
Bible Overview Workshop

An interactive journey through the Old Testament

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Introduction

What?

The “Bible Overview Workshop” is a two day workshop for leaders of church groups, such as listening group leaders and Sunday School teachers, with the aim of giving a basic knowledge of the overall Bible story and particularly aspects of the Old Testament which are important for understanding the New Testament. We have run this workshop twice in the Ndop region of North West Cameroon.

Why?

We had trained people to be listening group leaders and children’s leaders, and they were generally doing well, however we realised that due to limited knowledge of the Old Testament, some were finding it challenging to lead their group because they were not prepared for the kind of questions that could come up unexpectedly when listening to or reading the New Testament – for example about the priests, the sacrificial system, the Passover feast, etc. Although they knew a lot of Bible stories, many did not have a very clear idea of what order they come in and how it all fits together.

How?

- **Geography:** We had a simple map of the Ancient Near East on the wall and the whole room was set up to match the map. The participants moved around the room as they engaged with the material so they gained an understanding of the layout of the places we were talking about and the movements of the people of Israel, from Abraham’s first journey to Canaan to the return from Exile.
- **Timeline:** Each participant received a blank timeline at the beginning of the course, and there was a large version of it on the wall. As we went through the material, we completed the timeline on the wall and the participants completed their own timelines to match it so they could take it home with them.
- **Telling Bible Stories together:** We selected a set of stories to give a coherent summary of the Old Testament. Some stories which were well known to the participants were covered very briefly by letting them summarise them or in some cases act them out. Other stories were narrated to them or read from the Bible.

- **Questions:** For several key passages, we asked questions based on the text in order to encourage discussion and bring out key points, especially when they would be referred to later. We also gave space for participants to ask questions.
- **Discussion topics** – e.g. we finished the first day by making a large model Tabernacle (out of people, benches, a sheet, cardboard boxes, etc.) and then having a discussion of sacrifices, comparing the Old Testament sacrificial system to their own village's sacrificial system.

Day 1 – From Creation to Mount Sinai

Programme (approximate):

(This is very flexible – it's up to the facilitators to decide how much time to spend on each topic, how much detail to go into, and how many breaks to have.)

9.00	Arrive and set-up
9.30	Introduction, opening prayer, worship
9.45	Creation and Fall (sketch)
10.15	Noah and Tower of Babel summary
10.25	God's promises to Abraham
10.55	Abraham to Joseph summary
11.15	Break (with snack – because they've just arrived in Egypt to get food!)
11.30	Israelites in Egypt / Moses
11.45	The Passover
12.15	Egypt to Mount Sinai
12.30	Giving of the law and the golden calf
12.50	Model tabernacle (include priests and Levites)
13.15	Sacrifices discussion (African Traditional Religions versus OT)
13.40	Closing prayer and food

Materials needed:

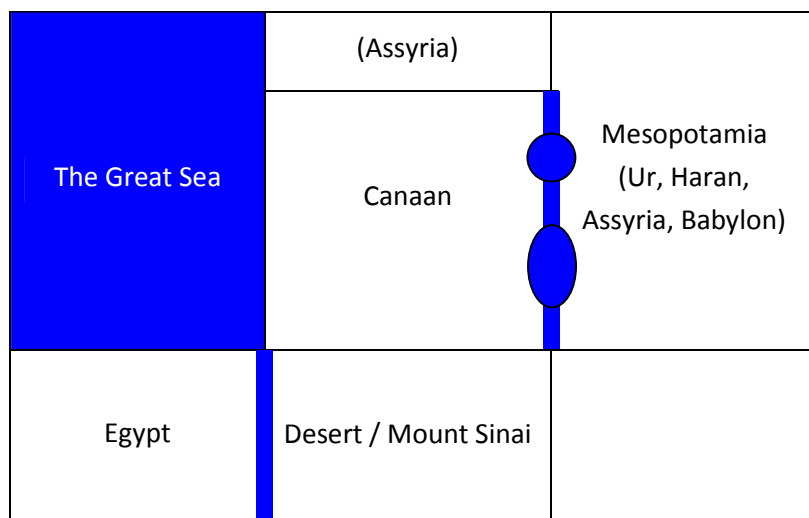
- Blank timeline handouts for each participant
- Parts for big timeline for the wall (string and cards prepared)
- Signs for Mesopotamia, Canaan, Great Sea, Egypt, Desert/Mount Sinai (to be put up around the room)
- Blue material for Red Sea, Sea of Galilee, Jordan River and Dead Sea
- Map of Ancient Near East in Bible times
- God's promises to Abraham written on card (optional)
- 10 commandments written on card (optional)
- Things to make model tabernacle – string, candle and matches, bucket, 3 boxes for altars and covenant box, 2 pieces of bread and 2 plates, sheet for curtain
- Pins, tape, sticky tack to attach things to the wall
- Chalk

