

# HISTORY OF ISRAEL

## FROM EXODUS TO THE SILENT YEARS

### REDEPTIVE HISTORY

The history of the nation of Israel is part of God's eternal plan to redeem mankind from its fall into sin. From the time God pronounced judgment in the Garden of Eden, there was a promise of a Seed who would eventually come to reverse the effects of sin. That promise of a Seed was passed to Abraham and then on to Isaac and then to Jacob (Israel). Israel's sons were the foundation of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and through the line of Judah, the Seed—Messiah—was to come. The events of the Old Testament point to the future in two senses. First, the Messiah was coming and would take away the sins of the people. The sacrifices commanded by God through Moses were only a temporary covering for sins and

pointed them forward to the One who would come to take the penalty for their sins. Second, God would establish his eternal kingdom. As the Israelites lived in the Promised Land, they rejected God as their king and asked for a human king. All of the human kings fell far short of God's standard and regularly led the people astray. The prophets continued to remind the Israelites to heed God's words and that the King of kings was coming. Through cycles of judgment and restoration, God pointed the people forward to when Messiah would come and establish his eternal kingdom. All of history is part of God's plan to redeem sinners through the Savior—Jesus Christ.

### BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

The historical narrative in the Old Testament provides accounts of the various leaders, prophets, kings, and ordinary people whom God used to bring about his plans. While many other historical documents from the same period tend to exalt the exploits of kings and diminish their shortcomings, the Bible is different. We don't just read about the good that Gideon, Samson, David, and Josiah did, but their sins and failures are also revealed to us. Gideon openly doubted and tested God, but God assured him and used him to bring freedom to Israel. David committed adultery and murder, and the grave consequences for those sins are

recorded for us. But the message of repentance and forgiveness shines through as well as how God works through broken vessels. These same features are found in the poetic and wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The laments of David and Asaph in the psalms, and the hard lessons learned by Solomon's godless living, help us to see that these people faced the same struggles that we do. But their laments always turned back to trust in God and the deliverance that would come through the Messiah. As we read this history, we too can find hope in the faithfulness of God even when we are faithless.

### A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

In the promise given to Abraham, God gave his descendants the land of Canaan to dwell in. As God established the nation of Israel, he set them apart for service to himself. They were to worship him alone and not the idols of the surrounding peoples. Since they worshipped the one true God alone, they were unique. As God demonstrated his power, the nations heard of his mighty deeds, and many people turned to him in faith—Ruth, Naaman, and Rahab are examples. As Gentiles identified with the Jews, many became part of the nation and there were more people to worship God. God used his chosen nation to spread the message of the coming Messiah.

In Acts 2, we read of believers from around the world who had assembled in Jerusalem to worship God. Peter declared to them that the Messiah had come. Jesus, the one who was crucified for their sins, was the fulfillment of God's plan to reconcile Israel and the Gentiles to himself (Ephesians 2–3). Now, it is Jesus Christ, "the light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:6) and the "Light which gives light to every man" (John 1:9), who offers salvation from sin through his sacrifice upon the Cross. Every Christian has the joy of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to those from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation to the glory of God!

