

Paradise Lost and Restored: What is the Bible?

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There came a point, when God created time and history. And the Bible contains our history, the history of mankind, why God created us, what He wanted for us, how it all went wrong, and what God did to fix it: God creates the heavens and earth. He then makes man, the first two were Adam and Eve. They lived a blissful existence with God, each other, and nature around them. But then one day, God's enemy—the inventor of lies—Satan, convinced Eve to believe that God was not who He said He was. She and Adam both accepted this lie, disobeyed God, and plunged the entire human race, along with all of creation, into death and destruction.

Having ruined His entire creation, you'd think that God would crush Adam and Eve like bugs. But He did just the opposite: He ran to their aid and promised that one day He would send His only Son, the Seed, the Redeemer, to sacrifice His life in order to undo the horrible damage that they had caused. This began a long journey. Each generation kept looking for God's promised Redeemer, the Seed: Eve thought she'd given birth to him when she bore Cain, Genesis 4:1. Noah's father thought that perhaps Noah was that Redeemer, Genesis 5:29. But God's Son had not yet been born. Eventually things got so bad with mankind that God decides to wipe out the entire human race with a Flood, but He spared Noah and his family, Genesis 6–10. The Flood now over, mankind gets a new start. But soon man is at it again, disobeying God. So God scatters them and confuses their language, creating hundreds of languages, Genesis 11.

God next decides to bring His Son through one man; his name is Abram. He makes an eternal covenant with him that includes making him a great nation (Israel), giving him and his descendants the Promise Land, and that through his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16. Now renamed, Abraham and his wife Sarah have a hard time believing God because when God makes the promise of a son, they are way too old to have children, Genesis 18:1–15. But Abraham and Sarah end up trusting God and they have a son named Isaac and God repeats the same promise to him, that through his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, Genesis 26:4. Eventually Isaac has Jacob and God repeats the promise about the Seed to Jacob, Genesis 28:14. Jacob then has 12 sons, one of them is Judah, and from them God creates the nation of Israel. Israel goes through many trials and tribulations, sometimes they obey God, sometimes not. So over the centuries God punishes them through the hand of several nations: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and finally Rome; He also removes them from their Promise Land. But God promises Israel that through the line of Judah would come His Son, the Seed, the Redeemer, Genesis 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Micah 5:2, who would one day save them and the world.

He is eventually born from a virgin through the power of God's Spirit and God gives Him the name Jesus, i.e., Savior, Matthew 1:18–25. But He is not what the people were expecting. They were expecting a Conqueror, instead all they see is a carpenter's son. Thus, He didn't look the part, but there was more to this carpenter's son than His appearance showed. He began to do things that only God could do, speak the way only God could speak because He was God in the flesh. In essence, Jesus began to reveal that He was the Seed promised by God who would undo the death and destruction that entered God's creation through Satan's lie. The Savior of Israel and the world was here. Thus, everywhere Jesus went, He showed people that they no longer had to live under the power of demons, sickness, illness, and disease. At every turn, Jesus, the King of all kings, freed the people, Mark 1:25–26, 34, 41–42; 2:5–12; 3:1–11; 7:33–35; 10:49–52. And all were welcome in His Kingdom, Mark 2:15, in fact, Jesus came especially for those shunned by society, Mark 2:17.

The King showed the people what it truly meant to be part of God's family: you had the right to hear the King's voice, Mark 4:11, 34. You valued human life more than possessions, Mark 5:13–15. You watched not just your words and actions but your motives, Mark 7:14–23. Instead of doubting the King's power, you embraced it and used it powerfully, Mark 5:25–29; 6:13; 7:24–30. Instead of questioning the King, you embraced His freedom and deliverance, Mark 11:18. And you didn't earn your way into the King's family; you became part of it by simply trusting in the King's salvation, Mark 7:24–30; 16:15–16. And even though the King's own disciples still had traces of Satan's kingdom in them, the King was patient, merciful, and compassionate. He kept teaching and guiding them into the way of His Kingdom, Mark 4:34; 5:37; 6:31; 8:13–21; 9:2, 11–13, 14–29, 33–35, 38–41; 10:35–45; 11:12–14, 20–24. And even when the King knew that they would abandon Him, He encouraged them, Mark 14:27–28.

Finally, as God promised, the King had to die in order to permanently undo Satan's death and destruction...so He was crucified. But Jesus didn't stay dead; He was raised from the dead. And when His disciples were told that He was alive, they refused to believe. But the King is so patient with us that He reached out to them and still offered them His power, Mark 16:14–18, 20. And before leaving earth, the King gave His disciples instructions to proclaim His salvation to everyone on earth so that they too could be saved and live life in His Kingdom, Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:4–8. His disciples obeyed and took the Goodnews of the King all over this world and many were saved and began to live life through the King's Spirit (Rom 8:9–13) in His Kingdom, Acts–Revelation.

