



Overview – What is the Bible?

A. How do we understand the Bible?

- Everyone interprets the Bible
- What factors affect how we interpret?
- What is good about wanting to interpret literally?
- What is wrong with literal interpretation?
- Our standard – the author's intent

B. Basic Beliefs of the Ancient Middle East

- Polytheism and the spiritual world
- Stories as the means of passing on wisdom
- Social structure and sources of conflict
- Connectedness to the land (for both nomads and agrarian societies)
- Clans and Tribal bonds
- Covenants

C. What is covenant?

Definition: An agreement between two or more people in which promises are made

- Two Kinds of Covenants
 - Unilateral
 - Bilateral



I. Beginnings

A. In the Beginning... (Genesis 1:1 – 2:4)

1. From nothing, creation. From chaos, order.
2. "...and it was good"
3. "Let us create..." (1:26)

B. In the Beginning, Take #2 (Gen 2:4 – 3:24)

1. The first thing that is not good and why
2. Breaking Relationship (Genesis 3)

Q: When did the break with God occur?

C. "The break" or why humans are "tweaked"

1. A break between humans and God (3:10)
2. A break between humans and themselves (3:10)
3. A break between men and women (3:12)
4. A break between humans and nature (3:17)
5. Chaos returns
6. And yet blessing (3:15 & 21)
7. The first covenant & what we learn
 - God is the all powerful creator and is separate from creation
 - God is good and merciful
 - God wants relationship with us
 - Q: Why do we have two creation stories?



II. Patriarchs, Matriarchs and Unlikely Blessings

Important points to think about as we begin to discuss Abram:

- What does Abram know about God?
- How did people think of gods in his day?
- Does it seem reasonable for Abram to travel to Ur to “the land I will show you?”

A. The Promise to Abram and Sarai (Genesis 12, 15, 17)

1. Great name
2. Be given a nation
3. Given a land
4. Bless those who bless you, curse those who curse you
5. All will be blessed through you

B. Trouble in the Promised Land (Gen 12 - 23)

1. Sarai is barren (Gen 12)
2. The land is inhabited (Gen 12)
3. There is a famine in the land (Gen 12)
4. Sarai is put into a harem (Gen 12 & 20)

Q: How must God have seemed to Abram?

5. Hagar: Sarai tries to help God’s plan. (Gen 16)
6. Sarah laughs at God (unbelief, Gen 18)
7. It takes 25 years until Isaac is born. (Gen 21)
8. Isaac must be sacrificed. (Gen 22)

Q: Is there any other father in the Bible who sacrifices his son?

C. All Kinds of New Trouble (Gen 24 - 37)

1. Isaac needs a wife (Gen 24) and has to deal with his own famine (Gen 26)
2. Isaac’s wife Rebecca is barren (25:21) and put in harem (Gen 26)
3. Isaac’s sons are at odds with each other (Jacob and Esau; Gen 25, 27-32)
4. Jacob has four wives and plays favorites with his children. Some of the sons conspire to get rid of others (Joseph).

D. Joseph and Egypt (Gen 38-50)

1. Joseph, the “little twerp” (Gen 37:1-11)



- Joseph like to tattle on his brothers
- Joseph was his father's favorite son
- Joseph boasted about his dreams

2. The Trials of Joseph (Gen 37:12-36; 39)

- His brothers sell him into slavery (Gen 37)
- Potiphar & his wife (Gen 39)
- Imprisonment (Gen 40) & Freedom
- "But the Lord was with him..." (Gen 39:3, 21)

3. Joseph's Rise to Power

- Gifts used properly – Joseph saves Egypt
- Is vengeance sweet? (Gen 42 – 49)
- The stage is set for trouble... (Exodus 1:6-8)
- You meant it for evil... (Gen 50 :20)

III. The Formation of God's People

Q: How is God doing on His promises to Abe?

A. God is Creating a People

1. God has a plan for Israel and his name is Moses
2. The Burning Bush (Exodus 3)

Aside: A better revelation! (Exodus 6)

3. The 10 plagues (Exodus 5-11)
4. Passover (Exodus 12)
5. God is more powerful than Pharaoh – The Red Sea (Exodus 14)
6. Let the grumbling begin! – Water, manna and quail (Exodus 15 -17)

B. The Covenant of the Law – Mt. Sinai

Q: What does God promise about the inhabitants of the Promised Land?

Q: The promise comes on the heels of what Jewish disaster?

Q: What reason is there to think that God can make good on this promise?

1. Bright shining faces and bright shining rear ends (Exodus 33:18-34:8, 29-35)
2. The Twelve Spies (Numbers 13 & 14)

The report:

- The spies explore the land for 40 days
- The land is flowing with milk and honey
- The inhabitants are powerful
- Ten spies give a bad report and discourage the people
- The Israelites are afraid and begin to complain against God.
- God responds “Let me slay them all! ... None will enter the land!”

C. A Reaffirmation of the Covenant

1. Forty years of Wandering (The Book of Numbers)
2. Blessing and curses – The Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 28 – 30)

Q: What do we learn about covenant from how God deal with the Egyptians? The Israelites?

Q: Is the law too hard to do? (Deut 30:11-18)



IV. The Kingdom of Israel and the Davidic Covenant

A. The Cry for a King (1 Samuel 8)

1. Samuel's Response
2. God's Response
3. The People's Response (vss. 19-22)

B. The Bad, the Good and the Mediocre – The First Three Kings of Israel

1. Saul
2. David
3. Solomon

C. Kings vs. Prophets

D. What does a prophet to do?

E. Great Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17)

1. What we know of him
2. Ahab and Jezebel
3. The Prophets of Baal and the Prophets of Asherah – The Big Showdown (1 Kings 18)
4. Who was Elisha? (2 Kings 1 - 9)

Q: Why is Elijah one of the “big two” of the OT?

F. Exile and Restoration

1. Assyrian Exile and the Northern Kingdom 722BC (2 Kings 17) – Isaiah
2. Judah spared – Good King Hezekiah (2 Kings 19) – Jeremiah
3. Babylonian Exile of the Southern Kingdom, 587 BC (2 Kings 25) - Habakkuk
4. Captivity in Babylon, 587BC – Daniel
5. Restoration – Nehemiah & Ezra
6. The Pharisees and the synagogue
7. God's promise of a New Covenant