Note about the timeline:

The blank timeline handouts are designed so that they print out on one side of A4 which you should then cut in half along the dotted line and stick together so that it is one long piece with the heading in the middle. We handed out these blank timelines at the beginning of the day. We also made a large version of it on the wall using a string with pieces of paper attached. As we covered the material, we gradually added the events/names to the timeline on the wall and encouraged people to fill in their own timeline to match it. This worked well.

Setting up the room to match the geography of the Bible lands:

We set up the church with different areas representing the different areas in the Bible stories. The layout was approximately as shown below:



We used the aisles for the bodies of water separating the areas. Between Canaan and Mesopotamia was the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River and the Dead Sea (represented by blue material). Between Egypt and the Desert was the Red Sea (represented by two similar pieces of blue material that we could separate for the crossing). We also made a simple map of the area and put it on the wall.

In the notes below instructions for moving the participants between these areas are indicated by the arrow symbol, ➔.

Creation and Fall

Tell the story of the 6 days of creation, making it as dramatic as possible. When you get to day 6, if you think it is appropriate for your group, ask for volunteers to come and act or mime the creation of Adam and Eve.

📖 Read Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:15-17

Questions: What did God command Adam and Eve to do? What fruit could they eat / not eat?

Tell the story of the fall with your actors still helping (you will need another volunteer for the serpent.)

*Questions: Who did Adam blame for eating the fruit? Who did Eve blame?
Who was actually to blame? (They all were)*

 Genesis 3:8-24

What did God do about it? What is the effect of sin in our lives?

This was the beginning of a huge problem for humans – because we all sin, we are all separated from God. But even in the beginning God had a plan to save us.

Noah (summary)

Ask a volunteer to summarise the story of Noah.

Questions: Why did God destroy everything? Why did he save Noah and his family?

Tower of Babel (summary)

Ask a volunteer to summarise the story of the Tower of Babel.

This is another example of people disobeying God and going their own way and God intervening.

➔ If the participants are not already seated in the area of the church representing Mesopotamia, then this is a good time to move them to that area (since God moved people to different parts of the world)

God's promises to Abraham

➔ The group should begin in the area for Mesopotamia.

 Read Genesis 12:1-7

Question: What did God promise to Abraham?

1. "I will make you a great nation and I will bless you."
2. "I will make your name great and you will be a blessing."
3. "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse."
4. "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
5. "To your offspring I will give this land."

➔ Move group to Canaan

The first promise: "I will make you a great nation".

God had a plan to make Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, into a special nation that would be his special people, and would be his light to the world. Eventually he sent Jesus to be born into that nation, to save people from throughout the whole world.

 Read Genesis 15:1-6

There is a problem: Abraham is still childless, and so he asks God about this. God confirms his first promise, by saying that he shall have a son as his heir and his offspring shall be as many as the stars in the sky. Even though humanly speaking this is unlikely because his wife is barren, Abraham believes God and God counts him as righteous because of his faith. In the New Testament, Abraham is used as an example of how people are made right with God through faith.

📖 Read Romans 3:20-24 and 4:1-3

Paul says that we are not made right with God by doing good works or by following the law, instead we are made right with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ, in the same way that Abraham was made right with God by believing God's promises to him.

The fourth promise: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Question: What do you think this means? Do you think it is true that all peoples (including our own people here) are blessed through Abraham?

📖 Read Galatians 3:6-9 and 3:26-29

When God made this promise to Abraham, he was looking ahead to the time that Jesus would come and to the time that the Gospel would be preached to all nations on earth so that eventually people from every nation, tribe, people and language on earth will believe in Jesus. Jesus was born into the family line of Abraham and through Jesus all peoples on earth will be blessed.

