

# Overview of the Big Story of the Bible

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**Creation** (Genesis 1-2) – God creates the world. In this we see what God intended for his creation: God’s *people* (Adam and Eve), in God’s *place* (the Garden of Eden), under his loving *rule*, experiencing his *presence*.

**The fall** (Genesis 3-6:8) – Adam and Eve sin, and humanity enters into a state of rebellion. They experience God’s curse of judgment and death. God’s original intent for creation is lost.

**The flood | Noahic Covenant** (Genesis 6:9-11:26) – God judges the world with a flood, but saves Noah and his family. God makes a covenant<sup>1</sup> with Noah and creation that, despite humanity’s rebellion, he will not ultimately destroy his creation. This anticipates that God must have a rescue mission planned for his creation.

**The patriarchs | Abrahamic Covenant** (Genesis 11:27-50:26) – Here we start to see the details of God’s rescue mission.

God chooses Abraham and makes a covenant with him. In this covenant, God promises to remake his creation: a new *people* (Abraham’s offspring, a new humanity), in a new *place* (the Promised Land, a new “Garden of Eden”), under his loving *rule*, experiencing his *presence*.

These promises are passed down to Abraham’s son, Isaac, and then Isaac’s son, Jacob (or Israel).

**The Exodus** (Exodus 1-18) – Abraham’s descendants find themselves in Egypt after God uses Jacob’s son, Joseph, to save the world from a famine.

However, after some time, a new Pharaoh takes the throne and starts oppressing and enslaving Abraham’s people. God’s promises to Abraham feel far from true. But God acts on his promises to Abraham by raising up Moses, delivering his people from Egypt, and judging their enemies.

Here we see that God’s rescue mission to remake his creation involves deliverance from things that oppose it.

**The Mosaic Covenant** (Exodus 19-Deuteronomy 34). After God delivers his people, he brings them to Mount Sinai. Here God makes a covenant with Israel, in which he gives them his law.

This covenant is a part of God’s rescue mission. In it God says to Israel, “I have plans to remake my creation, and I have chosen you to be a part of it.”

With this goal in view, this covenant promises blessings for Israel’s obedience. In it God says, “I have chosen you to be my new humanity (a new Adam, if you will). If you obey my law, you will experience the blessings of being my *people*, in my *place* (the Promised Land, a new “Garden of Eden”), under my loving *rule*, experiencing my *presence* (the tabernacle, and eventually the temple).”

“However, if you rebel like Adam did, you too will experience curses, just like Adam did. If you disobey my law, you will experience the reverse of things I’m promising to you here. It will be as if I am undoing the Exodus and my promises to Abraham. You will no longer experience the blessing of being my *people*. I will remove you from the land (my *place*). No longer will you be under my loving *rule*. You will again be enslaved and oppressed by foreigners. And I will remove my *presence* from you (my temple).”

God tells his people how to offer sacrifices to atone for their sins. These sacrifices show us that the only way we will be able to experience the blessings God’s new creation is through atonement of our sins.

**The wilderness wanderings** (Numbers) – Israel fails to enter the Promised Land due to their disbelief and disobedience. God postpones things, and Israel wanders in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation dies off. Nonetheless, God remains committed to his rescue mission and picks things up with the next generation.

**Entrance and life in the Promised Land** (Joshua, Judges, Ruth) – God is faithful to his rescue mission and his covenant promise to

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<sup>1</sup> A covenant is a binding agreement between two groups. This agreement typically involves promises and obligations.

remake creation. He brings Israel into the Promised Land (God's place).

However, because of Israel's unbelief and disobedience, God's promises are not fully fulfilled. They do not take all of the land, and some of Israel's enemies remain in it.

**Monarchy | Davidic Covenant** (1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles) – God makes a covenant with David specifying how God will lovingly *rule* over his people: He will rule over them through kings from David's lineage. Specifically, there will be an ultimate king (a "Messiah") from David's line.

However, due to their rebellion, God's people are split between the north ("Israel") and the south ("Judah") and they stray further away from the plan of God's rescue mission.

**Wisdom and songs** (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) – God supplies wisdom and songs for his people. This wisdom and these songs exemplify a restored way of relating to God and his world, reflective of God's rescue mission to remake creation.

**Exile | New Covenant** (The Prophets [Isaiah-Malachi]; Esther) – Due to their rebellion, God's people finally experience the curses of the Mosaic Covenant. They are removed from God's *place* (the land). They are captured, enslaved, and brought into foreign lands. They are no longer under his loving *rule*. Their kings are dethroned. And the temple, the special place of God's *presence*, is destroyed. They no longer experience the blessings of being God's *people*. It is as if they are back in Egypt. They, like Adam, have rebelled and now experience God's curse.

However, God's prophets tell of a New Covenant in which God promises to fulfill his rescue mission once and for all. In this New Covenant, God will deliver his people (a "New Exodus") and provide an ultimate sacrifice for their sin. Not only so, but he will give them the Holy Spirit to transform them into an obedient people.

God will bring his people back to the land (God's *place*), place them under his loving *rule* through his appointed king ("Messiah"), and

make a new temple (God's *presence*). They will be his *people* and he will be their God.

**Return from exile** (Ezra, Nehemiah) – God brings many of his people back to the land after exile. However, it's quite clear that God's rescue mission is not complete. The Old Testament closes waiting for God's final king (the "Messiah") and his New Covenant.

**The Gospel** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) – God becomes a human being – Jesus – and saves his people through his death and resurrection.

Jesus is the ultimate "Adam." Like Adam and Israel, he experiences God's judgment and curse. Except in his case, he has no sin of his own, and bears the curse of others.

Jesus' death brings about God's promised New Covenant, and God's rescue mission is accomplished. He is God's ultimate act of deliverance (a "New Exodus") and the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

**Pentecost | the Church** (Acts; the NT epistles) – Jesus gives his people the promised Holy Spirit to transform them and cure their rebellion. Gentiles (non-Jews) are now also made a part of God's people (i.e., the Church) and included in God's rescue mission.

Believers in Jesus are forgiven, transformed, and made into God's new *people*. They live under Jesus' loving *rule*, experience his *presence* through the Spirit (the ultimate "temple presence" of God), and anticipate their ultimate home in God's *place* (the new heavens and new earth, the ultimate "Garden of Eden").

The Church is sent on mission to spread the message of God's rescue mission (the "gospel") to others, so that they too might believe and be saved.

**The return of Christ | consummation** (Revelation 21-22) – Christ returns and brings God's rescue mission to completion. God's *people* are totally restored. God's loving *rule* through Jesus is uncontested. And God's *place* is now the entirety of creation, which is also entirely filled with God's *presence*.