

WHEN YOUR CHILDREN ASK: “WHAT IS THE BIBLE ABOUT?”

Program #1030

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Joshua 4:21 establishes the principle that if our children ask us questions about God, we need to be able to answer them. What if your child asked you, “What is the Bible about?” Would you be able to give them an answer? Stay tuned, and we'll study that today.

Introduction

Welcome to *The Truth in Love*. Thank you for joining us today for our period of Bible study. I hope you have your Bible ready as we continue our series of lessons that we've entitled, “When Your Children Ask.”

There are a number of important questions that our children may ask us from time to time, and God has placed upon parents the responsibility of being able to answer those questions. Fathers are told to bring up (or raise) their children “in the training and the admonition of the Lord,” (Ephesians 6:4). We need to be prepared to do that as parents. If your child were to ask you what the Bible is about, would you be able to tell them?

Have you ever begun to read a book by opening it up in the middle? Have you tried to determine what the book is about and tried to make that part of the book fit into the overall whole of the story when you don't know the whole story? Well, it's important for us, if we're going to understand the Bible and understand the component parts of the Bible that we be able to understand and know the general story of what the

Bible is about. Then, when we study a part in the middle somewhere, it will make sense to us because we will know how it fits into the overall Bible story. If we don't understand what the Bible is about, then we set ourselves up to be guilty of teaching something that's false doctrine, or error, because we don't understand the whole context of scripture. Or we may simply just find ourselves confused over why a certain thing happened, why God said a particular thing or what a particular prophecy means. If we don't understand what the Bible story is, then a lot of the component parts of the Bible won't make sense to us. So we want to survey the Bible today.

Obviously, that's a lot of ground to cover, and it's certainly not something we'll be able to do in a lot of detail in just a half-hour show today. But we can give the basic Bible story so that hopefully, as we study the rest of the scripture on our own, we'll be able to understand these component parts because we understand the whole.

The Old Testament

As we survey the Old Testament, the Bible begins with creation. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," (Genesis 1:1). And as the crowning part of God's creation, God said in Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." God made man "in His own image," (Genesis 1:27). God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden and gave them instructions. Those instructions were that they could eat of every tree in the garden except for the fruit of one particular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God said, "In the day that you eat thereof, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17)

In Genesis chapter 3, we read of how Satan came and tempted Eve. She gave in to the temptation and ate the fruit.

Because of Eve's disobedience to God, she was separated from God. Adam was separated as well, Genesis 3:6 says, "She gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Sin separates from God. Isaiah 59:1-2 tells us that "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Fellowship with God was broken when sin entered the world. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." And death at its very heart, as far as a definition of it is concerned, means separation. Physical death is the separation of the body from the spirit (James 2:26). Spiritual death is our separation from God, and from fellowship with God. Sin causes that. So very near the beginning of the creation, sin became a reality, and

fellowship with God was separated.

The story of the rest of the Bible centers in God's desire to reestablish that fellowship with His creation, the fellowship that we messed up because of our sin. God created in His mind, in eternity, a plan that would reestablish fellowship with Him when sin became a reality. Ephesians chapters 1 and 3 talk about God's eternal purpose and His plan from all eternity to redeem mankind from the consequences of man's own sin. So, beginning in Genesis 3 when sin became an actual reality for God's human creation, God then began to enact that plan to bring about the reestablishment of fellowship with Him. That plan would culminate in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His church, which we'll get to when we look at the New Testament in just a little bit.

In Genesis 3:15, the Bible says that God would put enmity or strife between the serpent (Satan) and the woman and between the woman's seed and the serpent. The seed of woman would ultimately crush the head of the serpent. This is the first reference biblically to the ultimate coming of Christ, who would come and destroy the power of Satan. And so God begins to unfold His plan in the early chapters of Genesis.

As we read further, the sin and wickedness of man becomes so great that God decided it was time, because of His justice that must be satisfied, that the world be destroyed. And He destroyed the world and all things in it with water except for Noah and his family because "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," (Genesis 6:8). Noah and his family were saved because they were on the ark that Noah built in obedience to God's command. In Genesis 9 they came out and began to repopulate the earth.

