

# Route 66

## *Overview of the Old Testament: The History of Redemption*

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Although the Bible (and especially the Old Testament) contains a lot of factual history, it's *not* a history book; it's a redemption book! It's an epic record of grace and compassion and deliverance and salvation and restoration. To read it any other way is to miss the point entirely.



Genesis

In the beginning, God creates a perfect world wherein He can enjoy an intimate, joyful connection with children made in His image. And Adam and Eve are offered the choice between good and evil so that their relationship with their Father-Creator will be genuine.

But they fall to the temptation of distrusting God's heart, and place their own will above His. This rebellion destroys their innocence and severs their intimate relationship with the Father. The very first sacrifice for sin is offered by God *Himself*, when He uses animal skins to clothe them and cover their shame. And God pledges to send a Redeemer to restore the relationship their sin has severed. He says to the deceiving serpent:

... he will crush your head [**Defeat sin and death**], and you will strike his heel [**It'll cost him his life**]. - *Genesis 3:15b NIV*

Adam lives to see the devastating effects of sin. Not only does his first son, Cain, murder his brother, but within nine generations mankind degenerates into wickedness *beyond hope*. God demonstrates, with a flood, the horror of judgment and the need for a Redeemer. Only one blameless man, Noah, qualifies to foreshadow the Savior and offer salvation from God's judgment.

However, his descendants unify against God and begin to build a self-glorifying monument known as the Tower of Babel. So, to curb their self-destructive drive, God confuses mankind's speech. But instead of repenting, they segregate into nations and create false gods to serve their lusts and their selfish desires.



Job

In one of these segregated nations, a man named JOB learns that although God's ways are beyond tracing out, the Lord can be *trusted* to redeem.

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. - *Job 19:25-26 NIV*

In another nation, a childless old man named Abraham responds to God's call with devotion. And the Lord makes a covenant with him (sealed by circumcision) to bring the Redeemer through his line.

I will make you into a great nation ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. - *Genesis 12:2-3 NIV*

After Abraham's nephew, Lot heads off to Sodom, God *promises* to give Abraham *all* the land in Canaan; and from then on this land of the segregated nations is referred to as the "Promised Land". And Abraham's trust is put to the ultimate test when God asks him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. But, God intervenes and points to a day when an only begotten Son *must* pay the price of sin.

Isaac has twin sons: Esau and Jacob. And, demonstrating that the Redeemer's grace will not be earned or merited, God chooses to honor the younger twin, Jacob, (and changes his name to Israel).

Israel's favorite son, Joseph, is sold into slavery by jealous brothers, but rises to great power in Egypt. And when a famine hits the land, his brothers unknowingly turn to Joseph for help. Foreshadowing the Redeemer, Joseph offers forgiveness to those who sinned against him. And he brings his brothers (and their families) to Egypt where they become the twelve tribes of Israel. The Lord said to them:

I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. - *Genesis 46:3b-4a*

400 years later, God is ready. He allows His chosen people to be forced into slave labor, to prompt their desire to leave "home". Their massive population threatens the Egyptians who exterminate the Hebrew male babies. But one baby, Moses, is miraculously spared, adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, and raised as royalty.



Exodus

At age 40, he kills an Egyptian for mistreating an Israelite, he flees to the desert county, he shepherds for 40 more years, and he's called by God (in a burning to bush) to deliver His people.

So, Moses and his brother Aaron go to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh (*and* the Israelites) are ignorant of God's authority. So, He sends ten plagues specifically designed to demonstrate His power over Egyptian gods, goddesses, and powers. The last plague brings death to firstborn males. Even Pharaoh's son (himself considered a god) dies. But, the Israelites are instructed to kill a lamb and brush its blood on their doorway.

... when I see the blood, I will pass over you. - *Exodus 12:13 NIV*

That morning they pass *through* the blood of the Lamb as they leave slavery behind and embrace salvation. God is beginning to reveal the significance in the coming Redeemer's blood.

God delivers them at the Red Sea, feeds them manna, speaks from Mount Sinai, and forgives them when they worship a golden calf. And He displays his desire to restore the severed relationship by dwelling among them in a tent of worship called the Tabernacle.