The fifth promise: "To your offspring I will give this land"

📖 Read Genesis 15:13-16

God told Abraham that before his descendants would take possession of the land of Canaan, they would first be strangers in a foreign country and would be slaves for about four hundred years, before coming back to the land of Canaan.

📖 Read Genesis 17:7-10

God confirmed again that he would give the land to Abraham's descendants and that he would be their God. He told Abraham to circumcise all the males in his household as a sign of his covenant with them. From then on, all the male children born into Abraham's family had to be circumcised at 8 days old as a sign of God's covenant with them. In the New Testament it says that this particular law does not apply to Christians from other peoples (i.e. not Abraham's biological descendants) because circumcision was a physical sign in the body, and what matters most to God is what is in our hearts. Paul says in Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." So for Christians, circumcision is not a requirement of our faith, although it is practised in our society and there is nothing wrong with it.

Abraham to Joseph (summary)

Help the participants to tell this summary by asking questions such as:

Who were the sons of Abraham? Who were the sons of Isaac? How many sons did Jacob have?

Continue with the story of Joseph, asking questions when necessary to keep them going, such as: what did Joseph dream about? What did his brothers do to him?, etc.

Make sure they include the key points: Joseph was the favourite son, the brothers sold him as a slave, he went to Egypt, ended up in prison, then became a ruler in Egypt, finally the rest of the family moved to Egypt because of famine in Canaan.

At the end Joseph said to his brothers: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20). God often turns around bad situations and uses them for good.

Through what happened to Joseph and his family, the Israelites ended up in Egypt. This was fulfilling what God had said to Abraham in Genesis 15, that his descendants would be in a foreign land for 400 years before returning to Canaan.

➔ Move participants to Egypt.

Israelites in Egypt / Moses (summary)

Ask volunteers to summarise what happened to the Israelites in Egypt after Joseph's generation had died (they became slaves to the Egyptians) and how God called Moses. Help them out if necessary.

The Passover

 Read or tell the story of Exodus 12:1-14 and 12:28-31

Question: What did the Israelites have to do with the blood of the lamb? Why?

On the day that became known as the 'Passover', the Israelite people killed a lamb and put some of the blood on the doorframes of their houses, then they roasted it and ate it together with bread made without yeast. The final plague that God sent on Egypt was to kill the first born son in every household, but the blood on the doors of the Israelite houses was a sign for him to pass over them and not kill anyone in their house. The lamb was killed in the place of the firstborn child. On this night somebody died in every Egyptian house, but none of the Israelites died. And this was when Pharaoh (the King of Egypt) finally allowed the Israelite people to leave his country.

God told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover festival every year to remember what he did for them on that night. When they celebrated the Passover, they had a special meal and they would eat bread made without yeast for seven days. They also held special assemblies and worshipped God with sacrifices. Many years later, when the Israelite people were living in the land God had promised to them and had built the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish people were supposed to go to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover meal. At some points in their history they had bad leaders who

did not follow God and then they did not celebrate the Passover festival, but at other points in their history they had good leaders and they celebrated the Passover in Jerusalem. When Jesus was living on earth, he would have gone to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover feast.

Q. Can you think of any places in the New Testament that mention the Passover feast?

1. Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover feast. When Jesus was 12 years old he went with them and got left behind in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52).
2. During another Passover feast when Jesus was an adult he drove the people who were selling things out of the Temple area (John 2:12-25).
3. All the events surrounding Jesus death and resurrection took place during the Passover festival. The “last supper” which Jesus ate with his disciples the night before he died was at Passover time (there is some debate as to whether it was the actual Passover meal or not). (Luke 22:7-16).

 Read 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Question: Why do you think Paul calls Jesus “our Passover lamb”? In what way is Jesus like the Passover lamb?

Just as during the Passover, the lambs were killed in the place of the firstborn, and the blood of the lambs was a sign for God’s judgement to pass over them, so Jesus died in our place, and when we choose to put our faith in him, his blood is a sign to God so that his judgement will pass over us.

Egypt to Mount Sinai (summary)

After the Passover, the Israelites left in the middle of the night to escape from Egypt, however Pharaoh again changed his mind and sent his army after them. When they reached the Red Sea they were trapped between the sea and the army. However God did a miracle through Moses and parted the Red Sea.


