

FIVE MINUTES SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (REVIEW & OVERVIEW)

We began with the book of **Genesis**, where we learnt of the *creation*, the *fall*, the *flood* and the *Tower of Babel* and where we come face to face with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In **Exodus**, the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and God raised up Moses to deliver them. Moses brought them to Mt. Sinai and gave them the Ten Commandments. There at Mt. Sinai, the instructions found in **Leviticus** were also given. **Numbers** tell us how the 1st generation of Israelites rebelled against God's command and refused to go into the Promised Land. The result was 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. When the 40 years were up, we have the second generation of Israelites ready to enter Canaan, but before they proceeded, Moses preached to them in the book of **Deuteronomy**, calling them to trust and obey God.

Joshua, Moses' successor, led Israel into Canaan in the book of **Joshua**. After the death of Joshua, Israel started to fall into sin and was punished by God. The God who punished them also had mercy on them, and so raised up various deliverers to rescue them from their enemies. This is what the book of **Judges** is about. It is during the time of **Judges** that the book of **Ruth** took place.

The book of **Samuel** brings us into a new era. Here we are confronted with Samuel a man of prayer, Saul a king after Israel's heart and David a king after God's own heart. From now on, we will find that kings and prophets will become very much part of the life of Israel. In **Kings**, we find the kingdom divided into northern Israel and southern Judah, we find godly kings and ungodly kings, and finally Israel went into exile in 722BC to Assyria and Judah was exiled to Babylon in 586BC.

The book of **Ezra** tells us of the return of the Jews to their homeland 70 years later. Between the first return under Zerubbabel and the second return under Ezra, the book of **Esther** took place. Then the 3rd return under Nehemiah was narrated in **Nehemiah**. **Chronicles** was written around the same time to trace the whole history, from Genesis to the return from Exile for those Jews who came back.

When we do a survey like this, we may mistakenly think that the Old Testament is a collection of many stories. The Old Testament is not a collection of stories; it is actually one story! The many stories are actually many mini-stories that make

up one big, overall story. Therefore the story of Abraham and the story of Samson and the story of David, they only make sense when we understand them in the context of the one big, overall story. And what is this one big, overall story?

It is the story of God working to redeem His people from their sins and thereby bringing glory to Himself! The story of the Old Testament has an end point and the end point is the coming and crucifixion of Jesus! At that point, the one big, overall story continues into the New Testament with the 4 Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles and then the book of Revelation. The New Testament is a continuation of the story started in the Old Testament, and the final end point is the return of Jesus on the Day of Judgment.

Therefore the Old Testament and New Testament (that together give us the entire Bible) is one story. It is the story of redemption, of how God comes to redeem His people for His own glory. God in the Old Testament, not Abraham or Moses or David; and God come in the flesh (Jesus Christ) in the New Testament, not Peter or Paul or John, is the central figure, the main character in this one big, overall story.

As God's people, whether corporately as Shalom Church or individually as believers, our story is a chapter in this one big, overall story of God. The Bible is God telling His story to us so that we can know God, know ourselves, and live in a way that is consistent with the theme of the story. I repeat: the theme of the story is the glory of God in the redemption of His people.

We often want to occupy the centre stage that is reserved for God alone. We often want to write our own stories and pursue a different theme. As a result, we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows. Every sad incident mentioned in the Old Testament is an example of this. It is only when we re-align our life-stories to go in the same direction and follow the theme of God's story that we begin to answer the chief end of our existence, which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Do take some time to ponder over what I have said above.