

## God's Plan in the Historical Books

June 16, 2013

Today continues our series on God's Plan in Scripture.

- In our first week, Pastor Viars encouraged us to think about the plan of Scripture in the word "Jesus" and in the words "creation, fall, redemption."
- Last week Pastor Aucoin helped us think about God's plan in the Pentateuch.

Today, I have the opportunity to help us think about the historical books.

- I have to say that I was totally pumped when P.V. assigned this section to me.
- It is one of my favorite areas of the OT. Are you ready?

So let's begin with a definition ...

### I. Definition of the Historical Books

**The historical books are the books of Joshua thru Esther** (233 pages in my Bible). So, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

**These books, in particular, recount the history of the nation of Israel from the death of Moses in (1445 BC) all the way to return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (Mid 400s BC).**

- To put in context of Pastor Aucoin's sermon last week ... Abraham was given his promise of land, seed, and blessing about 2165 BC. Those promises were passed to Abraham's son Issac, and then on to Jacob (who was also named Israel). Jacob's 12 sons were the beginnings of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- This people group grew and fled to Egypt during a famine. Then Moses, the author of the Pentateuch, was called by God to lead his people out of Egypt. This happened about 1445 BC (some 700 years after Abraham).

So you might be tempted to think ... I bet these books are boring history. I hope by the end of this sermon you cannot wait to read them.

Despite the wide range of time and material, these books are some of the most entertaining reading in the Bible. After all, there is ...

- Suspense ... In Joshua 6 we have a nation walking around the city of Jericho for 7 days preparing to blow trumpets. What in the world is that going to do?
- Surprise ... In 1 Samuel 8 the nations begs God for a king only to realize that sometimes God gives you what to ask for to prove to you that what you think will make you happy doesn't satisfy for long.
- Action ... Throughout David's life there is constant action. He is off fighting various wars so much so that in order to be a mighty man of David you have to have killed 1,000 men with a toothpick. Ok... so I exaggerated a little.
  - 2 Samuel 23:8 describes the dude who was bad to the bone (<sup>8</sup> **These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against eight**

**hundred whom he killed at one time.)** What? 800! Darth Vader could not even do that and he had a light saber.

- Hopeless Romance ... David kills Goliath and Saul offers his daughter ... oh, not free ... at the cost 100 Philistine foreskins.
  - You didn't get those by asking for them.
  - David had to kill people. He not only brings 100, he brings 200.
  - He wins the girl with bravery and with giving her father even more than what he asked for.
    - I can't wait to share this story with the first boy that wants to date Mackenzie.
- Dedication against all odds ... We have Nehemiah and Ezra who through thick and thin press on with their tasks to build the wall around Jerusalem and the temple inside it so that true and genuine spiritual revival can occur in the nation.
- Irony ... We even have Queen Esther, an orphan girl was used of God to rescue the entire Jewish nation.
  - You have Solomon, the wisest man in the world think that having 300 wives was a good idea.
- Crazy ... We have judges like Gideon (who goes into battle screaming "For God and for Gideon" [I get the first part, not so sure about the second]). Then you have Samson. You read about Jephthah and you think that dude must have been on crack.
  - As you are reading you just can't decide if there is an ounce of good or just wholesale wickedness.
  - We have the ending of judges that is so unbelievably crazy with guys hiding in the bushes looking for girls and they are told to "grab one and marry her" that you almost cannot believe it is in the Bible.

Let's be frank ... the Harry Potter books are not even this good.

I think the historical books are awesome!

- If you have not read them lately, I would encourage you to read them like a book ... read them fast and see what you have been missing.

On a more serious note, I have given you an insert this morning that provides a very simple paragraph about each book in this section of God's Word. I would encourage you to read it on your own and use it for reference.

Now that I have covered some of the basic content of the books, we need to think in larger pictures. We need examine how the historical books fit into God's storyline of the Bible. In order to do that, I want to trace some of the key themes.

## II. Themes in the Historical Books

For the sake of time and simplicity I am going to discuss three of the themes and site a series of examples from the historical books to show how that theme worked out in practice.

### A. Focus on the Lord brings blessing while Forgetting the Lord Brings Ruin

As Brent mentioned last week, God is Holy and there is no rival to him. He is the sovereign creator and redeemer.