➔ Have everybody stand up ready to cross the red sea, separate the two blue pieces of material so that they can pass across to the desert.

Questions:

What did the Israelites start to complain about when they were in the desert? (hunger, thirst, wanted meat) How did God provide for them? (manna, quail, water) How did God guide them in the desert? (pillar of cloud/fire)

Giving of the law

Q. Who knows what happened when they reached Mount Sinai? (Giving of law)

 Read Exodus 19

Why did God give the Israelites the Law? (vs 5-6 – he was calling them to be a special holy nation)

Do you know the 10 commandments? (Ask people to call out the 10 commandments in any order without looking them up)

These 10 commandments are the most well known part of the law, but they were only the first bit. The law includes a lot of details about how the Israelites were supposed to live well with each other and worship God. God gave them all these commandments because he wanted them to be a holy nation, i.e. different from the other nations around them which were not following God.

The Golden Calf

What were the Israelites doing while Moses was up the Mountain?? In what way do we sometimes act like the Israelites? (e.g. coming home from church and immediately doing something that is not honouring to God)

Model Tabernacle

Question: Who knows what the Tabernacle was?

It was basically a temple, but because the Israelites were travelling in the desert and living in tents, they needed a temple that they could take with them, so the Tabernacle was also a tent. It was the place where they made sacrifices to worship God and the place where God showed them His presence and talked with Moses.

Make a model of the Tabernacle. (You need to move everyone to an open space for this.)

1. Ask everyone to stand in a rectangle and hold hands, representing the fence around the courtyard.
2. Use benches to represent the edges of the tent
3. Use a bucket for the laver
4. Cardboard boxes for the two altars
5. Cardboard box for the covenant box
6. A sheet for the curtain (two people will have to hold it)
7. A candle or lamp for the lampstand
8. A plate of bread for the Table of bread

Explain what all the parts were and what their function was.

The Priests and the sacrificial system

If people seem to be comfortable, remain in your model Tabernacle for this part, if not, have them sit down again before you start.

Discussion about the local sacrificial system:

Ask the group to describe some types of sacrifices that people do in this village - What is sacrificed? When? Where? Why? Who can make sacrifices? Who are they sacrificed to? How is it done?

Explanation of Old Testament Sacrificial system

In the Old Testament the Israelite people made sacrifices to God. Part of the law that God gave to Moses was about how these sacrifices should be done. He set apart the tribe of Levi to serve him in the Tabernacle and later in the temple. The men of one particular family, the family of Aaron were to be the priests who could offer sacrifices on behalf of the people, and the other Levites had other jobs, such as carrying the different parts of the Tabernacle when they were travelling and setting it up when they arrived in a new place.

Question: What was the major difference between sacrifices in the Old Testament religion and sacrifices here today?

The sacrifices that God commanded the Israelites to make were to be made to him – the Almighty God in heaven, not to small gods and ancestors. In fact he commanded them never to worship any other God but him, although they did not always obey this.

When?

Sacrifices were made in the temple every morning and evening, and in addition extra sacrifices were made at certain times such as on the Sabbath, when there was a new moon, at their annual festivals. In addition to these regular sacrifices, people could bring offerings to the temple to be sacrificed on their behalf.

Why?

The main purposes of the sacrifices was to worship and give thanks to God, and for the forgiveness of sins.

What?

The things that were sacrificed were animals (sheep, goats, cows or birds) and other food items (grain, oil, salt).

How?

When someone brought an animal to be sacrificed for forgiveness of sin, they would place their hand on the animals head to symbolise that that animal was representing them.

Question: Why do Christians not have to offer sacrifices to God today?

Because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice – he died once for all of our sin.

 Read Hebrews 10:10.