One day the King will return as He promised, John 14:1–3. He will fulfill His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Jewish people. They will be a great nation, possess their Promise Land, and through their Messiah, the promised Seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The King will finally remove Satan and death and establish His Kingdom forever, Revelation 20–22.

God's story began with a beautiful relationship between God and man and between man and each other. This was horribly damaged. But as God promised, He's brought back what was taken from Him and us in the Garden. Now we all have an opportunity to walk with our Creator as it was in the beginning, to have an intimate relationship with Him and with each other. Now we can seek each other's welfare instead of our own. Jesus has brought this harmony back into our lives....and it's available to anyone who simply believes in Him, John 3:16.

How does each book of the Bible contribute to this Story?

Genesis – Deuteronomy: God tells us about how this all started, how it went wrong, His promised Seed/Redeemer who would take us back to God, about the nation of Israel—from whom the Redeemer would come, how the nation is born, enslaved, freed, and brought to their Promise Land.

Joshua – 2 Chronicles: God gives further details about His people Israel: their triumphs and failures, how they eventually get their first king (God gives them a king of their choosing), how they get their rightful king (God appoints a king that all others are compared to), what the rest of the kings are like (some are good, but most are terrible), how the nation of Israel is split in two (Northern Kingdom, "Israel" and Southern Kingdom "Judah"), and how they are enslaved again this time by the Assyrians and then by the nation of Babylon for seventy years due to their disobedience.

Ezra – Nehemiah: God uses this priest and king's cupbearer to show how God keeps His promise to free Israel from Babylon and return them to their Promise Land by the hand of the king of Persia. They also tell how the people fail to obey God again, but when they repent, God redeems them.

Esther: though God freed Israel through the Persian king, many Israelites did not return to the Promise Land. Esther describes God's mercy in protecting a disobedient people who were about to undergo genocide. Thus, through the faithful actions of one willing to give up her life to save her people, Israel was saved—echoes of what the Seed/Redeemer would eventually do for the nation.

Job: God pulls back the curtain and shows us what the spiritual battle looks like behind the scenes, behind all of the chaos we see in this world: Satan and God are at war and things don't happen by accident nor for the reasons we might think—terrible things can happen to good people. The question is, will those good people and the people around them seek an audience with God and ask Him what's going on or will they define the meaning of life by the circumstances around them?

Psalms: God shows us how to praise and pray to Him through the trials, heartache, frustrations, triumphs, and victories of His many faithful servants, who know that the King will win in the end.

Proverbs: God shows us where wisdom begins and ends: it starts and ends with a relentless reverence for every word that comes out of the mouth of God. He tells us about every aspect of life and how to (and not to) live it, which is especially helpful to fathers and mothers who are responsible to raise God-fearing children. The way of the King leads to life, the way of Satan to death.

Ecclesiastes: God tells us the meaning of life through a man who had it ALL and used it ALL and discovered that everything in life is but a vapor unless you get all your meaning from God.

Song of Solomon: God shows us how to be selfless lovers in the blessing of sex. He reveals the beauty and depth of love that should be part of the God-given covenant between man and wife.

Isaiah – Daniel: sometimes called the Major Prophets, God used them to address the Southern Kingdom but also the entire nation of Israel. God confronts the nation's sin, warns them of judgment (they'll be enslaved by Babylon, Persian, Greece, and Rome), but He also shows the Gentile nations the story's end: the promised Servant/King will end Israel's slavery forever and rule the world.

Hosea – Malachi: sometimes called the Minor Prophets, God used them to address the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (and the nations around them) before and after Israel's Babylonian captivity, when God returns them to their Promise Land. God convicts them of their sin but He also comforts and exhorts the Jewish nation to look forward to the coming of their Savior/King who will finally free them from their enemies forever.

Matthew – John: these books contain the Gospel, God's Goodnews about the Seed, the Redeemer. They prove that He's Israel's Messiah/King who's come to fulfill God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They also show that He's God in the flesh who's come to take back His creation and usher us back into God's arms and the intimate fellowship we lost in the Garden of Eden.

Acts: God reveals how His plan of salvation continues to unfold through Jesus' disciples after God raises Him from the dead and escorts Him back up into heaven. God also shows us how the Church is born and is united as one, with both Jews and Gentiles becoming part of Christ's Body. God empowers the disciples through His Holy Spirit to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations. In this way, His promise to bless the nations of the earth by a descendent of Abraham (the Seed/Messiah/King/Redeemer) is being fulfilled.

Romans – Revelation: through these letters God encourages, guides, instructs, comforts, and affirms His entire plan of salvation. God shows His children how they can have victory over Satan now. And He tells us how the story will finally end: Satan, God's enemy, will be cast into the Lake of Fire forever. The Savior/King of the world will bring victory over evil, sin, and death. A new perfect world and a glorious peace in God's presence will be enjoyed forever.