Down through history, we come to a very special individual in Genesis 12 whose name was Abraham. To Abraham, God made a number of promises. One of those promises was that He would make of Abraham and his descendants a great nation. Ultimately, all of the nations of the world would be blessed, not only through the descendency line of Abraham in general, but by one. In particular and specifically, the promise God made to Abraham of blessing all nations would be fulfilled in a single seed, one of those descendants. We don't have to guess as to who that promised offspring, or promised seed would be, because we're told in the New Testament who it was. Galatians 3:16 tells us very clearly. After Paul quotes what God had promised to Abraham, he gives his inspired commentary when he says that the seed is Christ.

So God made a promise to Abraham when He said that He was going to bless all of the nations of the world through his seed, (Genesis 22:18), because Abraham had obeyed his voice. And that promised seed would be Christ.

The rest of the Old Testament is going to be God preserving Abraham's descendancy, and preserving Abraham's seed so that ultimately, this promised one would come into the world and bless all nations because of it. Now, to Abraham was born Isaac, the son of promise. And to Isaac was born Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. And from Jacob, or Israel, would come his sons, 12 of them, and those 12 sons would ultimately be the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel that you read about many times in the Old Testament. During the days of Jacob, one of his sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery. His brothers hated him, and they wanted to kill him, but Reuben, the oldest, kept them from doing that. Ultimately, he was sold into slavery and ended up in Egypt. Through the providence of God, Joseph was elevated to second in command in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Again as providence would have it, during the days of Joseph, while he's in Egypt helping to rule there, a famine existed in the rest of the world.

Joseph's family, his father Jacob and his brothers, came to Egypt because they knew there was food there. They moved all the way into Egypt and were kept alive there, God preserving the seed line of Abraham. They remained there until they themselves grew into a great nation of people living within the borders of Egypt. But the Bible says, as we open up the book of Exodus, that there "arose a pharaoh who knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).

Following Joseph's death, a pharaoh came up in the natural order of things that didn't have respect for Joseph or his family. Because he saw this great nation of Hebrew people that continued to multiply, he became afraid this nation might rise up against him and try to overthrow him. So he oppressed them and made them slaves. As they cried out to God for deliverance, God heard their cry, and He raised up Moses to deliver them from the slavery and bondage of Egypt. That is what the book of Exodus is about. Moses leads them out, and they cross the Red Sea and make it to Mount Sinai, where God gives them a law.

God has kept His promise to Abraham of establishing a great descendancy line and a great nation of people. A nation needs to be governed by law, and God gave them the law at Mount Sinai, including the ten commandments. Then God's people travel from Sinai, and they

make it to the brink of the promised land. The book of Leviticus records a number of those laws, and the book of Numbers speaks of how they come to the promised land. The book of Deuteronomy reiterates some of those laws.

When the people arrived at the brink of the promised land, and though they had promised loyalty to God, they did not follow through on their promise. They showed themselves to be faithless. When God said that they may enter the land and conquer it, the people (all except Joshua and Caleb) said that they couldn't take it. They thought that they were not able. They didn't have enough faith in God that God would fulfill and keep his promise. And so as punishment, God made them wander for 40 years in the wilderness while that generation died off. Once that was done, the book of Numbers records that they, this new generation of people, come again to the promised land. And they, in faith, trusting God and following the leadership of Joshua, (who took over after the death of Moses), enter the promised land. They conquer the land and drive out the wicked inhabitants of the land. God used the Hebrew people to be His rod of punishment for those Canaanites that had forsaken Him long ago. They come in conquering the land and live in it.

For a while, they're ruled by a series of judges. These were military leaders that would come in and help God's people to defeat their enemies. They were ruled by those judges like Samson, Gideon and others.

But the people ultimately cried out to have a king. They looked around at the nations that were around them, and they saw that all of the other nations had kings. They weren't ruled like Israel was ruled. And so they asked for a king. God ultimately gave them a king, and they got all of the baggage that would come with it. God warned them in the early chapters of the book of I Samuel. But they got a king, and his name was Saul. Saul was the first king over Israel. Then following the rule of Saul, David became king. And following that, David's son Solomon was king.