- What we find in the historical books is that when God's people will recognize God's character and live in light of it then they experience his blessing.
- However, when they act pridefully and attempt to live independent of the creator and redeemer God, then they experience ruin.

While this could be illustrated in dozens and dozens of ways including ...

- Saul sacrificed when he was instructed not to.
- David seduces Bathsheba and kills her husband.
- Eli does not discipline and teach his sons
- The nation acts in idolatry and are deported to Babylon.

Nevertheless there are two stories that show this point as well as any.

### *#1. City of Ai and the importance of Holiness in Holy War*

Joshua is an exciting book. There are few events more exciting in Joshua than the story of Jericho.

- It is a high point, the nation obeys the Lord and they experience victory.
- Jericho is one of the cities that must be taken. It has a wall and one would expect that many lives will be cost.
- Yet, God gives it to them casualty free. We love this story in church. We even have cool songs about it.

However, the Word of God gives 10 times more text in Scripture to a little town call Ai. This story reminds us of the significance of the Fall and just how quickly God's people can turn from him. There is no wall in Ai and the nation thinks that everything is good

**Joshua 7:2- 5 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." So the men went up and spied out Ai. (3) They returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up; *only* about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few."**

Can you hear their attitude? They don't need God, in fact they don't even need all the soldiers. This will be easy. We got this!

**(4) So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. (5) The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water.**

They experience defeat. Men die. The ground is not taken.

- It is not because the city of Ai had fiercer warriors, it was that the people did not have the God's blessing because they were not holy.
- Achan had taken some of the spoil from Jericho. Sin was in the camp.

- If we had taken time to read Joshua 1-5 we would have seen that every action is related to holiness. Joshua is not about war, it is about holy war. In order to wage holy war .... You must be HOLY!

Time for a new plan. This time let's not be so arrogant. First, they deal with Achan's sin. In other words, they address the sin in the camp. But more than that ... Joshua leads them not to be prideful either ...

**Joshua 8:3** So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night.

In the midst of all these changes, we see his dependence on the Lord for a few verses later we find ...

**Joshua 8:18, 26** Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. ... (26) For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

Joshua leads the nation to deal with their sin (so that they are holy) and to deal with their pride (by choosing the valiant men).

Friends, the Bible tells us that our battle is not against flesh and blood ... our primary battle is a spiritual one. We are in Holy War. In order to wage Holy war properly, you must actually be holy.

- Can I ask you then, how do you deal with your sin? Do you ignore it? Do you minimize it? Do you tell the person that confronted you, that we are just not connecting?
- Friends, How we work is a spiritual battle? How we live out my marriage is a spiritual battle. Just like the nation of Israel, we can have an attitude of "I got this." We can lose the importance of holiness in our holy war.

If the Spirit is bringing conviction in your life, don't ignore it. Learn from the historical books. A second example which illustrates the same point comes in both Judges and the Kings.

### *#2. Judges Generations and the Northern Kings*

At the end of Joshua we see that the nation occupies a significant portion of the promised land (the land promised to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob). They have, for the most part, eliminated the inhabitants of the land. However, we are not very far into the book of Judges before a very important passage occurs ...

**Judges 2:10** All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

The generation of Joshua had seen the mighty works of God and yet they did not pass on this information to their children.

- I can imagine it now ... at the dinner table there was more discussion about the baseball averages than there was about the Lord.
- There was more discussion at bedtime about the games played during the day than there was about the Lord.
- When there was suffering in the world, the conversation began with “Se la vie” (such is life) rather than thinking about what the Lord might be doing in the midst of the suffering.
- When the crops were successful, when the industry was improving the discussion turned to how wise, smart, insightful the person was rather than on the gracious Lord who gave that person wisdom, health, and strength to accomplish it.

So what happened when you have a generation that does not know the Lord nor the works he has done in Israel?

- “Everyone did what is right in their own eyes.” It was total anarchy. Sin ran completely rampant and innocent people suffer while the guilty often go free.
- As soon as the Lord is not in the equation anymore, there are very few motivations for caring about others.
  - o We see this in Christian homes today. There is no conversation about the Lord, no landscaping at Faith West, No VBS, no teaching of the Word, no focus on the Lord daily. So what results? Conflict as everyone does what is right in their own eyes.