Day 2 – From Moses to Christ

Programme (approximate):

9.00	Arrive and set-up
9.30	Introduction, opening prayer, worship
9.45	Summary of Day 1 (Creation to Mount Sinai)
10.00	Entering the Promised Land / Joshua (summary)
10.15	Judges (summary)
10.30	The first Israelite Kings (Saul, David, Solomon)
11.00	The divided Kingdom (include example good and bad kings)
11.30	Going into exile in Assyria / Babylon
11.45	Break
12.00	Daniel (summary)
12.15	The return from exile (Ezra / Nehemiah)
12.45	Prophecies about the Messiah
13.30	Closing prayer and food

Materials needed:

- Blank timeline handouts for all participants
- Materials for making big timeline on the wall (paper, string, tape, scissors, bold marker pen)
- Materials for room set up as for Day 1.
- Materials for exercise about the prophecies about Jesus – see description below
- Map of 12 tribes of Israel
- Cards with names of tribes (optional)
- string for the dividing line between Israel and Judah
- Chalk

From Joshua to King Solomon – Overview (up to 1 hour)

Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan

Before Moses died, he made a speech to all the Israelites, challenging them to love and obey God so that He would bless them.

 Read Deuteronomy 30:15 – 31:8

Questions:

1. *What did Moses command the people to do? (Ask them to look at 30:16 for the answer)*
2. *What will God do for them if they do this? (30:16b)*
3. *But if they are disobedient and worship other gods, what will happen to them? (v17)*
4. *Who is to succeed Moses as the leader of the Israelite people? (Joshua)*

After Moses had died and the people had grieved for him, Joshua lead them across the Jordan river and into the land of Canaan, the land that God had promised to give to Abraham’s descendants. They had to fight and drive out the people from that land who were not worshipping God because this was what God had commanded. God helped them to win their battles, when they trusted him.

➔ Move participants to Canaan (optionally, give them cards with the names of the 12 tribes and seat them according to the positions of the tribes)

Questions:

- 1. Who knows what happened when they crossed the Jordan river? (When the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant entered the edge of the river, it stopped flowing and the waters divided so that they could pass through on dry ground – recorded in Joshua 3)*
- 2. Who knows which was the first battle after they had crossed the Jordan? (The battle of Jericho in Joshua 5 – ask someone to summarise what happened)*

Sing: The walls of Jericho fell down! (optional)

When the Israelite people had arrived in the land of Canaan and God had helped them to drive out some of the Canaanite peoples from the land, they divided it between the 12 tribes. They did this by casting lots. The descendants of Joseph had split into two tribes, named after his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh so Ephraim and Manasseh had separate territories. The Levites did not have their own territory because they had been set apart for the service of the Lord. Instead, they had towns and pasture land for their animals in the territory of each of the other tribes.

Show map of 12 tribes of Israel.

Once they had settled in the land they had peace with their neighbours for a time.

Judges

After Joshua died, the Israelite tribes continued to conquer the land that God had given them, however they disobeyed God; even though they drove out some of the people, they made peace with others and some they took as slaves. God was angry with them for disobeying him.

 Read Judges 2:2-3

Questions:

- 1. Why was God angry with them? (v2)*
- 2. What was the consequence of their disobedience? (v3)*

 Read Judges 2:10-15

- 3. Joshua’s generation served the Lord their God, but what happened after that generation had died?(v11-12)*


4. *Who were the “Baals” and the “Ashtoreths”?* (The gods of the pagan nations around them.)

 Read Judges 2:16-19

5. *Who were the “judges”?* (People who God used to save Israel from their enemies when they were in distress.)
6. *Who can name some of the judges of Israel?* (e.g. Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Samuel.)

Samuel, King Saul and King David

Samuel was one of the last of the judges (in fact his two sons were the last judges, but they were bad ones who were not honest.) Then the elders of Israel came to Samuel and asked him to appoint a King over them, like all the other nations had.

 Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9

Questions:

1. *How did Samuel feel about their request for a King?*
2. *What did God say about it?*

God lead Samuel to anoint a man called Saul as King of Israel. (Optional: act out Samuel anointing Saul).

What kind of King was Saul – good or bad? (To begin with Saul was a good King who followed God, but later he went his own way and stopped following God.) God rejected him as king and replaced him with King David.

 Read 1 Samuel 15:17-23

Question: Why did God reject Saul as King?
(Because he rejected the Word of the Lord, v23)

Act out the anointing of David (1 Samuel 16).

Questions:

1. *Who can remember one story about King David?* (e.g. David and Goliath, Saul trying to kill David, David sparing Saul’s life, David and Bathsheba, etc.)
2. *Which book of the Bible was partly written by King David?* (Psalms)
3. *What was one thing that David wanted to do, that God did not allow him to do?* (David wanted to build a Temple for God in Jerusalem, but God told him through Nathan the prophet, that he should not be the one to build the Temple, instead his son Solomon would be the one to build the Temple.)

