

God's Faithfulness to Preserve His Rebellious People

The Bible can seem complex to any reader due to the changing literary styles. One way to make sense of Scripture is to view the entire history of God's interaction with humankind in various ways. To see the faithfulness of God in human history, a study of His faithful remnant will give the reader a chronological map of human history.

Creation



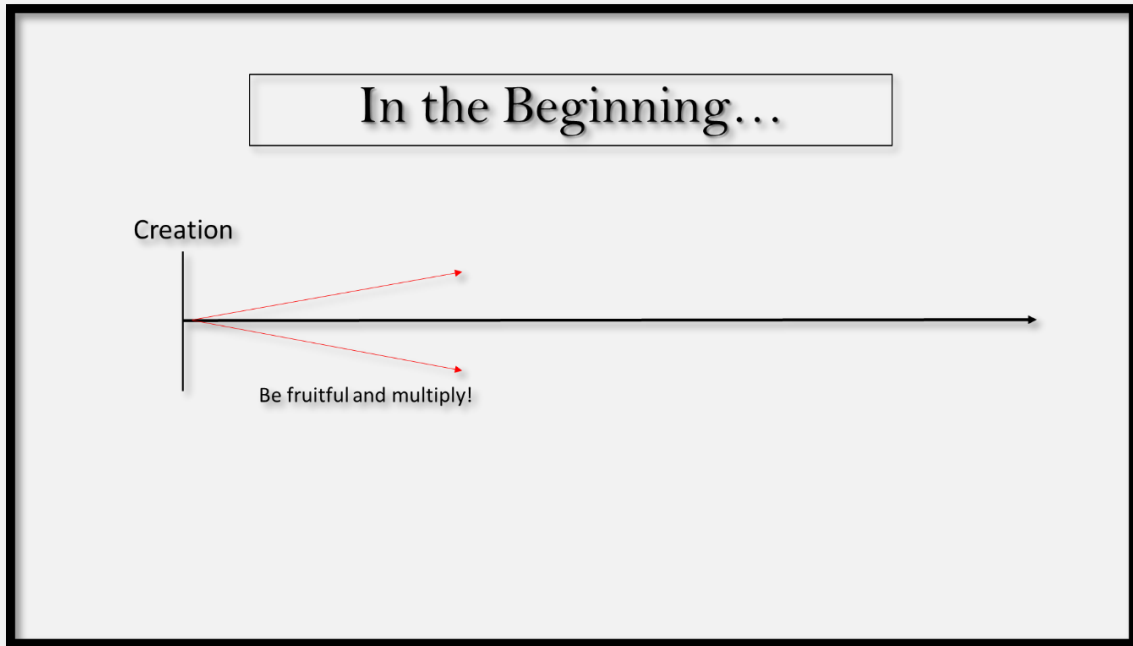
In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth...

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

NOTE: Another concept to integrate in studying the remnant of God throughout Scripture is that of *stewardship*. From the beginning, God placed humankind as managers of the creation. If you are familiar with the Bible, or if you are an observer of human nature, you already know how that has been handled. */

The chart below is a visual image of a timeline from creation, showing God's command for humankind to reproduce.



God saw everything that He had made, and He declared it “good.”

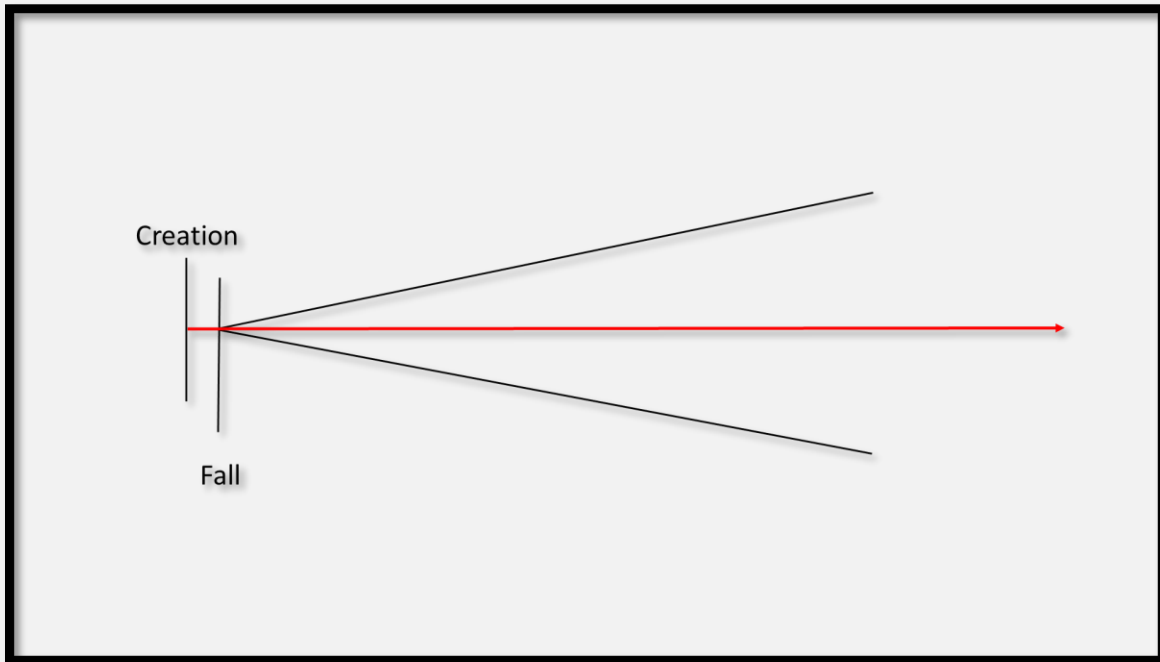
The man and his wife were naked, and they were not ashamed.

Fall



Did God really say...