After this period of anarchy, the nation gets a king (around 1050 BC). But even that does not solve matters for a hundred years later in 931 BC there is a split of the kingdom between the northern tribes and the Southern tribes. During that split the northern tribes follow a particular person ...

**1 Kings 12:25-32 Jeroboam built up Shechem in the Ephraimite hill country and lived there. From there he went out and built up Peniel. <sup>12:26</sup> Jeroboam then thought to himself: “Now the Davidic dynasty could regain the kingdom. <sup>12:27</sup> If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the LORD’s temple in Jerusalem, their loyalty could shift to their former master, King Rehoboam of Judah. They might kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah.” <sup>12:28</sup> After the king had consulted with his advisers, he made two golden calves. Then he said to the people, “It is too much trouble for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look, Israel, here are your gods who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” <sup>12:29</sup> He put one in Bethel and the other in Dan. <sup>12:30</sup> This caused Israel to sin; the people went to Bethel and Dan to worship the calves. <sup>12:31</sup> He built temples on the high places and appointed as priests people who were not Levites. <sup>12:32</sup> Jeroboam inaugurated a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival celebrated in Judah. On the altar in Bethel he offered sacrifices to the calves he had made. In Bethel he also appointed priests for the high places he had made.**

Here is an outright attempt to eliminate the true and right worship of God. The Northern tribes reject the worship of God, they establish a new way to worship God.

- What is the theme we are looking at? Focus on the Lord brings blessings while rejecting him brings ruin.
- The nation of Israel follows after Jeroboam. His children, grandchildren and great grandchildren lead the nation further and further away from God. His evil becomes the family legacy until they are sent to captivity in 722 BC.

When the nation follows God, they experience blessing and when they act like they don't need him, they experience ruin.

One of the lessons that screams out from the historical books is the significance of actively and aggressively pursuing a deep, meaningful, and obedient relationship with the Lord.

- We like the nation of Israel have tendencies to wander, we have tendencies to create idols of our own making, we have tendencies to want things our way.

God has provided the historical books in his Word to help us see that our 24/7 needs to be about Jesus.

- When we worship him in our work, in our family, in our hearts, and in our thoughts then we experience the blessings that come from walking with the creator and redeemer.
- When we limit our thoughts about the Lord to Sunday morning (and not even faithfully at that), then we miss out on his blessing.
  - o Our homes look more like a war zone because "everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes."
  - o Our attitudes are filled with frustration because God's discipline is uncomfortable.

Friends, the historical books are screaming at the top of the lungs to learn from their mistakes. Follow the Lord wholeheartedly and experience his blessing.

Not only do we see the theme that those who walk with God receive blessing and those who try to live independently suffer ruin, but we also see ...

### **B. A Fully Human Ruler/King Can Never Fully Satisfy the needs of the people**

Much of the historical books introduce us to important figures in the nation of Israel. We see the end of Moses' life, Joshua, each of the judges who offer a form of deliverance, then the kings like Saul, David, Solomon, and others. In each case there are some redeeming qualities. However, there are also some question marks.

- Moses struck a rock when he was told to speak to it.
- Joshua made a deal with the Gibeonites when God told him not to.
- Saul sacrificed when told not to
- David took another man's wife and had the man killed
- Solomon multiplied wives to himself.

The irony is that the book of Deuteronomy introduced us to the idea of a king. In fact, in Deut 17:14-20 says.

<sup>17:14</sup> When you come to the land the LORD your God is giving you and take it over and live in it and then say, “I will select a king like all the nations surrounding me,” <sup>17:15</sup> you must select without fail a king whom the LORD your God chooses. From among your fellow citizens you must appoint a king—you may not designate a foreigner who is not one of your fellow Israelites. <sup>17:16</sup> Moreover, he must not accumulate horses for himself or allow the people to return to Egypt to do so, for the LORD has said you must never again return that way.

<sup>17:17</sup> Furthermore, he must not marry many wives lest his affections turn aside, and he must not accumulate much silver and gold. <sup>17:18</sup> When he sits on his royal throne he must make a copy of this law on a scroll given to him by the Levitical priests. <sup>17:19</sup> It must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out. <sup>17:20</sup> Then he will not exalt himself above his fellow citizens or turn from the commandments to the right or left, and he and his descendants will enjoy many years ruling over his kingdom in Israel.