King Solomon

When David died, Solomon became the next King. (Optional: act out anointing of King Solomon). As God had promised to David, Solomon organised the building of the

Temple in Jerusalem. The layout of the Temple was very similar to the layout of the Tabernacle and it replaced the Tabernacle. The priests then began to offer sacrifices to God in the Temple and all the people would go to the Temple in Jerusalem when they had sacrifices to offer to God or to celebrate the annual festivals.

(Optionally draw layout on the board as a reminder)

Questions:

- 1. Who knows what Solomon asked God for when he became King? (Wisdom, 1 Kings 3)*
- 2. Was Solomon a good King who followed God, or a bad King who disobeyed God? (At the beginning he followed God and was very wise, but later he turned away from God and disobeyed him by marrying foreign wives and worshipping their gods)*

 Read 1 Kings 11:9-13

Question:

What was the consequence of Solomon's disobedience? (The Kingdom would be divided once his son became King – most of it would go to another person, v11-13)

The Divided Kingdom

When King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as King, however he was a very harsh ruler. One of his father's officials, Jeroboam led a rebellion against him which resulted in all the tribes except Judah and Benjamin breaking off as a separate Kingdom. Now instead of one Kingdom of Israel, there was the Kingdom of Israel to the North under King Rehoboam and the Kingdom of Judah to the South under King Rehoboam. The capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was at Shechem and the capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was still in Jerusalem.

SHOW MAP

- ➔ Set up a dividing line between the North and the South parts of Canaan – the south consists of Judah and Benjamin and the North is everyone else (e.g. using string or rope)

Questions:

- 1. Where did all the Israelite people go to worship God before the Kingdoms were divided? (The Temple in Jerusalem)*
- 2. What do you think happened once the Kingdoms were divided? (The people of Judah continued to worship in Jerusalem and most of the people of Israel stopped worshipping God)*

 Read 1 Kings 12:26-30


After this there were various different kings of Judah and Israel, some of whom were good kings who lead the people to follow God and some of whom were bad Kings who lead the people away from God. The books of Kings and Chronicles record the lives of these kings. Most of the time, most of the people were not following God, instead they were worshipping other gods of the pagan tribes around them such as Baal, but occasionally God would raise up prophets such as Elijah and Elisha who would call the people to follow Him again, or there would be a good King who led the people back to following God.

Questions:

- 1. Can anyone name any of the good Kings who led the people to follow God? (e.g. King Joash of Judah who repaired the Temple, King Hezekiah of Judah who removed altars to other gods, King Josiah of Judah who found the book of the law and renewed the covenant)*
- 2. Can anyone remember what God had said would happen to the people if they turned away from him and worshipped other gods? (They would not live long in the land God was giving them)*

Going into Exile

Just as God had promised through Moses and then warned through his prophets, Israel and Judah's continued disobedience to God resulted in them being driven out of their promised land. First it happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and later it happened to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

 Read 2 Kings 17:6-13, 22-24

The people of the Northern Kingdom were scattered to different parts of Assyria and people of others nations were brought to live in their former land, Samaria. That was the end of the Northern Kingdom – those people were never again brought together as one nation.

➔ Move the part of the group in the North part of Canaan to Assyria.

 Read Jeremiah 25:1-14

 Read 2 Kings 25:1, 8-12

When the people of the Southern Kingdom went into exile in Babylon, not all of the people were taken – the poor were left in their own land. God had promised through his prophets that this exile would only be for a limited time, 70 years and after that they would be able to return from exile to their own country. This is exactly what happened.

➔ Move the part of the group in the South part of Canaan to Babylon.

BREAK

Daniel and friends in Exile in Babylon

Questions:

1. *Who can name someone who was in exile in Babylon and followed God even when things got difficult? (Daniel!)*
2. *Try to have the group summarise some of the things that happened to Daniel and his friends. (If there is enough time, they could act out one of the stories)*

During the exile in Babylon there were some significant changes to Jewish worship. They were unable to go to Jerusalem to worship God in the Temple, but as we can see from the story of Daniel, at least some of the people were still faithful in praying to God. They had to learn that God is everywhere, not just in Jerusalem. It is thought that during this time, they started the practice of having synagogues (meeting houses where they met to pray and worship God and also where they could teach their children about God). But they did not offer sacrifices in the synagogues.