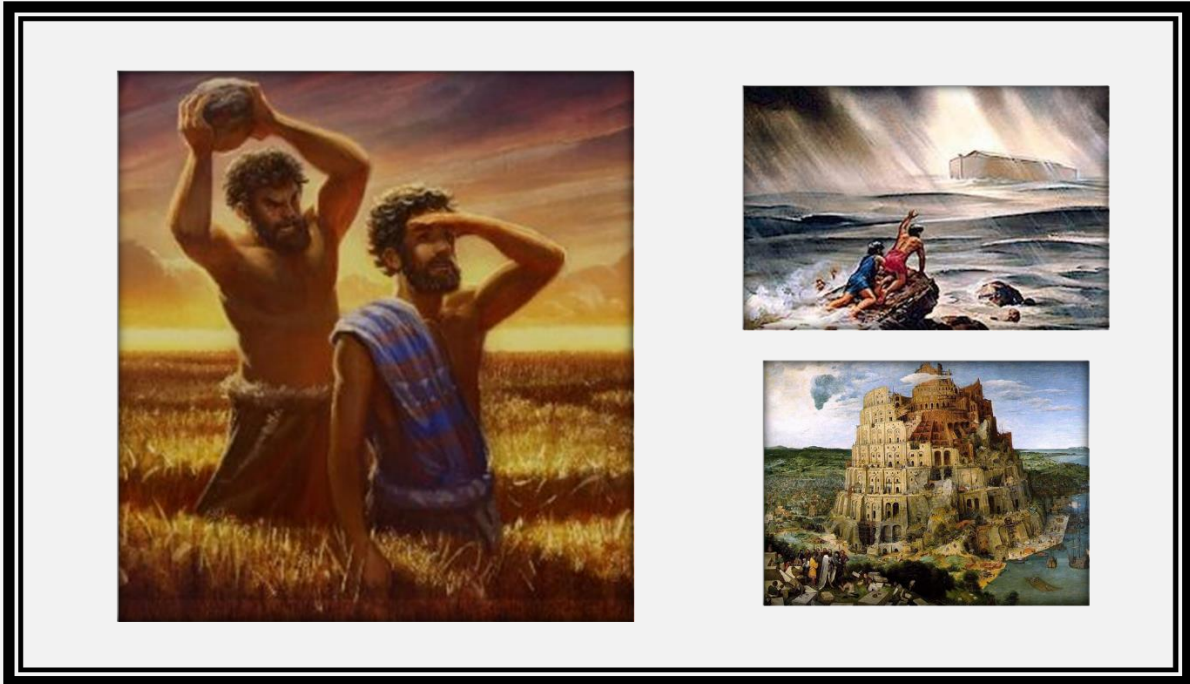
When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.



The Fall is the turning point of everything good that God created. The man and his wife chose to be stewards of God's creation without His involvement. The consequences of this choice would not be realized at first. However, while the command to be fruitful and increase in number was reiterated by God, the reality of the choice to do things without God's involvement became evident as far worse than could have been originally anticipated. A promise by God to the woman was made that would ensure restoration to the now broken world through her offspring.

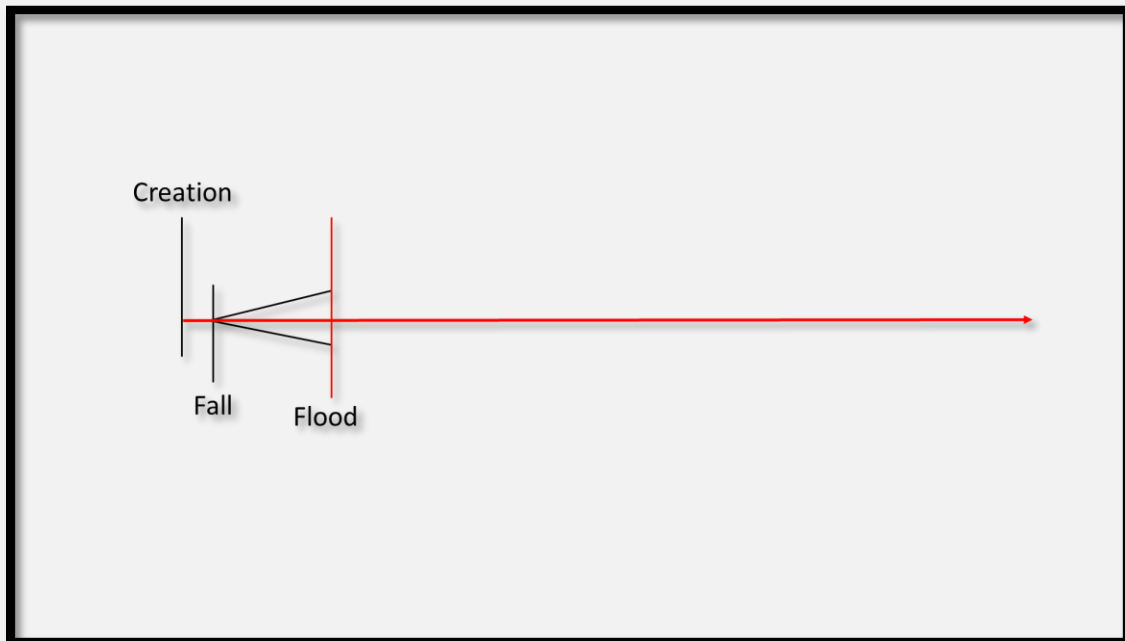
Decline

Soon after expulsion from God's presence, we see a decline in human behavior, resulting in murder, and lawless men doing whatever they want to women. The behavior of humankind spiraled downward, with a lack of morality never seen in the creation.

