

# Fly Through The Bible

## Part One: Five People

### ***Introduction***

When you fly into a city, you can look out the window and have a birds-eye view of the buildings, the landmarks, and perhaps a river or a shoreline. Seeing a city from above helps you to get a feel for what's there, before you explore the city on the ground.

The journey we are about to take will be a bit like this, a brief, high-altitude introduction to the Bible's story.

Our flight through the Bible story is in 3 parts.

- In the OT we will meet five people
- In the Gospel we will look at five events in the life of Jesus
- and in the NT letters five gifts that God gives to every believer.

In this first session, we are going to look at the Old Testament

- If you get to know Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and Ezra,
- you will have a high level overview of the Old Testament story

## **1. Adam**

***In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)***

God made the sun, the moon, and the stars.

- He made the plants, the fish, the birds, and the animals.
- But God's masterpiece was still to come:

***Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26)***

Adam was made in the image of God, and what was true of him is true of you.

- You are made in the image of God,
- and that gives your life, unique dignity and worth.

God filled Adam's life with good gifts.

- He planted a garden and gave it to Adam as his home (Genesis 2:8).
- He gave Adam the work of naming the animals (Genesis 2:19),
- He created Eve and "brought her to the man," (Genesis 2:22).

Home, work, and marriage are good gifts from God.

- But God's greatest gift was the gift of Himself.

God appeared in the garden in a visible form because He wanted Adam and Eve to know Him (Genesis 3:8).

- God wants us to Him,
- not only as our Creator, but also as our friend.

### ***A plunge to disaster***

God gave Adam and Eve a single command:

***“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)***

Adam and Eve already knew about good,

- and God wanted to protect them from evil.
- So this command was a wonderful expression of God's love.

But Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God.

- They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
- and in that act of disobedience, they got the knowledge of evil.
- We have all lived with it ever since.

This first act of disobedience, which the Bible calls *sin*, led to a great catastrophe.

***He [God] drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:24)***

Driven from the garden, Adam and Eve found themselves in a very different world.

- Pain, conflict, frustration, and death were woven into their experience.
- They were excluded from paradise, and there was no way back.
- But God gave them hope, first through a curse, and then through a promise.

God cursed the serpent.

- “Cursed are you . . .” (Genesis 3:14).
- In pronouncing this curse, God was consigning evil to destruction.
- Evil will not stand. It will be destroyed.

Then God turned to Adam and said, “Cursed . . .”

- Adam must have held his breath.
- God had cursed the serpent, and now it seemed He was about to curse Adam too.
- But instead of saying to Adam, “Cursed are you,” God said, “Cursed is the ground because of you” (Genesis 3:17).

What did the ground do wrong?

The cursing of the ground tells us something very wonderful about God.

- He will always deal with sin and destroy it.
- But God can deflect His judgment away from us,
- creating room for us to be reconciled to Him.

### ***The promise of a Deliverer***

Then God promised that a Deliverer would come.

He said to the serpent:

***“I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
He shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)***

The rest of the Old Testament is all about this Deliverer.

- It tells us what we need to know to discover who He is,
- what He has done, and how we can share in the blessing He brings.

### **Transition**

As the human family grew, evil and violence increased. (Genesis 6:5).

- God restrained evil by sending a flood, and by confusing human language.
- But then God stepped into human history
- and revealed Himself to a man called Abraham.

## **2. Abraham**

Abraham was born about 2,000 years before Jesus.

- He grew up in Mesopotamia, in modern day Iraq.

God appeared to Abraham and gave him a marvelous promise.

***“I will bless you ...  
and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:2, 3)***

This promise to Abraham is a promise for us and for every member of the human family.

- The Old Testament focuses on the line of Abraham, not because the rest of the world doesn't matter,
- but because the rest of the world *does* matter,
- and God's plan is to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham.

### **A Great Sacrifice**

God's promise to bless all people would be fulfilled at an unimaginable cost,

- and that cost is illustrated by the harrowing story
- of Abraham and his son Isaac.

**He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” (Genesis 22:2)**

If you have seen pictures of a small child lying on an altar, forget that picture.