During this 120 year period that we sometimes refer to as the united kingdom, the kingdom was united under Saul and David and then Solomon. But after Solomon's death, the kingdom divided. The kingdom split and Solomon's son Rehoboam took over. And Israel began to sink into idolatry. When the kingdom divided, Israel was to the north and Judah was to the south. Those were the two resulting kingdoms that

came from the division.

Israel began very quickly to go into idolatry. God sent prophets to warn them that if they didn't repent of their idolatry, they'd be taken from the land. God had warned them of that way back in the law in the book of Deuteronomy. If the people became unfaithful, then God would take them out of the land. Well, the people became unfaithful. God sent prophets to warn them, prophets like Amos and Hosea, to try to tell them that they needed to repent. But they didn't listen. Ultimately, Israel, the northern kingdom, was taken off into captivity by the Assyrians, and that left Judah by itself for a while.

But Judah didn't fare much better than Israel did, because Judah, just like Israel, began to worship idols and forsake God. And God again sent prophets to them to try to tell them that they had forsaken Him and to try to warn them to come back to Him. But they didn't listen to those prophets, either. So they spent 70 years in captivity in Babylon, as God had told them through the prophet Jeremiah and others. While they were in that captivity, Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets that preached to them.

Ultimately, that captivity was over, and a remnant of people returned under the leadership of men like Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. And because of their faithfulness to God, God brought them back to the land. They once again reinhabited the land and listened to prophets like Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, who preached to them about their particular responsibilities.

Part of the work of the prophets was not just to preach to them about their own personal circumstances. That was certainly a major part of their work. But the prophets also predicted things that would happen in the future, like when Jesus would come. There are a number of the events that are recorded in the prophets that speak to the coming of Christ. Remember, God throughout this whole process of history, is preparing the people for the coming of Christ. The prophets kept that on the minds of the people. So you have prophecies like Isaiah 53 that speak about the suffering Savior that would come and take the punishment for the sins of the world. And prophecies about the kingdom, like Isaiah 2, that spoke about the establishment of the kingdom of God, which would ultimately happen in Acts 2.

So, as you read through the Old Testament, you're impressed with God's desire and His actual carrying out of the plan to save people from their sins. He prepares His people throughout all of those events in

history for the ultimate coming of the Messiah, Christ.

The New Testament

That brings us to the New Testament. When you open up the pages of the New Testament, it has been some 400 years after Malachi the prophet had finished his work. There were a lot of things that took place during that 400 year period that are important as well. We don't have the time to look at those in this lesson.

But 400 years after Malachi, John the Immerser comes on the scene preparing the way for Jesus. The gospel accounts tell of the arrival of the Messiah. Jesus comes on the scene and teaches people concerning His life and His death, and He teaches people about the coming kingdom and things they are supposed to do as citizens of it. Galatians 4:4 says that all happened “in the fullness of time.” It was in the fullness of time that God sent forth His son. “In due time, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). Jesus came when He came because that was God's plan, because God was working that out in His scheme of redemption.

The teaching that Jesus gave included, again, things about the kingdom. He told them that some of them would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). He taught about the church, which is the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). He prepared people on how to conduct themselves as citizens of the kingdom in the sermon on the mount (Matthew chapters 5–7).

But ultimately, Jesus was rejected. Though He came in fulfillment of prophecy, and though He came to try to reach people with His message, they ultimately rejected and killed Him because He did not meet their misconstrued idea of what the Messiah was supposed to be. So they put Him to death by crucifying Him on a cross. But all of that was according to God's plan all along. You see, the death of Jesus was not an unforeseen event. It was not an unforeseen accident that just happened because nobody was expecting it or was ready for it. This was God's will. It was predicted in the prophets, and spoken of centuries before, because it was all a part of God's plan.