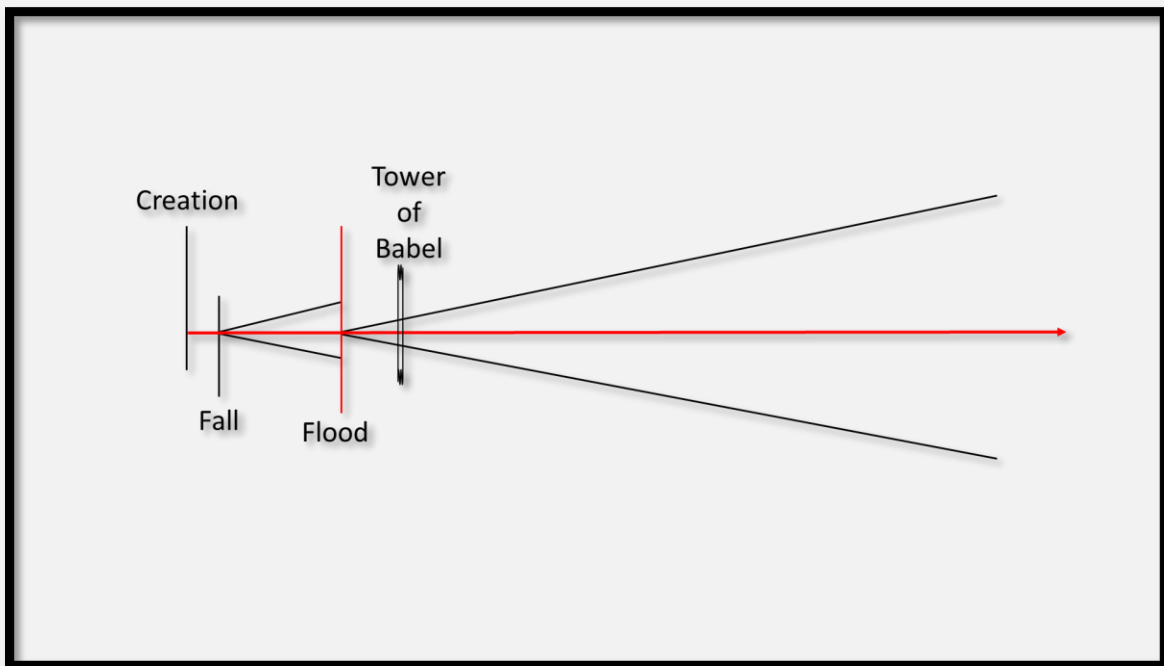


From the Fall to Noah, the earth increased in human population. Humankind was only continually evil in their thoughts. The Creator destroyed all but one family of 8 people. We see this evidence in the ground everywhere on planet earth.

God promised to never destroy all life again and gave the command to be fruitful and multiply to Noah, his sons, and their wives. From Noah, his three sons, and their wives, humankind began to repopulate the earth.



Humankind began to reproduce and spread out on the face of the earth once again following the flood. That is, until a group decided to take a stand against God and attempt to elevate themselves to be equals with God by building their way to heaven. The Tower of Babel incident summarizes all of humanity's attempts to do things without God's involvement. To demonstrate His superior nature, God rewired human brains so that rather than speaking one universal language, no one could understand other people groups. God also scattered humankind across the face of the whole earth.

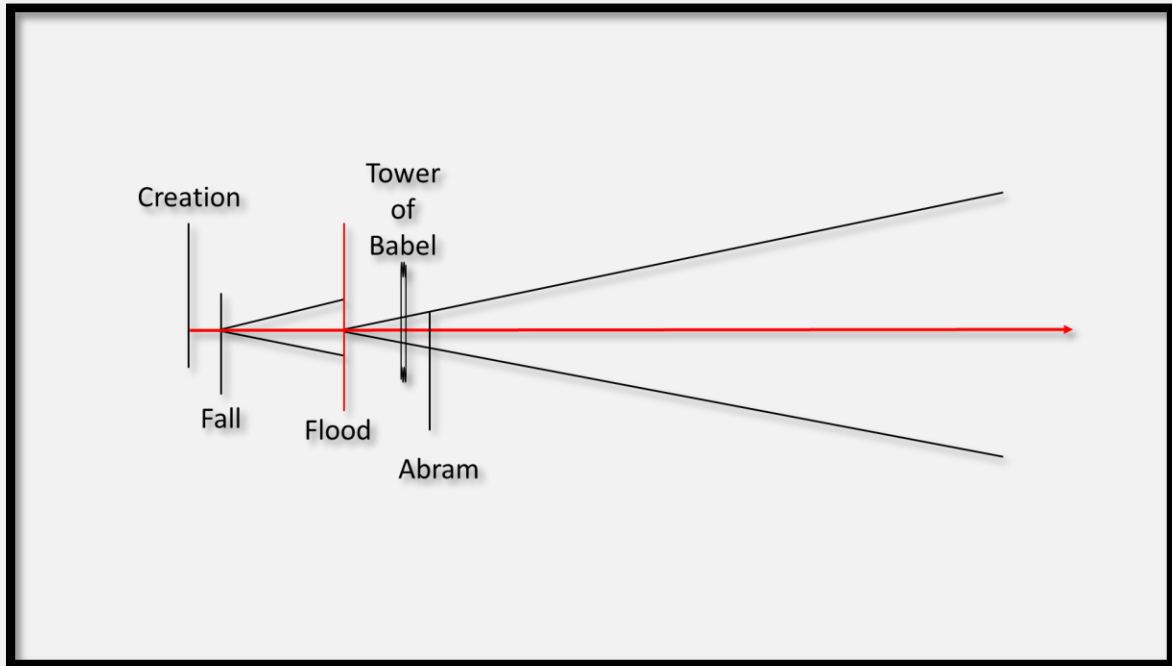


Redemption

One man was singled out after all this took place to reestablish a relationship between humankind and their Creator...Abram (later to become Abraham), whose name means "Father". God intervened to provide greater clarity to His promise made to the woman at the Fall. Through Abraham's bloodline God promised to bless all the people groups of the earth. God also promised land for Abraham's offspring.



Abraham was called by God to leave his hometown, to a place where God would multiply his offspring.



