

Old Testament Overview (Part 1)

I. Act 1: Creation (Genesis 1-2)

- God is the Great King who created heaven & the physical universe out of nothing (Gen. 1:1).
- The Bible describes not the time of creation (when, how long) or the mechanisms of creation (how) but the fact and order of creation as God's work to create a suitable dwelling place for his relationship with humanity and a pattern for humanity to follow (work & rest/celebration).
- Human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation as the only creatures made in his image (Gen. 1:26-27).
- God establishes his kingdom in creation in a **covenant**: a personal, structured relationship of life and love consisting of blessings and corresponding obligations/roles.
- **Covenant** of creation
 - Presence & worship: God gave a garden sanctuary to meet with God in word and sacrament (Tree of Life and Tree of Knowing Good & Evil).
 - People & community: God gave the gift and responsibility of marriage & human community.
 - Place & work/culture: God made humans to work and rule the rest of creation under God's authority and according to his pattern of creating and cultivating the world (Gen. 1:26, 28; 2:15).

II. Act 2: Fall & Redemption Begun (Genesis 3-11)

- Humanity sinned by acting on Satan's temptation through the serpent and turning away from God in rebellion. They sought wisdom, happiness, and life apart from God on their own authority, their own will, their own time, and their own strategy.
- Human sin introduced massive corruption into humanity's four types of relationships with God, self, others, and the physical world.
- God promised redemption through a singular descendant of Eve who would crush Satan and sin (Gen. 3:15), and he continued to pursue fallen humanity to restore them to a reconciled relationship with him through sacrifice. Humanity divided into lines of people who accepted God's redemption and sought life with him and those who rejected God (Abel vs. Cain; Gen. 4:26).
- Repeated pattern of sin's effects
 - Rebellion (Adam & Eve)
 - Decline (Cain, Lamech)
 - Judgment (Flood)
 - New **covenant** (Noah)
 - Rebellion (Noah's son Ham)
 - Decline
 - Judgment (Tower of Babel)
 - New **covenant** (Abraham)

III. Act 3, Scene 1: Israel's Founders Receive Promises of a Kingdom

- God called Abraham and Sarah out of the city of Ur in Sumeria into **covenant** with him and made several long-term promises about how he would bless all peoples of the world through them (Gen. 12:1-3).
 - Presence & worship: God would be with them to bless them and give them a great name. They built altars wherever they live and worship God there through prayer and sacrifice.
 - People & community: A great nation would descend from them. The physical sign of male circumcision became a sacramental symbol of household covenant membership.
 - Place & work: God would give Abraham's nation the land of Canaan (Israel) and kings would descend from them.
- Four generations lived in Canaan as sojourners and resident aliens (Gen. 12-36), waiting for God to fulfill his promises with a mixture of faithfulness and sin/failure.
 - Abraham & Sarah (sons Ishmael [by Hagar the servant] & Isaac)
 - Isaac & Rebekah (sons Esau & Jacob)
 - Jacob, Leah, & Rachel (12 sons, founders of Israel's 12 tribes)
- Jacob's sons sold their brother Joseph to Egypt out of jealousy over Jacob's favoritism, and Joseph became the highest governor in Egypt under the Pharaoh and delivered the empire and his family from famine (Gen. 37-50).
- Jacob moved his household to Egypt where they lived and multiplied for four centuries, eventually becoming slaves of Egypt and largely forgetting their God.
 - Rebellion (Israel forgot the Lord and followed other gods: Josh. 24:14, Ezek. 20:5-8)
 - Decline via oppression by a Pharaoh who did not know or fear Israel's God
 - Judgment (10 Plagues)
 - Exodus & New **covenant** (Moses)

IV. Act 3, Scene 2: Israel's People Become a Nation

- God acted upon his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 2:24) by calling Moses, a Hebrew who had grown up in Pharaoh's household, to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt (exodus). Pharaoh resisted, and God judged Egypt and its gods with plagues. God finally led Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground to Mt. Sinai in the Arabian wilderness.
- God made a **covenant** with Israel at Mt. Sinai that formed Israel into a "holy nation" and a "kingdom of priests" (Exod. 19:6).
 - Presence & worship: God directed the making of a lavish Tabernacle tent as a sanctuary for worship, a special priesthood in the line of Aaron (Moses' brother) as pastors to lead worship, written word of revelation (Torah) through Moses for instruction, and a liturgy of sacrifices and calendar of festivals for renewing the covenant through worship.
 - People & community: God gave the 10 Commandments and many other laws (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) to show how their entire society should live to reflect God's goodness, justice, and mercy at every level of the culture.
- God led Israel through the wilderness to the promised land of Canaan, and Israel refused to enter out of fear of the violent peoples of Canaan (Num. 13-14). As a consequence for their lack of trust, God led them back into the wilderness for 40 years until that generation died.