Leviticus

Moses is given a set of laws and religious regulations (to instill an appreciation for the severity of sin and the holiness of God). And all the sacrifices in the tabernacle and the festivals in the homes perfectly foreshadow, and offer a rehearsal for, the coming Redeemer.



Numbers

God brings them directly to the Promised Land. But ten of twelve spies fill the people with fear and they refuse to enter in. So, they're sentenced to 40 years of wandering and a *glut* of manna.



And poor Moses ends up disobeying a command from God, out of anger with his people, and is not allowed to enter the Promised Land.



Deuteronomy

Finally, God has a new generation of people who are ready to bring His judgment to the segregated nations and become the centerpiece of the Promised Land so that the world can recognize and appreciate the goodness and holiness of God, and their critical need for the coming Redeemer.



Joshua

Joshua was one of the two *faithful* spies, so Moses anoints him as his successor. And the Lord leads Joshua to victory at Jericho, the center of the Promised Land and the major trade routes of the ancient world. They go throughout Canaan, conquering one fortification after another.

Seven years later, Joshua divides the land between the twelve tribes; and warns them to conquer their remaining enemies. But they don't. They intermarry. They compromise. They adopt idol worship. And they become enslaved in a whole new way.



Judges

After Joshua, come the judges: 350 years where Israel again and again turns from God, falls to an enemy, and repents. And each time, God raises up a deliverer (known as a "judge"). The two most famous are Gideon (who hesitates to trust God) and Samson (who trusts a prostitute *over* God).

At times God's *chosen* lie, deceive, rebel, and struggle to trust Him. But, these *are* the people He chooses to use, *and* to redeem.



Ruth

During this cycle of rebellion, a pagan widow named Ruth turns from her idols and culture to the living God. She accompanies her mother-in-law to Bethlehem, and demonstrates that redemption is open to Gentiles (by marrying a faithful Jew and directly advancing the line of the Messiah).



First Samuel

Then comes the period of kings: rejecting God's warning, Israel compels Samuel, the *last* judge, to anoint Saul as king. He's strong and smart but has no heart for God. This is contrasted when God anoints Ruth's great grandson, David, a *highly unlikely* boy with a *full* heart for God.



Psalms



First Chronicles

David puts emotion and expression to worship in the Psalms, expands the kingdom, makes Jerusalem the capitol, and brings home the sacred Ark of the Covenant. And he designs a majestic temple.



Second Samuel

Saul had the *external* form, but David has the *internal* heart, so God pledges that the throne won't leave his lineage until the Redeemer sits on it forever. David's sin with Bathsheba reminds us not to put our faith in faulty humans; and that the Redeemer must be something *more*.



Proverbs

David's son, Solomon, starts strong. He's blessed with wisdom and wealth and power beyond compare. He completes the temple, palaces, and fortified cities to much acclaim! And God's chosen people are finally poised to fulfill their calling to be a witness to the world of the coming Redeemer.

Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom ... - 1 Kings 4:34 NIV



Song of Solomon

But, after writing proverbs and a poem of intimacy and fidelity, he marries *1000* wives, adopts their foreign idols, and vainly seeks out satisfaction in every conceivable *substitute* source.



Ecclesiastes



First Kings

His years of sin take a heavy toll. His son, Rehoboam splits the nation; and the ten northern tribes (who retain the name, *Israel*) are ruled by 19 consecutive evil kings. And, in spite of the warnings of Elijah and Elisha, Israel entangles itself in spiritual adultery with fertility gods.



Hosea

God instructs the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute to show them what they're doing. And Amos, a sarcastic farmer-turned-prophet ironically encourages them to keep on sinning!



Amos

And, both promise restoration and redemption if Israel repents.



Jonah

To remind Israel of her abandoned mission, God forces the unwilling Jonah to go to Nineveh (the capitol of their vicious enemy, the Assyrians). But, even when the *entire* pagan nation embraces God, calloused Israel is uninspired, and refuses to restore the covenant and resume her calling.

In the south, the tiny tribe of Benjamin joins the huge tribe of Judah and they're ruled by seven good kings and twelve bad ones. Sadly, the heart of the people turns irreversibly away from God.