The promise to Abraham came through his bloodline through one of two sons: Isaac. Prior to Isaac's birth, Abraham listened to his wife and they attempted to fulfill God's promise by their own efforts. This was another example of humankind

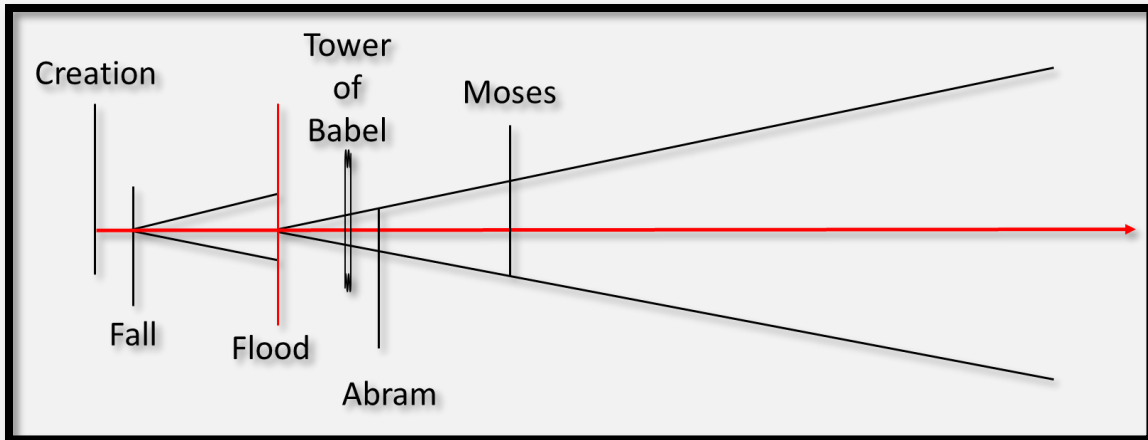
failing to involve God in their stewardship of what He has given. God's faithfulness was demonstrated when Abraham listened to and obeyed God regarding Isaac.

Exodus

From Abraham, the tension continued to build regarding the of God to raise up a savior figure. Through the offspring of Isaac, came Jacob, renamed Israel by God. Israel's story leads the reader into another instance of humankind attempting to fulfill their own will, when his children sell his favorite son, Joseph, to slave traders headed to Egypt, and lied to their father that Joseph died. The culmination of Joseph's story is that what his brothers intended for evil, God used for good.

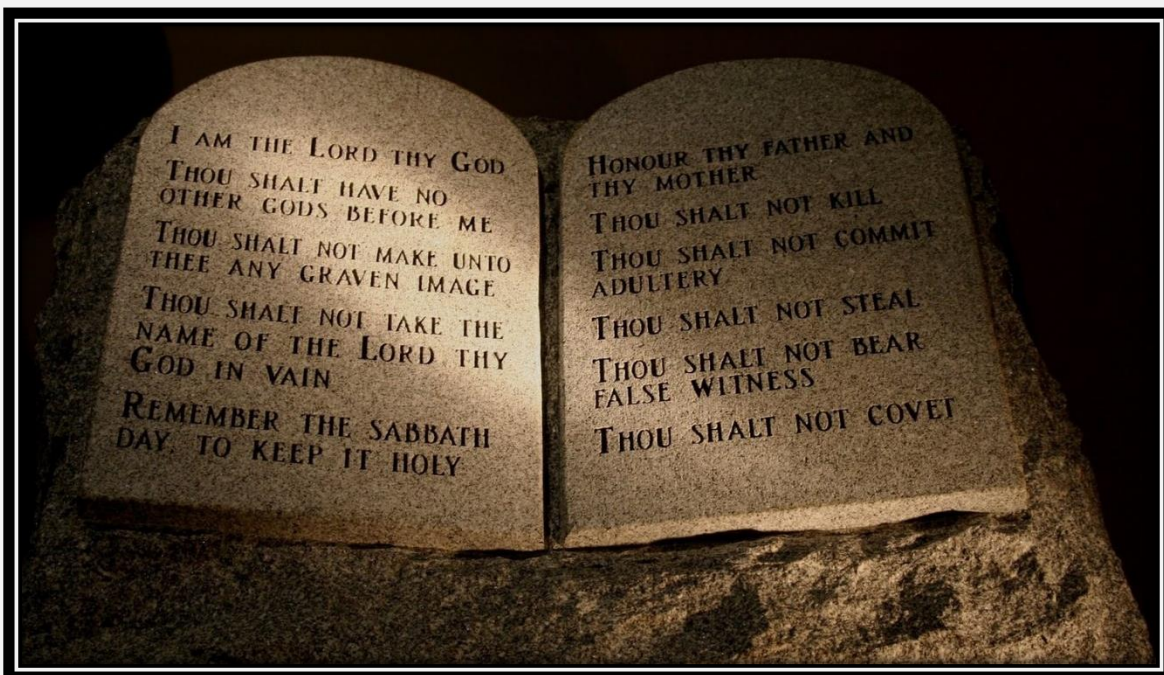


God established His chosen people by bringing them out of captivity. After Joseph's time, the offspring of Jacob (Israel) multiplied in Egypt. However, they were enslaved by the Egyptians, and after 400 years, were in desperation of a savior. The king of Egypt chose to murder the newborn boys of the Israelites, but God revealed His faithfulness to keep His promise by preserving His people through a messenger. He chose to do this through Moses.



Law

God made a conditional covenant agreement with His people through the Law. Through Moses, God brought His people out of slavery and into the wilderness to reveal more of His character and nature to them. God gave the Ten Commandments and the Law to the people of Israel while in the wilderness. He also required them to establish a way to be in right standing with Him through a sacrificial system to cover the seriousness of sin and rebellion already well-established in the narrative of human history up to this point.

