



God's story in
60 snapshots

bible⁶⁰

Andy Peck

CWR

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I have benefited much from my friend and colleague Phil Greenslade's understanding of the Bible's narrative. His work on 'God's story' reflected in his book *A Passion for God's Story* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), and courses by that name at CWR have led many into a fuller understanding of what the Bible is really about. I am grateful for Phil's many insights that have refreshed and challenged my perspectives, and commend his courses to you – visit www.cwr.org.uk/training for further details.

Introduction

You are pressed for time and realise that your listener is struggling to stay interested. So you might say, 'To cut a long story short ...' and provide a summary of the main points you want to make. There is always more that could be told of any story, but isolating the major points is a vital skill, especially if you want to keep your friends.

This book aims to cut the long story of the Bible into a shorter one. It looks at the key turning points and parts of the narrative that are critical for a grasp of the story that God is telling in the Bible.

It is my hope that an understanding of the major turning points will compel you to return to the books of the Bible at another time, keen to more easily enjoy their treasure once the overall thrust of Scripture is understood. So the readings in this book must not be seen as a substitute for reading the whole of the books. I am keenly aware of the danger of taking texts out of their overall context. My aim is that the notes accompanying the reading of the Bible passages show how the selected chapter or section fits into the overall story.

My selection of passages is made largely with the narrative of Scripture in mind. In places I have chosen passages according to their believed chronological order, rather than their order in a typical Bible. I have included some sections that demonstrate the book that they are part of, even if narrative was not moved forward by them. It would have seemed odd, for example, not to have included something from Psalms and Proverbs. As such, some important major themes of Scripture are covered along the way, but not in detail. Themes such as the character of God, redemption, sacrifice or the kingdom of God, could all be usefully followed up in more detail than is possible here.

'JESUS CENTRAL'

I have chosen thirty readings from the Old Testament part of the Bible and thirty from the New, even though the Old has far more books and covers a longer period of biblical history. The Old Testament covers over 2,000 years compared to

the less than 100 years in the New, but I opted for this ratio because of the centrality of an understanding of Jesus in the New Testament to grasping what the Bible is about. Scripture sees the coming of 'God, the Son', Jesus Christ, to earth as central to an understanding. Jesus Himself said to the religious leaders of His day, 'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life' (John 5:39–40).

After His resurrection, Jesus spoke to two of His disciples as they travelled to Emmaus, a town near Jerusalem. Not recognising Him, the disciples were despondent because they thought Jesus was still dead. Jesus said to them, "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself' (Luke 24:26–27).

Later the apostle Paul would write, 'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God' (2 Corinthians 1:20).

God had determined to bless the world and reverse the curse of sin pronounced in the Garden of Eden. He chose to do so by His election of a people who would be the model community showing the world what He is like. But their failure to display His goodness is a permanent reminder to us of human failure and the need for One to come who was fully man and fully God, to deal finally with the problem of human sin and realise the potential that image bearers can have as they relate to their Maker.

God's dealings with humans in the Old Testament were always preliminary to the coming of Jesus in the New Testament. In the light of the events of the New, chiefly the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we can make sense of what God was doing.

Jesus, through a new agreement with humankind (known as the new covenant), promises the wonderful blessing of His Holy Spirit, who comes to live in His followers, empowering them to live each day with Him at the heart of their lives.

Hence the Bible is written not to you but *for you*. As the apostle Paul puts it, 'For everything that was written in the

past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope' (Romans 15:4).

In another of his letters (known as epistles) he writes, 'These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come' (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Thus we interpret the Old Testament in the light of the coming of Jesus and as those who have been brought into a new covenant (relationship) with God. It is as if the train journey from the Old Testament has today to go through the hub that is 'Jesus Central'. You cannot expect to make sense of the Old if you don't make that journey. I have tried to demonstrate this in the comments made in the Old Testament section, and hope it will save you from misunderstanding which can come if you use a different route.

So, if you are a believer in Jesus, these are your books. This is your family tree. If you are not yet a believer in Jesus, I hope these readings will stir your heart to discover the wonder of God for yourself and an increasing hunger to know Him better.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

- Aim to set aside fifteen minutes a day to read the Bible passage for the day and the comments. Please read the Bible first; the comments assume that you have read the text. Some days will include a longer reading than others.
- Read the text prayerfully. The Holy Spirit delights to speak as we read the Word He inspired. You will certainly benefit from what He says, before reading the comments.
- Make notes as you go. You will benefit more if you write and/or underline as well as read. Make the book your own. If you have questions, write them down. They may be answered in later readings. If they aren't, they will give you some fun exploration at the end of the sixty days.
- Use the questions at the end of the day to prompt your thoughts and prayers. If you are reading the book with others, the questions will provide a discussion starter.

OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE

		2000 BC		1500		
EDEN	EXIT	ELECTION	EGYPT 400 YEARS	EXODUS	ENTERING	
Day01 Day02	Day03 Day04	Day05		Day06 Day07 Day08	Day09 Day10 Day11	
Creation	Fall	Abraham		Law given	Canaan	

NEW TESTAMENT TIMELINE

6 BC to AD 30-33	AD 33		35	
EMMANUEL	EASTER	ECCLESIA	EVANGELION	
Day31-39	Days40-45	Day46	Day47, Day56	
Gospels describe Jesus' life	The final week Trial, Crucifixion, Resurrection 40 days of appearing Ascension	Coming of the Spirit at Pentecost	Gospel to Gentiles Paul's conversion	

Approximate dates/time period for each day's reading

1000			500			400 Inter-testamental period 400 YEARS
EMPIRE	EMPIRE	EMPIRE DIVIDED	EXILE			EXPECTATION
			PRE-EXILE	EXILE	POST-EXILE	
Day12 Day13 Day14 Day15	Day16 Day17 Day18 Day19	Day20	Day21 Day22 Day23	Day24 Day25 Day26 Day27	Day28 Day29 Day30	
David	Temple	Decline	Prophets Assyrian Exile (722 BC)	Prophets Babylon (586 BC)	Prophets	

Approximate dates/time period for each day's reading

50	55	60	70	85
			ESCHATOLOGY	
Day48–50	Day51–53	Day54–55, Day57		Day58–60
Jerusalem Council	Nero's persecution of the Church	Paul imprisoned in Rome	Fall of Jerusalem Execution of Peter and Paul Gospels written?	John exiled on Patmos

Introduction to the Old Testament

This Testament covers vastly more time than the New. It starts at the beginning of creation – the date is not specified in the text – through to the time of Abraham, who is believed to have lived around 2000–1850 BC, and then via the Exodus (dated at 1500 or 1350 BC), through King David (1000 BC) to the Assyrian Exile (722 BC) and Babylonian Exile (586 BC). The canon of the Old Testament concludes around 400 BC, leaving a gap of some 400 years before the start of the New Testament era.

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The events of the Old Testament centre on the Ancient Near East, including stories from Babylon in the east, Egypt to the west and the majority focused on the land of Canaan at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea, the confluence of many of the world's major trade routes in the day.

In the selected passages we will focus upon, the unfolding story of God's purposes shows His choice to overturn the folly of Adam and Eve's rejection of Him, by a programme of restoration that will centre on His promises to one man, Abram (later Abraham). God promises that through him and his descendants all peoples on earth can know a special relationship