You see how the Bible story connects itself and how it's all connected together? There's a passage from the book of Acts that shows us very well and very simply how this plan came about and how all of this story is tied together. In Acts 3:22-26, the Bible says:

‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

You see, Paul said in Acts 3 that from Samuel and all the prophets, God had spoken of “these days.” And when God said to Abraham, “in you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed,” He was speaking of these days and speaking of the work of Christ. So all of this is coming together, and all of this is a part of God's plan.

Jesus tasted of death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). He came to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He is "The lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," (John 1:29).

He's the only way to the Father (John 14:6). He's the one through whom we are saved from wrath (Romans 5:8-9).

And so God's plan has come to its completion and its fruition with the coming of Christ and the establishment of His church. You see, once Jesus had been rejected and killed and became that sacrifice for the sins of the world, He was raised from the dead and ascended back to the Father. His apostles, the ones He left behind, in keeping His mission, then established His church. In Acts 2, when Peter preached to those who had been guilty of crucifying Jesus, he told them to repent and be baptized, and they did. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized;" (Acts 2:41), "and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them." And the kingdom became a reality on the earth.

Then in the book of Acts you read how people continued to be added to the church. Souls were being saved through the work of both the apostles and the other inspired men who preached and who taught the gospel. You can read accounts of conversion where people came to Christ and accepted and embraced the forgiveness of their sins through

His sacrifice and through their obedience to the gospel.

The rest of the New Testament (Romans through Jude) are the epistles, or letters, written to either individual Christians or groups of Christians in congregations of the church. These letters instruct them on how to live the Christian life, and give them information on what they need to do to be continually pleasing to God. The Bible then closes with the book of Revelation, a book of prophecy, where many things are spoken of prophetically about what will happen at the end of time and the great judgment day that will one day be upon all of us (Revelation 20). And so the Bible is God's plan. It is the story of God's unfolding plan for the salvation of mankind.

Overview

Remember where we started. We started in the book of Genesis with God's creation. And then sin becomes a reality. Separation from God, the severing of fellowship with God, is a result of that sin. But because of Jesus Christ, and through His sacrifice and His death, we are no longer separated from God. God, in the fullness of time, ultimately brought Jesus into the world through the descendancy of Abraham, and born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). Jesus lived, and taught, and died for the sins of the world. He was raised from the dead for our justification (Romans 4:25), ascended back to the Father, and established His church, and now we are able to be a part of that church and be a part of the saved in preparation for the coming of Christ again.

Someone has well summarized the Bible by saying that the Old Testament taught us that Jesus Christ is coming. The gospel accounts in the first part of the New Testament tell us that Jesus Christ came. And following His resurrection and through the rest of the New Testament, the message is that Jesus is coming again. And indeed, He is. "He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7). He will come in like manner as the apostles saw Him go (Acts 1:11).

Are you ready for that day? Jesus has made it possible for you to be saved. You must trust Him, put your faith in Him, and believe that He is exactly who He claimed to be, the Son of God (John 8:24). If you'll believe in Him and then repent of your sins, as we read in Acts 17:30, "God commands all men everywhere to repent." You need to do that. You need to turn from your sin and then be willing to confess your faith in Christ. Paul referred to that as the good confession (I Timothy 6:12).

And following that, you need to be willing to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins just like those folks did in Acts 2, who gladly received the word.

Will you gladly receive the word and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sin? If you'll do that, the Bible is very clear that the blood of Jesus Christ will wash your sins away (Revelation 1:5), and the Lord himself will add you, not to some human organization, but to His church, (Acts 2:41-47). If you haven't done that, you need to do that. And if we can help you in that way, to help you to obey the gospel, then please contact us.

We also want to offer you a free copy of today's lesson, whether an audiocassette or a CD or a DVD. If you'll contact us, we'll be glad to send that to you free of charge. Our address is P.O. Box 865, Hurst, Texas, 76053. Our email address is requests@thetruthinlove.com. And our website is www.thetruthinlove.com. Please contact us, and we'll be glad to send you a copy of today's lesson absolutely free. Thank you again for joining us today. I look forward to seeing you again next time, as we continue to study God's word here on *The Truth in Love*.

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