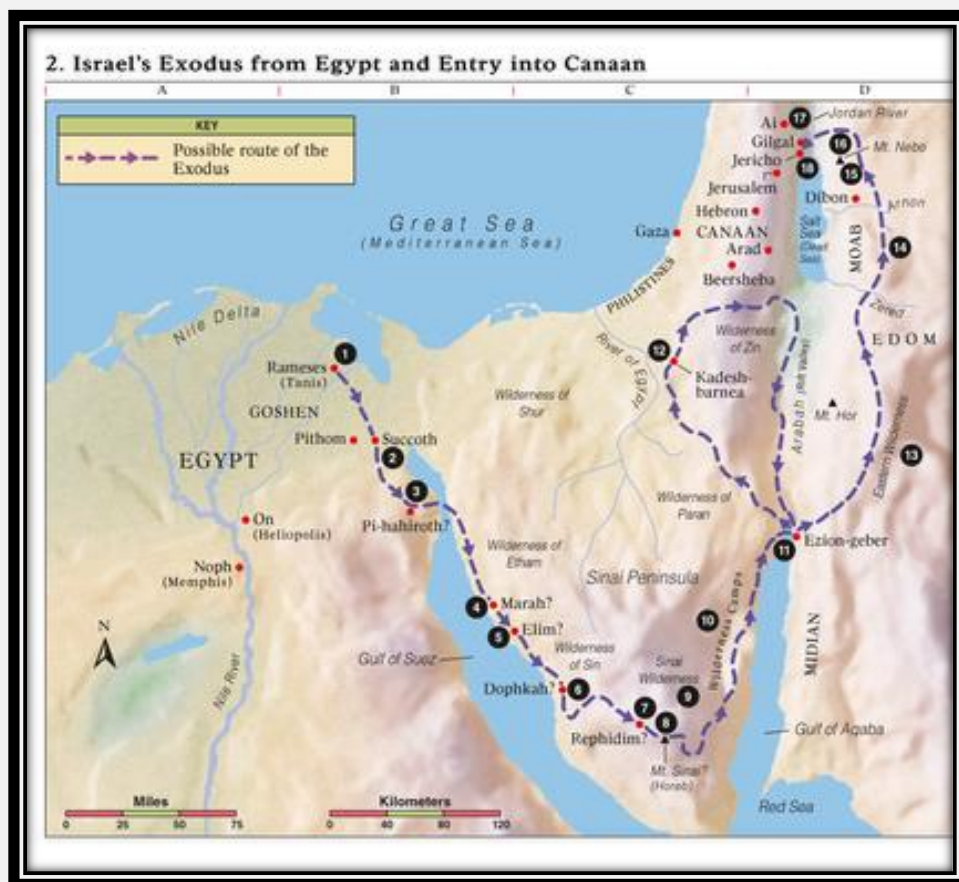


The time in the wilderness was a time of God's provision, revealing His holiness, and a time of rebellion by His people through their unbelief that He is good and

faithful. The Israelites, just as every people group before them, consistently attempted to do things without God's involvement. We see this theme continue through the rest of the Old Testament.

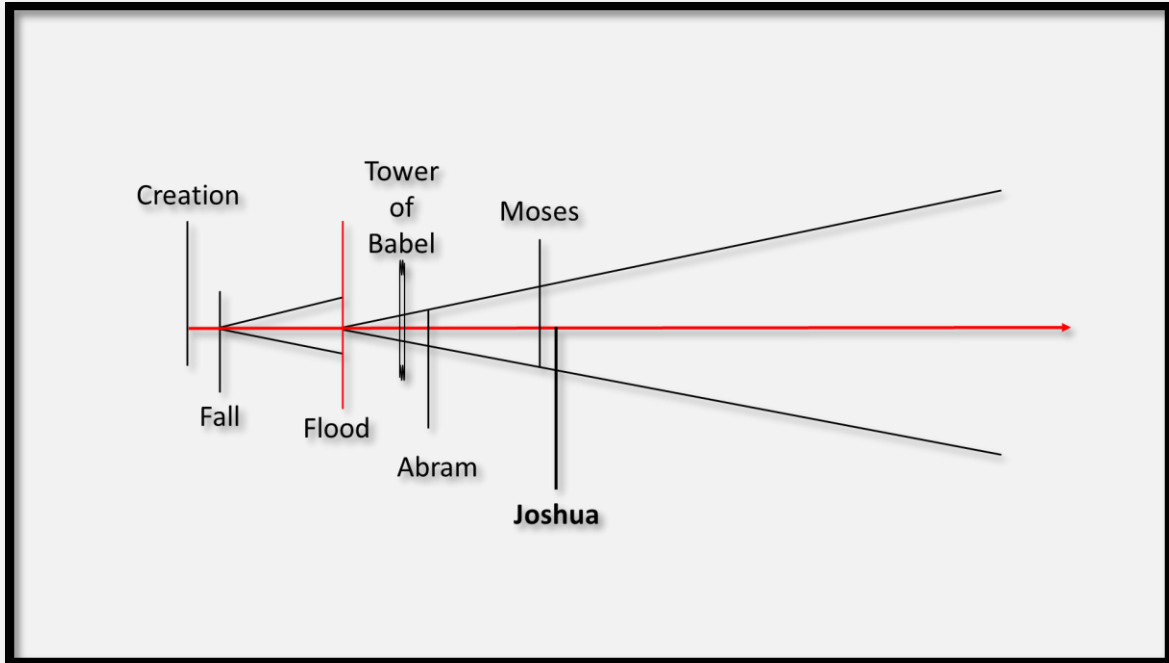
Promise

The Old Testament Promise from God, made to Abraham of land, was fulfilled in Joshua. After 40 years in the wilderness, God allowed His people to enter the land He promised. It is worth noting that God did not allow them to enter sooner because of their unbelief to enter because the people were again failing to include God's involvement.



After decades in the wilderness, the chosen people of God entered the land.

“In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25, NASB).



After entering the land, the Israelites conquered cities and settled into homes for the first time in their history as God’s people. The different family groups stemming from Jacob’s offspring were given land throughout the region.