Micah

Using courtroom language, Micah warns *both* nations that God will judge their unfaithfulness. And Isaiah gives details! He says Assyria will destroy Israel, and Babylon will exile Judah.



Isaiah

He predicts the burning of the temple, the eventual destruction of Babylon, and the return of the remnant. He also informs them the Redeemer will be a Suffering Servant *and* a Conquering King. "... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." - *Isaiah 53:6b NIV*

Isaiah lives to see the Assyrians conquer and assimilate Israel.



Nahum

Nahum poetically foretells the end of the Assyrians' reign of terror. And Joel uses bizarre imagery of locust-soldiers to warn Judah of a similar fate if she refuses to repent.



Joel

Shortly after, the Assyrians are annihilated by the Babylonians.



Zephaniah

The prophet, Zephaniah, employs hyperbole to warn Judah with the harshest possible words. And, Habakkuk declares his trust in God after failing to argue Him out of their impending doom.



Habakkuk



Daniel

Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are in the first group to be taken to Babylon. And, ten years later, Ezekiel is taken with a second wave of prisoners.



Ezekiel

Daniel serves in the palace; Ezekiel among the exiles. And both receive incredible visions. Daniel is given a timeline of the Redeemer; and Ezekiel foresees the indwelling of His Holy Spirit:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you ... - *Ezekiel 36:26 NIV*



Jeremiah

Back in Judah, Jeremiah, makes one last, unsuccessful attempt to turn his people back to God. He witnesses Judah's destruction *firsthand*, and describes it in his lament over Judah's sin.



Lamentations



Second Kings

And they're gone. The nation God chose, protected, and blessed has failed; because, although *animal* sacrifices can remove the *penalty* of sin, they can't "indwell" and break its power.



Second Chronicles



Obadiah

In Babylon, Obadiah brings consolation when he foresees God visiting justice to Esau's nation for "selling out" his brother, Jacob's, people. And, 50 years after destroying Jerusalem and the temple, Babylon itself is destroyed by the Persians. Just as Isaiah had predicted, a leader named Cyrus releases the Jews, returns the temple implements, and funds the reconstruction.



Haggai

50,000 Jews return home and begin rebuilding the temple. But, they run into opposition and let it sit idle for 14 years. So, the prophet, Haggai, steps up and tells them to get their priorities in order, and motivates them back to work. But, they're soon discouraged once again.



Zechariah

Then, Zechariah inspires them to *finish*, with visions and details of the coming Redeemer: He'll be a king who serves as *priest*. He'll come humbly riding on a donkey. And though He'll be rejected and sold for 30 pieces of silver, He'll triumph, and remove their sin in a single day!

As His time draws nearer, the details become clearer and clearer.



Esther

Back in Babylon, an orphan named, Esther, shows that God is watching over the Jews who stayed behind. Esther providentially becomes queen and with the encouragement of her cousin Mordecai, she puts her life on the line and saves her people from a holocaust type extermination.



Ezra

60 years after the temple is rebuilt, Ezra arrives with 7,000 men, women, and children, and a load of gold and silver from Esther's stepson, King Artaxerxes I, to beautify the temple. But, he finds the people violating God's laws; so, he leads them in repentance and instructs them.



Nehemiah

13 years later, Nehemiah (Artaxerxes' cupbearer) brings supplies from the king, to rebuild the walls and gates (so people will repopulate the city). They finish in 52 days and move back in! He serves as governor for 12 years, goes back to Artaxerxes for two years, and then returns.



Malachi

Nehemiah's friend, Malachi becomes the last voice of the prophets. He calls his people to set their hearts to honor God, in eager anticipation of the coming Redeemer. And their *future* became our past. We get to know that the Redeemer came! And He was perfectly on schedule as predicted.

God's only begotten Son became the *final*, perfect sacrifice, to break the grip of sin and death, and to redeem all mankind.

Death began with man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, and ended with the Redeemer's *obedience* in the Garden of Gethsemane.

One of the most powerful lessons of the Old Testament is this:

- Because of brokenness, man can't seem to keep his promises.
- And, because of holiness, God cannot *not* keep His!