



Old Testament Narrative

Saturday 7th February 2026

Teaching by Andy McCullough

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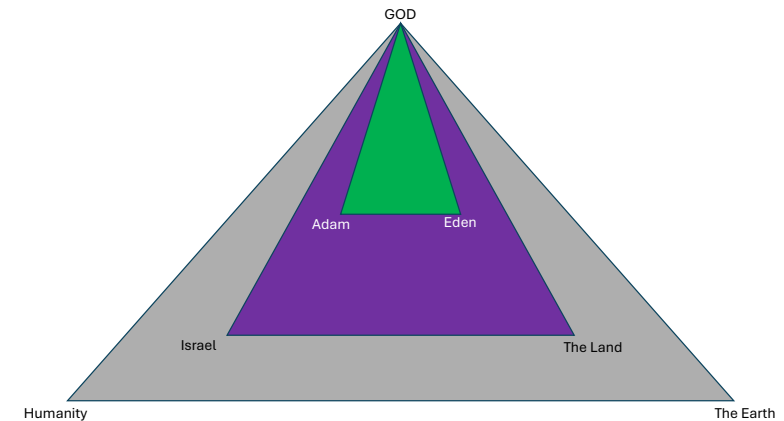
1. The Importance of Narrative Overview

- “The Bible is like the bazaar in Old Jerusalem. You can get anything you want. If you want verses justifying oppression, you can find them. If you want verses about liberation and justice, you can find them. What you find in the Bible says more about you than it does about the Bible.” Mitri Raheb

2. Some Key Themes

A. Eden, the Land, the Earth

Eden	Promised Land	Whole Earth
Adam	Joshua	Jesus
One new family	One new nation	One new humanity
Failure – exile eastwards	Failure – exile eastwards	



From Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*

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B. Stories of the Ark

C. Bethlehem

and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. Matthew 1:4-6.

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D. Three tones of voice

Royal Perspective	Prophetic Perspective	Priestly Perspective
Concerned with physical Jerusalem	Concerned with ideal or future Jerusalem	Concerned with the Law
Horizontal time (progress)	Vertical time (interruptions)	Cyclical time (festivals)
Centre	Margins	de-centred
Optimistic	Critical	Atonement
Metrics: growth, scale, prosperity	Metrics: justice and righteousness	Metrics: holiness, biblical literacy, purity
Prose	Poetry	Laws

3. Conquest to Kingship

A. Joshua

“The bizarre strategy confirmed that Israel could not attribute victory to its own military prowess. Their victory was a gift of grace – an astounding work of the Lord.” Schreiner

As Joshua leads his people into a land flowing with milk and honey, complete with cities they did not build and vineyards they did not plant, we are reminded that one day freedom will come, and a true and better Joshua will bring God’s people through the waters, rescue prostitutes and sinners and Gentiles, and provide them all with an inheritance of peace, abundance, and rest. Just not yet. Roberts and Wilson.

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B. Judges

C. Ruth

“Surprisingly, Ruth forms a link in the chain that would bring David into the world, solving the problem of Judges, where Israel lacked a king. And a future son of David would bring many more Ruths, many more Gentiles into the fold of God’s people, and fulfil the promise of universal blessing made to Abraham.” Schreiner

- House of Bread
- House of Lamb
- House of Inclusion
- House of Reconciliation
- House of Redemption
- House of Shame-Absorption
- House of the Seed

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D. I Samuel: The Rise of David

“Judah was proclaimed the royal tribe only after he had offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin. Similarly, Saul became king without ever accepting the cross, while David, the king from Judah, rose to the throne only after a death and resurrection.” Peter Leithart

E. II Samuel: The Fall of David

This tradition of royal authoritarianism and of poetic (prophetic) interruption is a rivalry that permeates Israel’s tradition.
Brueggemann, Walter.

4. Kings and Chronicles (Divided Kingdom)

“In hindsight, the tight intertwining of Solomon with Pharaoh’s daughter serves as a grim and deeply troubling refrain in his story. By making their marriage the opening (3:1) and closing (11:1) note of the Solomon narrative, the Bible is tainting Solomon from start to finish.” Alex Israel

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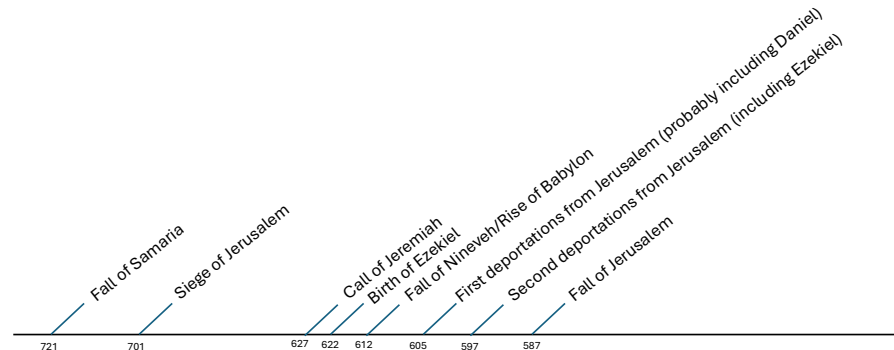
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“The establishment of a controlled, static religion in which God and his temple have become part of the royal landscape, in which the sovereignty of God is fully subordinated to the purpose of the king. In Jerusalem in this period there is a radical revision in the character of God. Now God is fully accessible to the king who is his patron, and the freedom of God is completely overcome. It is almost inconceivable that the God domiciled in Jerusalem would ever say anything substantive or abrasive.” Walter Brueggemann

5. The Emergence of the Prophets

Of paramount importance in the history of Israel was the freedom and independence enjoined by the prophets, their ability to upbraid the kings and princes for their sins. From the beginning of the monarchy, the king was at any moment in peril of rebuke, even of rejection, by the prophets, who reminded him that the king's sovereignty was not unlimited. Abraham Heschel

6. Inevitable Exile



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“So while we can value all the positive contributions that Ezekiel’s education and training as a priest brought to his prophetic ministry, we must also appreciate the immense personal, professional and theological shock it must have been to him when, in his thirtieth year, the year he ought to have entered on his ordained priestly career, God broke into his life, wrecked all such career prospects, and constrained him to a role he may himself have viewed with considerable suspicion - the lonely, friendless, unpopular role of being a prophet, the mouthpiece of Yahweh.” Motyer.

“It is hard to understand the depth of the crisis into which the destruction of the first Temple plunged the Jewish people. Their very existence was predicated on a relationship with God symbolised by the worship that took place daily in Jerusalem... In losing the Temple, it was as if they had lost hope itself.” Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

“In establishing the synagogue, Judaism created one of the greatest revolutions in the history of religion and society, for the synagogue was an entirely new environment for divine service, of a type unknown anywhere before.” Professor Stern, *A History of the Jewish People*.

“Thus, in the fateful year 587 B.C. Jerusalem fell. It was the end of the house of David as a temporal dynasty, the end of Judah as a sovereign state, the end of Jerusalem as a fortress. But it was the beginning, as Jeremiah already dimly perceived, of a new Jerusalem made without hands, of the House of David spiritually supreme amongst the kings of the earth, and of a conquered People conquering the world by suffering and faith.” Caiger

“It was in exile, in Babylon, that Torah rose to a prominence in the life of the nation that it rarely had before, because it was now the very basis of the nation’s identity. A people in exile have by definition lost all the other things that made them a nation – their land, home, language, landscape, independence and sovereignty... It was then that the priestly voice came into its own. For monotheism makes possible something impossible otherwise: *a living relationship with God away from home*.” Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.