However, just as the rest of human history has shown since the Fall, it didn’t take long for the people to neglect to involve God in their task of being stewards of what He gave them.

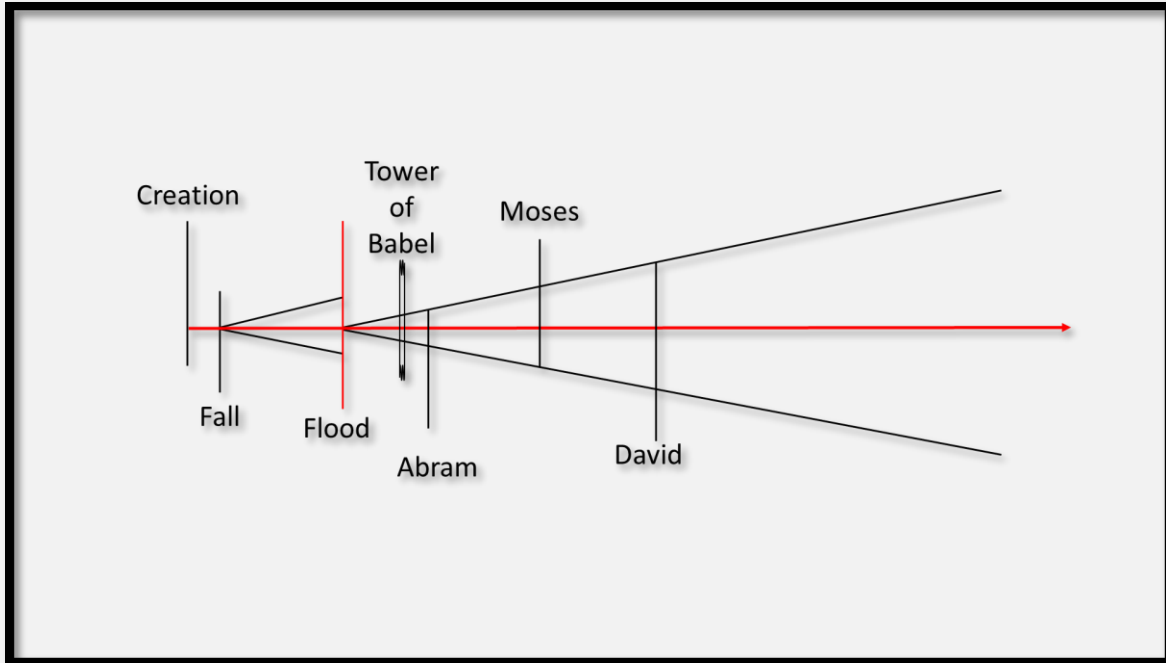
“In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25, NASB).

God raised up judges to point His people back to the relationship He established with them while in the wilderness. Ultimately, the people decided to do it their way again, demanding a king to rule over them rather than to honor their relationship with God.

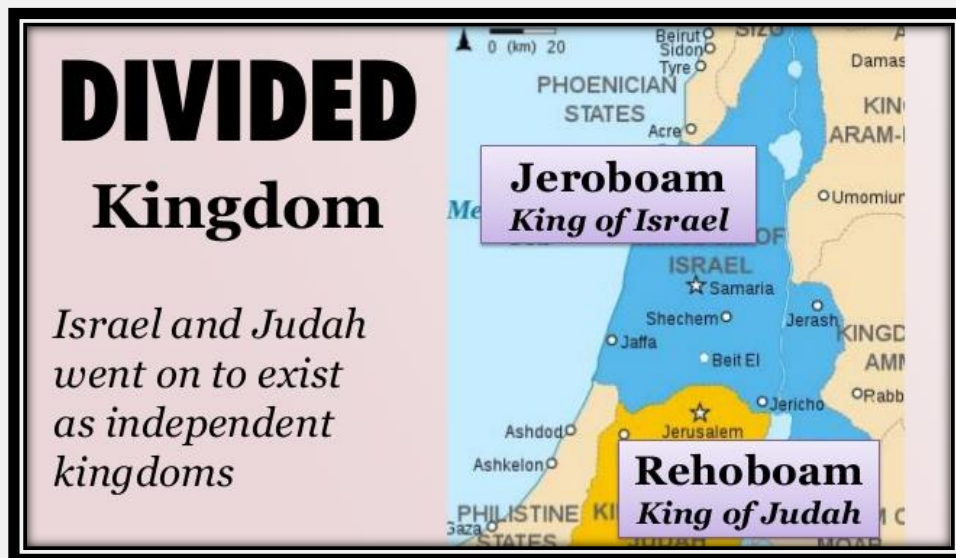


The era of the judges led to a desire for a king to rule over the nation of God's people. This was another form of rebellion, as the Lord was to be their king.

God gave the people what they asked for. Through His prophet Samuel, God gave the people a king. His name was Saul. Saul quickly failed to include God's involvement in his rule of the people. Samuel identified a new king that God chose for the people. David finally became king and chose to do things his own way, but God made a promise to David that his offspring would be an eternal king. David pointed the people to faithfulness in God.