- There is a foreshadowing of nation, kingship, ruler in the Pentateuch (God is building a kingdom) that becomes much more prominent in the historical books. But one thing about these kings becomes clear ... they all fail ... and in many cases they fail miserably.
- Notice v. 17 ... Solomon forgot that one ...
- what about v. 18 one wonders if any king did that ...
- what about v. 19 it seems that all the kings struggled there.

My point is that over and over and over and over and over and over again there is human failure. The fall of man in Genesis 3 was so significant that no one could overcome it. Even the best of the best (Moses, Joshua, David) could not live it out perfectly.

So who is going to rule? Who will be the king that rules forever? Who will be the one that we look to for guidance, for instruction, for help in time of need? The historical books make us long for Jesus, for Jesus, for Jesus. He is the only one that we can fully rely upon.

Sometimes in our counseling ministry we serve people who are having a hard time trusting each other ... for good reason.

- While we want them to rebuild the trust, while we want the shadow of doubt to stop looming over their home.
- Please listen ... there is only one who is perfect. There is only one who will never hurt you. There is only one who will love you consistently. There is only one who can satisfy the desires of your heart. Everyone else (including you is a work in progress).
  - o So do not expect your husband, wife, son, daughter to give you only what the Lord Jesus can give you.
  - o So Love the Lord as the only one who can truly satisfy [Since we know the rest of the story we can see just how Jesus is the one who can make all this right.]

Another very important theme throughout the Historical books is this

### C. God is active in the midst of our chaos to move his plan toward completion

Without question the people struggle with holiness ... time and time again.

- Without question the people run away from God and created idols.
- Without question even the best of the best failed in significant ways. So the Historical books scream that man is fallen.
- They scream that man, on his own will never, ever be good enough for God.

But here is what else they scream ... They scream that God is a redeemer God.

- He has a plan for all history and that plan is wonderful.
- This creator God did not give up on his fallen creation.
- He did not write us off. He did not choose to ignore us, instead he works in the midst of our failure to bring about beautiful things.
- There are glimpses of redemption in every book.

Again I could highlight this in many different ways such as the provision of Joshua, the raising up of Judges for the nation of Israel as a demonstration of God's faithfulness., there is the provision of a little orphan girl named Esther, there is the provision of two godly exiles named Nehemiah and Ezra who seek to re-establish the covenant with God. But maybe the most significant example of all is the covenant that God made with David.

There are many covenants (promises) that God made with is people.

- The major ones include the covenant with Abraham ... land, seed (both of which we see progressing toward fulfillment in the historical books) and blessing.
- There is the Mosaic covenant (the law as it is often called) based on the ten commandments.
- Then there is the Davidic covenant. In many ways, the Davidic covenant is the centerpiece of the historical books.

What we see is that these covenants are part of God's plan. They are moments in time where God draws a line in the sand and says here is what we are going to do. I want to read the covenant that God makes with David

**2 Samuel 7:8-16 <sup>7:8</sup>“So now, say this to my servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of hosts says: I took you from the pasture and from your work as a shepherd to make you leader of my people Israel. <sup>7:9</sup>I was with you wherever you went, and I defeated all your enemies before you. Now I will make you as famous as the great men of the earth. <sup>7:10</sup>I will establish a place for my people Israel and settle them there; they will live there and not be disturbed any more. Violent men will not oppress them again, as they did in the beginning <sup>7:11</sup>and during the time when I appointed judges to lead my people Israel. Instead, I will give you relief from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that he himself will build a dynastic house for you. <sup>7:12</sup>When the time comes for you to die, I will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>7:13</sup>He will build a house for my name, and I will make his dynasty permanent. <sup>7:14</sup>I will become his father and he will become my son. When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings. <sup>7:15</sup>But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>7:16</sup>Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent.’ ”**

Notice the key features of this covenant. God promises that David's dynasty would last FOREVER. God promises that he will not remove the kingdom from David as he removed it from Saul.

When God makes these covenant promises to build a kingdom, in spite of man's continual failures, God is fulfilling his own plan. God is building his kingdom and human foolishness and sinfulness cannot derail that commitment.

Praise God for that! Praise God that he makes commitments he does not renege, he does not make excuses, he does not change his mind. What God does is stay true to his word all the time.

