
Day 288 - October 15

Historical Interlude (425-5 BCE)

The End of the Old Testament Record

Readings: No readings - summary of information provided in "The Narrated Bible"

Reflections:

- Act 1: The story of God begins with the creation of a perfect world and a man and a woman to be his close companions and the first parents of a family.
- Act 2: The earliest story of humanity records how this first woman and man turned away from God and chose willful independence. As God's perfect world comes under the painful consequences of the curses of a creation now broken by sin. Yet, God promises that one day a rescuer would come to undo all that selfish humanity had done, even at the cost of his own suffering.
- Act 3, Scene 1: The story of Abram begins the process of God establishing a family that would grow into a nation. This friend of God who had to learn what it meant to trust God completely became a father to this family. The foundation of this nation is formed with his grandson, Jacob whose name is changed to Israel and who also has twelve sons that will form twelve tribes.
- Act 3, Scene 2: Through a turn of events, this family ends up in Egypt and ultimately become slaves as they grow in number. An unlikely rescuer is commissioned to rescue this family of slaves. Moses is another friend of God. This new nation miraculously escapes Egypt and in the desert enters into a committed relationship with God. Unfortunately it is short lived as barely one week passes before they completely reject God. This should be a clue to us on how this part of the story is going to go. This new nation receives from God all the rules you could imagine, a religious system that would remind them at every turn about the calling of God on their lives to live for God alone. They receive priests and a sacrificial system so that if they mess up they can be restored to God. They receive a Promised Land where they can cocoon themselves away from all their enemies and those that would tempt them to rebel against God. This scene ends with the nation in a complete mess as everyone is still as self-centered as possible.
- Act 3, Scene 3: The nation cries out for a king and in doing so reject God as their king. A 120 year monarchy unfolds that walks the nation through a case study for four different kinds of

leaders: 1) Saul, the A-type power leader who stands head and shoulders about everyone else (but ends up power hungry, paranoid and demonized); 2) David, a humble and submitted leader who has a heart after God (but is simply too soft and ends up committing adultery and murder as well as abdicating proper care for a family member); 3) Absalom, a leader for the underdogs and victims of the world (who ends up enraged in his own ambition and violence and dies as a mutinous rebel); and 4) Solomon, the wisest of all leaders raises the nation to its highest point in how he secures the border and builds the most beautiful temple (who also ends up rationalizing himself into idolatry and lust). These four leaders present a very stark truth: no human can be trusted to be the ultimate leader. Only God is worthy of that place in the human heart.

- Act 4, Scene 4: As the nation spirals into sin and rebellion, prophetic leader after prophetic leader is inspired by God to call the nation back to God. One terrible consequence after another falls on the nation. Yet, none of this does anything to prevent this nation to falling back into slavery to sin as well as slavery to foreign powers. Just as this family started in slavery, they end in slavery with only a small remnant living in the land, worshipping in a small rebuilt humble temple. The great hope of a nation that had all the right rules, a space all to themselves, a good leader to keep them in line, and strict accountability ends up a miserable failure. The final words of the prophets? The rescuer will come and he will bring a new era of God's Spirit when people will be changed from the inside out to that they will truly live the life God desires for them.
- Daniel's vision of seventy sevens may well have given this nation a clue to what would now become reality: nothing is going to happen for 400 years. For ten generations this nation must now wait for the Messiah and for God's destiny for their national family to be fulfilled.