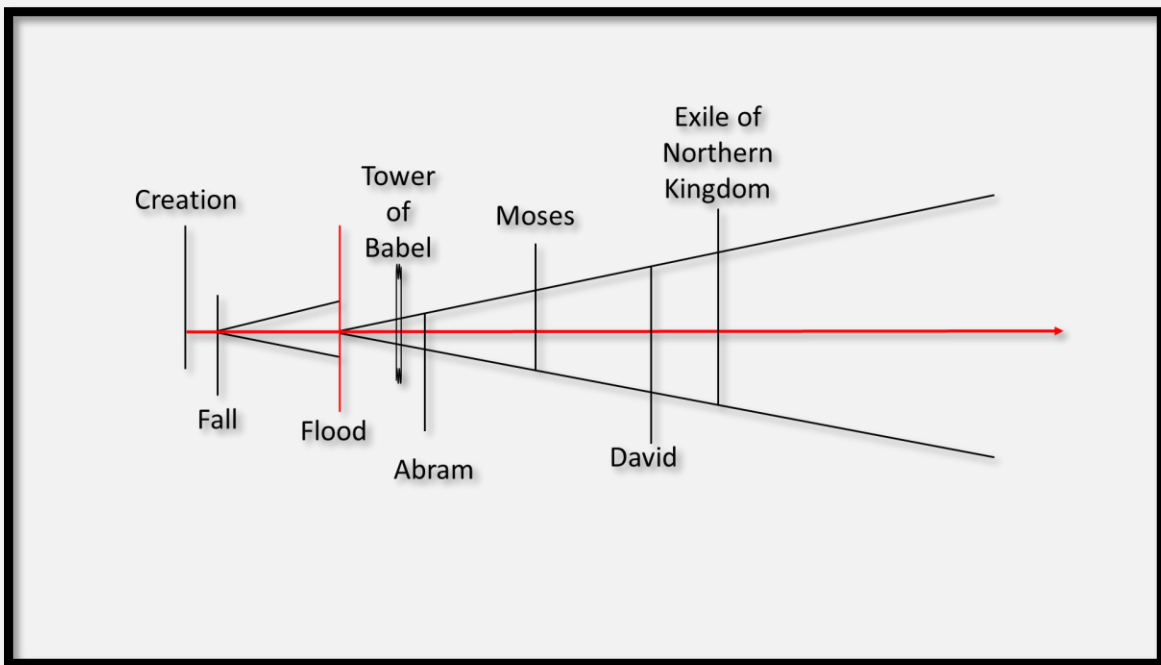
David's son, Solomon, became king, and eventually failed to include God in his stewardship of the kingdom. By the end of his life, the nation was divided.



The history of the divided kingdom can be summarized by the famous words of Frank Sinatra, "I did it my way!" After Solomon's death, a division between the Northern and Southern tribes of God's people resulted in two kingdoms. The northern kingdom became known as Israel, while the southern kingdom was called Judah. The northern kingdom had king after king who led the people away from fellowship with God. The southern kingdom had more of a flip-flopping

series of kingship. In the southern kingdom, we see just about every other king directing the people back to their covenant relationship with God, only to have a successor who points them away.

During this era, God raised up prophets, or messengers, to point the kings and their people back to God. Rather than listen to the prophets, those in the northern kingdom continued to seek their own way of life without God's involvement. Elijah, a prophet sent to the northern kingdom with warnings of God's judgment, was chased down and hunted to be murdered by those in power due to their refusal to turn to God. We can think of this as a lesson in failed stewardship again. In 722 BC, the Assyrian Army conquered and exiled the northern kingdom. It was not a pleasant experience for those living in the kingdom to say the least. The southern kingdom, witnessing this destruction, and next in line to be conquered, received mercy from God, as He spared them from being conquered. King Hezekiah of the southern kingdom read the Old Testament Scriptures, which had been forgotten about, and repented, calling on God to show mercy to His people. God honored the humility of Hezekiah.



The prophet Isaiah was present during King Hezekiah's reign. Isaiah's prophecy for God's promises to be fulfilled would be realized during, after, and long after he wrote his contribution to our Bible.

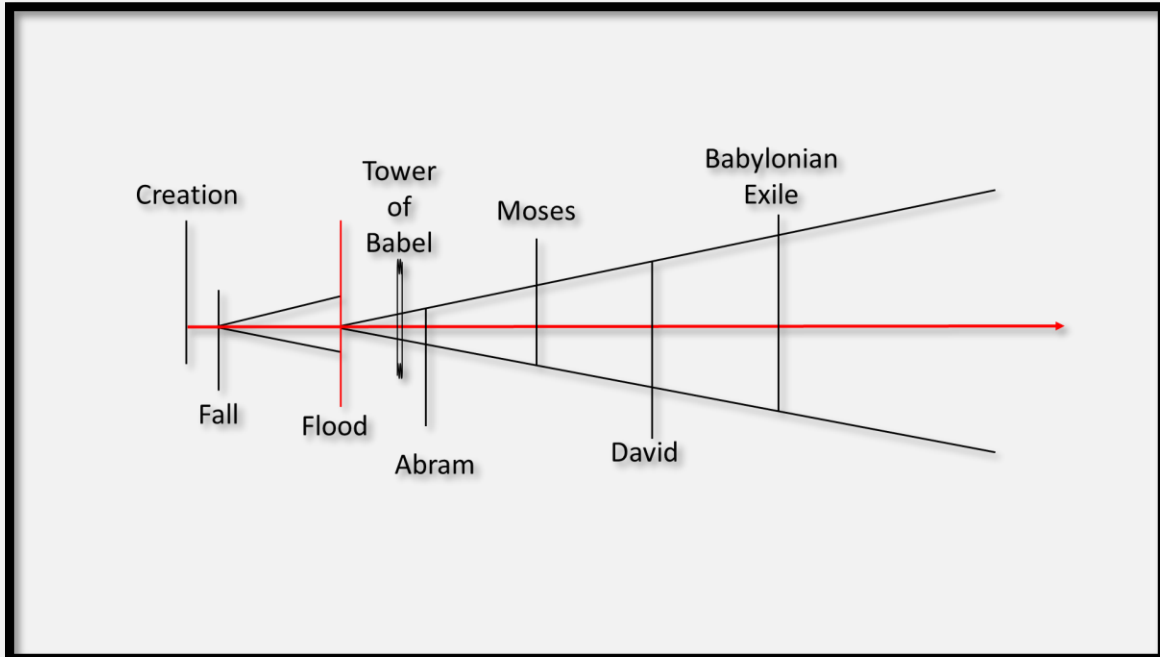
Despite the delay in being conquered, continued flip-flopping of southern kings led to a people who professed to honor and worship God, but who failed to include Him in their lives. Many more prophets were sent by God to point people back to their relationship with Him. However, in 586 BC, God sent the Babylonians to conquer and exile the southern kingdom. The promises that God made might have looked as though they would not be fulfilled, but He emphasized His promise to allow them to return to the land after a period of 70 years. God's promise to preserve a faithful remnant would be seen through this exile. Before the exile, God spoke a promise to His people through His messengers:

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord.