Now that we know the rest of the story, we know that Jesus will fulfill the covenant to David and will rule FOREVER.

I want to encourage you to love the Lord your God with all your heart because of this.

- I want you to see that God's plan is fully intact. There are no threats to it. There are no concerns with it. God who is creator and redeemer is on the throne and doing just fine.

You see, the historical books are not simply about the history of Israel. They are not just entertaining. They are incredibly practical. These themes relate to your life on a daily basis.

- Just like Israel ... when we choose to act like we don't need God, we experience ruin.
- Just like Israel ... when we place too much hope and trust in a human being (even ourselves) we are ultimately disappointed
- Just like Israel ... God is actively moving his plan toward completion and God is not thwarted in his plan by human foolishness or sinfulness.

That brings us to our final major outline point.

### **III. How do the Historical Books Point to Christ?**

Each book and many of the individual passages point to Christ, but I would like to summarize it in two basic ways.

#### **A. Jesus is the perfect King**

The kingdom of Israel enjoyed many great kings. But even the great kings had warts. David sinned with Bathsheba, Solomon acquired lots of wives who drew him away from the Lord, even Hezekiah (who was the king when God destroyed the Assyrians) died rather far from the Lord.

As we read, we think who can be trusted? Ultimately, those of us who know the rest of the story, we know that answer is only found in King Jesus.

That is why the Bible often encourages us to

1. Please him (2 Cor 5:9)

2. Glorify him (1 Cor 10:31)
3. Proclaim his excellencies (2 Peter 2:9)

So our focus, our attention should be squarely fixed on Jesus.

- VBS starts tomorrow ... some 500 children will be here. We can go into this bummed out ... acting like martyrs ... or we can go into this week saying “I get to please God and glorify God by representing Jesus to these children.” By his grace, some of these children may place their faith and trust in Christ. By his grace, our ministry to the parents may help them see their need to be involved in a church.
- Some of you participated in the Race for Hope ...
  - o You prayed, you gave, maybe even ran the race because you said in your heart ... I want Jesus glorified. Every time there is a young lady who moves to Lafayette Indiana and process biblically her sin and her suffering through the power of Christ Jesus is glorified.
  - o Thank you for that help.
- Some of you helped with landscaping over the last two weeks and one week from now Faith West is going to look fantastic.
  - o You helped because you wanted Jesus to get the glory. You want to reach as many people at Purdue and West Lafayette as possible.
- Even in your homes ... you were working this week to live like a biblical husband, a biblical wife, a biblical worker, a biblical teenager, a biblical child because you wanted your life to proclaim God’s glory.

Friends, if you would say that you have not been giving Jesus his due, then would you please take a lesson from the historical books.

- Learn from the nation of Israel.
- Don’t get trapped into thinking that you can ignore the Lord and receive his blessing.
- Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that any human being can satisfy all your needs.
- Learn from the Historical books.

Not only do the historical books point us to Jesus through the continual failures of people but also because ...

### **B. Jesus is the one who establishes a perfect, never ending kingdom**

The covenants made by God to Abraham, Issac, Jacob, David will not come about through human origin. They are grounded and established by the Lord Jesus.

- This forever kingdom is not going to come from just anyone. It is going to come through the person of Jesus.
- One cannot miss the opening of **Matthew 1:1 This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

The Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled by Jesus and so will the Davidic covenant. Jesus is the one who will establish the perfect, never ending kingdom.

So let’s be about kingdom building.

- ABF (develop if time)

- Intro to Faith ... begins July 10-31 [maybe the step for today is to join the church ... the thing Jesus promised to build]
- Serving [maybe the first step is serving ... connection card, email address]

As I close let me summarize just a few ...

### Take Aways

1. **Skim read Joshua – 2 Kings.** There are 150 chapters ... reading 5 chapters each day you will be done with this entire section in 30 days. If you read 10 chapters each day you can be done in 2 weeks (10 chapters is nothing in a great story as this). Part of the reason for doing this series is to help us all learn our Bible better.
2. **Invest in the kingdom that Jesus builds.** All other kingdoms are doomed to failure including any that you attempt to build.
3. **Rejoice in God's plan and in God's power which enables him to keep his plan even among human failure.**