- Isaac was in the prime of his life, and
- he could easily have overpowered Abraham, if he had wanted to.
- But Isaac didn't do that.

Isaac was willing to lay down his life.

- So, what you have here is a father willing to give up his son,
- and a son who is willing to give himself.
- And they were *one* in this, so that blessing would come to the world.

Abraham and Isaac seem to have understood that a great sacrifice would have to be made if God's blessing was to reach all the families of the earth.

- But God would not allow Abraham to give up his son.
- God provided the sacrifice, (Genesis 22:13).
- A ram caught by its horns in a thicket was the *substitute* for Isaac.

We are meant to respond to this story in two ways:

First, I hope you will feel a sense of recoiling in horror at the thought of anyone sacrificing his own son.

- That is what you are meant to feel.

Second, I hope you will gaze in wonder at the reality to which this story points.

- God did what He would not allow Abraham to do.
- He gave His Son, and His Son gave Himself.
- God's promise to bring blessing to all the families of the earth came at the unimaginable cost of God the Father giving His Son and God the Son giving Himself.

### ***Transition***

Abraham's son, Isaac, became the father of Jacob, who had twelve sons.

- Jacob's family moved to Egypt where they found food in a time of famine,
- and their descendants remained there for 400 years.

The family God had promised to bless multiplied,

- but as their numbers grew, they were oppressed.
- They cried out to God and He answered their prayer by sending Moses.

### 3. Moses

God commissioned Moses to bring His people out of Egypt and lead them into the land He had promised (Genesis 12:7).

- Abraham's descendants had become Pharaoh's workforce, so at first he refused to let them leave.
- But after a series of plagues that God sent through Moses,
- Pharaoh relented and let God's people go (Exodus 12:31).

But, then Pharaoh changed his mind again and sent his armies after them.

When the people came to the Red Sea, it seemed that they were trapped.

- But God made a path for them through the sea (Exodus 14:21-22).
- Then, when the pursuing army tried to cross,
- God caused the wall of water to collapse over them.

God's people knew that they had been saved from certain destruction

- by a miracle that only God Himself could have performed.

#### ***The Ten Commandments***

After this great deliverance, Moses led God's people to Mount Sinai where God gave them the Ten Commandments.

1. *You shall have no other gods before me.*
2. *You shall not make for yourself a carved image.*
3. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.*
4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
5. *Honor your father and your mother.*
6. *You shall not murder.*
7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
8. *You shall not steal.*
9. *You shall not bear false witness.*
10. *You shall not covet. (See Exodus 20:1-17)*

These commandments are a direct reflection of the character of God, and God calls His people to live a life that reflects who He is.

- Why should you not commit adultery? Because God is faithful.
- Why should you not steal? Because God can be trusted.
- Why should you not lie? Because God's Word is truth.

The Ten Commandments also spell out what it means to love.

- The first four commands tell us what it looks like to love God.
- Loving God involves putting Him first, embracing Him as He is, honoring His name, and giving Him time.

The last six commands tell us what it looks like to love our neighbor.

- Loving others involves giving honor where honor is due,
- acting in the best interest of others, being faithful, giving rather than taking,
- telling the truth, and rejoicing in what God has given to others.

A world where these commands are always fulfilled would be supremely good.

- But while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments at the top of the mountain,
- God's people were breaking them at the bottom of the mountain.

Even these people, who God had so richly blessed, turned away from Him.

- Like them, we have sinned against God and broken His commandments.
- We have the knowledge of evil in us and around us.
- We are alienated from God and excluded from paradise.

### ***Transition***

After Moses died, God brought His people into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua.

What followed was a long period of chaos in which God's people kept turning away from Him.

Other nations had a settled form of leadership, and God's people wanted to have a king.

- The first king, Saul, was a big disappointment.
- God had another king in mind who would reflect His own heart,
- and his name was David.

## **4. David**

David got people's attention when they heard the story of his great victory over Goliath.

- David must have looked pitifully small as he faced up to this giant of a man.
- But Goliath had defied God and God was with David.
- David put a stone in his sling, and struck Goliath on the forehead (1 Samuel 17:49)

David was a great king.