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people”(Jeremiah 31:33, NIV).

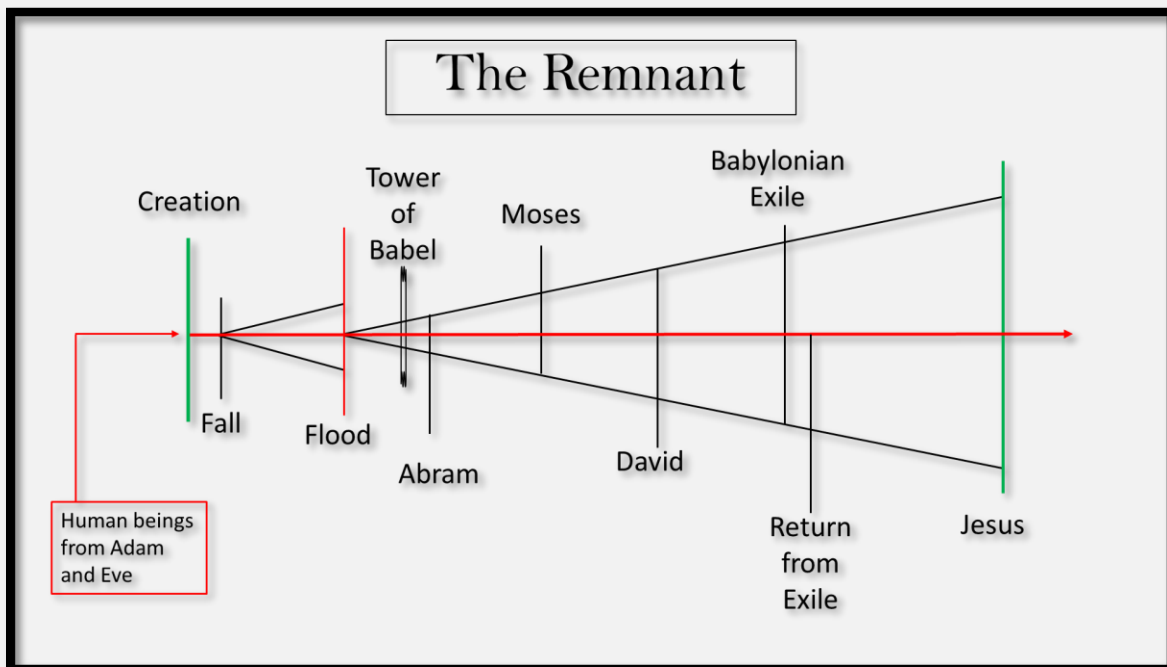
Upon return, God's people were serious about maintaining the covenant relationship made with Him. Ezra and Nehemiah, leaders of God's people, helped to rebuild the temple of God, which had been destroyed, as well as a wall around it to protect from foreign invaders.



The next 430 years are often referred to as the intertestamental period. The close of the Old Testament leaves the reader hanging onto a promise for God to send His messenger, to prepare the way for the promised Savior.

During the intertestamental period, God's people were ruled by a number of superior foreign armies. The Persians, ruled by King Darius, conquered the Babylonians, and allowed the Jews (the people exiled from Judah) to return home to rebuild and live relatively free from foreign rule. Alexander the Great conquered the Persians and set the stage for the Roman military to come in within a few centuries and change the known world regarding travel and lifestyle. The ongoing foreign rule created a tension in God's people as they prayed and waited for His promise to be fulfilled.

The Messiah came, fulfilled the Scriptures, and made a way for all to know Him. Knowing how we got to the point in human history when God came to set us free from the power of Sin and Death is helpful in growing our faith. Seeing how humankind is prone to wander from God gives the reader a sense of humility when being honest with himself or herself. Ultimately, what we can see in the Old Testament leading up to Jesus is that God is faithful 100% of the time.



The same cycle of turning away from God and declining morally is happening today, even among those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God will not keep people from experiencing the negative consequences of choosing not to include Him in their lives. Let us be good stewards of what God has given.

The Remnant

Creation - Genesis 1-2

Fall – Genesis 3

Flood – Genesis 6-9

Tower of Babel – Genesis 11

Abram (Abraham) – Genesis 12-25

Joseph - Genesis 45:7

Moses – Exodus – Deuteronomy

Joshua 10:20; 23:11-13

David – 1 Samuel – 1 Kings 2; 1 Chronicles 11-29 (See 2 Samuel 7:8-16)

Elijah – 1 Kings 18-19:18

Hezekiah – 2 Kings 17-19 (*19:30-31); *Isaiah* 10:20-22

{2 Kings 19:4 = *Isaiah* 37:4}

Babylonian Exile – 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Jeremiah 31:7, 31-40; 39:10; 42:2; 52

Ezra 9:5-15; Haggai 1:12-14; Nehemiah 1:1-2

New Testament Remnant – *Romans* 9:27; 11

The remnant of God can be described as the faithful people of God, or those who submit to God. Humility is necessary to be part of God's remnant. In this respect, it is helpful to consider biblical stewardship as involving God in every aspect of life moment-by-moment. Failure to involve God in our thinking, our attitudes, and our behavior results in each of us trying to steward this fallen creation which God has subjected to frustration (Rom. 8:20). Therefore, any attempt to do anything good in the fallen world without God's involvement is prideful and ultimately futile.

Let us strive to involve God in everything we do. He is good and faithful to redeem that which is broken. Believe it. Live it. Know Him more and more!