The Return from Exile (Ezra and Nehemiah)

After 70 years, just as God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah, He made it possible for the people of Judah (by this time known as Jews) to return to their land. Their return from exile is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

 Read Ezra 1:1-4

Questions:


1. *Who did God use to send his people back to Jerusalem? (King Cyrus of Persia!)*
2. *What job did they have to do when they went back? (Rebuild the temple)*

The book of Ezra describes the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem which had been destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. There was a lot of opposition to the rebuilding of the temple by people who did not want the Jewish people to move back to Jerusalem, but in the end it was completed. When it was completed they dedicated it and then celebrated the Passover Festival which they had not been able to celebrate while in exile.

 Read Ezra 6:19-22

The book of Nehemiah describes the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem which was lead by a man called Nehemiah. This also faced opposition, but in the end it was completed.

When many of the Israelites (Israelites now refers to the people descended from the Kingdom of Judah) had returned from exile, they all assembled together in Jerusalem and Ezra, the priest read the book of the law to everyone who was able to understand.

 Read Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8-12, Nehemiah 9:1-3

In these verses we can see that when the people returned from exile, they were really serious about repenting and turning back to God.

Prophecies about Jesus and their fulfilment

- Prepare in advance slips of paper with the Bible references given below and sheets of paper or card with the corresponding summary statements written big enough to be seen by the group.
- Ask everyone to stand in a circle with their Bibles with them if they have them.
- Hand out slips of paper with the Bible references for the OT prophecies about Jesus, in order as below. They should take it in turn to read out the verses indicated on their slip of paper and then be given a piece of paper with a summary of the prophecy on it to hold up.
- Once all the prophecies have been read out and everyone has their summary paper, go around the circle again and for each one ask them to explain how that prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus lifetime – help them if necessary.

Bible references and corresponding summary statements:

1. Isaiah 7:14 – A virgin will give birth to a son called Immanuel
2. Micah 5:2-5 – A ruler will come out of Bethlehem
3. Isaiah 40:3-5 – Someone will prepare the way for the Lord
4. Isaiah 9:1-2 – God will do something special in Galilee – a new light will be seen
5. Isaiah 9:6-7 – A child will be born who will reign forever
6. Isaiah 61:1-2 – He will preach good news to the poor and set captives free from darkness
7. Isaiah 29:18-19 – The deaf will hear and the blind will see
8. Zechariah 9:9 – A King will enter Jerusalem on a donkey
9. Zechariah 13:7 – When they strike the shepherd, the sheep will be scattered!
10. Isaiah 53:1-3 - He was rejected by men
11. Isaiah 53:4-6 - He was ‘pierced’ for our sin and by his wounds we are healed
12. Isaiah 53:7 – He was silent when oppressed
13. Isaiah 53:8-9 – He died with wicked people although he had done nothing wrong
14. Isaiah 53:10 – It was God’s will that he should be a ‘guilt offering’
15. Isaiah 53:11-12 – After suffering he will see the light of life; he will justify many and bear their sin
16. Psalm 16:10 – God’s “Holy One” will not decay in a grave
17. Jeremiah 31:31-34 – God will make a new covenant with his people

For facilitator’s reference, here are the prophecies and corresponding NT passages:

Isaiah 7:14 – Matt 1:18-25

Micah 5:2-5 – Matt 2:1-6

Isaiah 40:1-5 – Matt 3:1-3

Isaiah 9:1-7 – Matt 4:12-16

Isaiah 61:1-2 – Luke 4:16-19
Isaiah 29:18-19 – Luke 7:18-23
Zechariah 9:9 – Luke 19:28-38
Zechariah 13:7 – Matt 26:31
Isaiah 53 – Luke 23
Psalm 16:10 – Matt 28:1-7
Jeremiah 31:31-34 – Luke 22:20, Hebrews 10:1-18.

Additional Resources

- Blank timelines for Days 1 and 2
- Example filled in timelines for Days 1 and 2.

This document is available for download at: <http://www.scripture-engagement.org>

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