- Under his leadership, the twelve tribes of Israel were united as one people.
- Enemies who had oppressed the people of God were pushed back and God's people prospered.
- With strong defense, a thriving economy, and stable leadership, God's people had never had it so good.

### ***We need a better king***

But David abused his power and committed adultery with a woman called Bathsheba.

- Then, he put her husband Uriah in the thick of a battle
- ensuring that his life would be lost.

David covered up what he had done,

- but God sent the prophet, Nathan,
- to confront David over his secret sin.

Nathan told David a story about a rich man who stole a lamb from a poor man.

- David was outraged when he heard this story.
- Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man!” (v. 7).
- And David said, “I have sinned against the LORD” (v. 13).

Despite all his achievements,

- David’s story points us to our need for a better king.

### ***God gave David a promise***

David wanted to build a temple to honor God,

- but God had other plans
- and He announced them in a stunning promise.

***“I will raise up your offspring after you . . .  
and I will establish his kingdom.***

***He shall build a house for my name,  
and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.***

***I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.” (2 Samuel 7:12–14)***

The Bible story is about how God’s blessing will come to all people.

- God had already promised that His blessing would come through a descendant of Abraham.
- Now, a thousand years later, God revealed that it would come through a king in the line of David.

When we come to the New Testament, the very first verse says,

***The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)***

Jesus is the One in whom God’s promises to Abraham and to David are fulfilled.

He is the One in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed.

- He is the King who will reign forever.
- He was born into the line of David,
- but God is His Father and He is God’s Son.

### **Transition**

After the time of David, God's people turned to other gods, and the kingdom divided in two. In time, the northern kingdom collapsed, and its people were scattered. Two tribes continued in the south. Their kings led the people to worship other gods and this idolatry was so offensive to God that He gave them into the hands of His enemies. Jerusalem was destroyed and those who survived were taken into exile.

Years later, some of God's people returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of a man named Ezra.

## **5. Ezra**

70 years after God's people were taken into exile,

- a group of about 50,000 people returned to Jerusalem
- and began to rebuild the city.
- And eighty years after that, a priest by the name of Ezra led a second group of exiles back to Jerusalem.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he found that God's people had adopted the detestable, idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations (Ezra 9:1–4).

- But God used Ezra to lead a great restoration among His people (Ezra 7:9–10).

Ezra's strategy for restoring God's people was to open God's Word (Nehemiah 8:2). He was supported in this by the Levites:

***They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly,  
and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.  
(Nehemiah 8:8)***

When the people heard God's Word,

- They saw how far they were from fulfilling God's commands,
- so their first response was to weep (Nehemiah 8:9).

But Ezra said,

***“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength”  
(Nehemiah 8:10).***

When we open the Bible, God will show us our sins and our failures.

- But God will not leave us there.
- When you open the Bible, you will discover the grace and mercy of God,
- and the joy of what you discover will give you strength.

### **Still waiting**

We've met five people from the Old Testament

- Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and Ezra,

Throughout the years of the Old Testament, God raised up,

- prophets who spoke His Word,
- priests who offered prayers and sacrifices, and
- kings who led God's people in triumph.

But despite all their efforts, God's people kept turning away from Him.

In the last book of the Old Testament, God says,

***“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:7)***

God's people kept turning away,  
but God had promised that a deliverer would come.

***Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation is he. (Zechariah 9:9)***

And at the end of the Old Testament, God's people were still waiting.

God's promise was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born.

- So why do we need the Old Testament?

The Old Testament explains why we need Jesus.

- We have the knowledge of evil,
- We have broken God commands
- We are excluded from Paradise.

We need the Deliverer God has promised.

- We need the Savior who will turn out hearts back to God
- We need the substitute who will die in our place.
- We need the king who will triumph over our enemies.

***Break For Discussion***

**Word Count**

- **2826 words**
- And 153 words introduction.
- (Reduced from 3617)

## Intro 153

- Adam 647
- Abraham 490
- Moses 537
- David 501
- Ezra 447