen 6.9-8.22). Yet even Noah and his family, the people God had chosen to repopulate the land were not immune from sin (9.18-29). The Tower of Babel records the attempt of the whole world to 'make a name for ourselves' (Gen 11.4) an attempt for greatness with no regard to God.

### **The Structure of Genesis**

Creation (1.1-2.3)  
The *account* of the heavens and the earth (2.4-4.26)  
The *account* of Adam (5.1-6.8)  
The *account* of Noah (6.9-9.29)  
The *account* of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10.1-11.9)  
The *account* of Shem (11.10-26)  
The *account* of Terah (11.27-25.11)  
The *account* of Ishmael (25.12-18)  
The *account* of Isaac (25.19-35.29)  
The *account* of Esau, the father of Edom (36.1-8; 36.9-37.1)  
The *account* of Jacob (37.2-50.26)

After the creation narrative, a repeated phrase structures Genesis. English translations will have a minor variation of the '*this is the account of...*'. You will note that while the heading mentions the father, the narrative that follows focuses on the son(s).

### **The Promise**

Read Genesis 11.27-12.9. What did God promise Abram?

Discuss this quote as a group: "The promise is extraordinary not only because of its content but also because of its context!"  
(Consider not just the immediate context, but the trajectory of Genesis 3-11)

How are the 'national' promises and 'international' promises to Abram revealed here in Genesis 12.2-3 reiterated and developed in Genesis 15 and 17 respectively?



