

[Home](#)[Content Index](#)[Bible](#)[Books and Testaments](#)[Story Old Testament](#)

QUESTION

What is the story of the Old Testament?

ANSWER

In the very beginning, God was already there. For His own good pleasure, God [created](#) time and the universe by the power of His word, turning nothing into something. On the sixth day of creation, God made something unique: mankind—a man and a woman—created in His likeness. As God created the first two humans as male and female, He instituted the covenant of marriage ([Genesis 1–2](#)).

God placed the man and his wife in the [Garden of Eden](#), a perfect environment, and gave them the responsibility of tending the garden. God

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allowed them to eat of any fruit in the garden but one: the [tree of the knowledge of good and evil](#) was forbidden to them. They had a choice to obey or disobey, but God warned them that [death would result](#) if they disobeyed ([Genesis 2:15-17](#)).

Meanwhile, a mighty angel named [Lucifer](#) rebelled against God in heaven. He and [one third](#) of the angelic host were cast out of heaven. Lucifer came into the garden where the man and his wife were. There, he took the form of a [serpent](#) and tempted Eve, the first woman, to disobey God by eating the [forbidden fruit](#). He told her that she would not die and that the fruit was actually good for her. She believed the lies and [ate some of the fruit](#). She then gave the fruit to her husband, Adam, and he ate it, too. Immediately, the couple knew they had done wrong. They felt ashamed and vulnerable and exposed. When God came looking for them, they hid ([Isaiah 14:12-15](#); [Genesis 3](#)).

Of course, God found them. Judgment was meted out. The ground was cursed for the man's sake: it would no longer bring forth its fruit easily; instead, man must toil to produce a crop. The woman was cursed with pain during childbirth. The serpent was cursed to crawl in the dust from then on. And then God made a [promise](#): one day, Someone would be born of a woman who would do battle with the Serpent. This One would crush the Serpent's head, although He would be injured in the process. God then slaughtered an animal and provided coverings of skin for the sinful couple before He drove them out of Eden ([Genesis 3:15-19](#), [21](#)).

The struggle between good and evil continued in the first couple's family. One of their sons, Cain, murdered his brother, Abel, and was cursed for his deed. Another child was born to the first woman. His name was Seth ([Genesis 4:8](#), [25](#)).

Several generations later, the world was filled with wickedness. Violence and a disregard for God were rampant. God determined to destroy the wickedness of man and begin anew. A man named [Noah](#), one of Seth's descendants, was extended grace (God's blessing on the undeserving). God revealed to Noah that He would send a great [Flood](#) to destroy the earth, and He gave Noah instructions on building an ark to survive the Flood. Noah built the ark, and when the time came, God caused animals of each kind to enter the ark. These animals, along with Noah and his family, were spared. The Flood destroyed every other living thing on the earth ([Genesis 6-8](#)).

After the Flood, Noah and his family began to repopulate the earth. When their descendants began building a monument to themselves in defiance of God, God [confused their language](#). The inhabitants of the earth separated according to their language groups and spread out over the face of the earth ([Genesis 11:1-8](#)).

The time came for God to begin His plan to introduce the Serpent-crusher into the world. The first step was to create a people set apart for Himself. He chose a man named [Abraham](#) and his wife, [Sarah](#), to begin a new race of people. God called Abraham away from his home and led him to the land of Canaan. God [promised](#) Abraham innumerable descendants who would possess Canaan as their own. God also promised to bless Abraham's seed and, through that seed, to bless all the nations of the earth. The problem was that Abraham and Sarah were old, and Sarah was barren. But Abraham believed God's promise, and God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness ([Genesis 12:1-4](#); [15:6](#)).

In due time, God blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son, [Isaac](#). God repeated His promise of many descendants and blessing to Isaac. Isaac had twins, [Esau and Jacob](#). God chose [Jacob](#) to inherit the promised blessing and changed his name to Israel. Jacob/Israel had twelve sons, who became the heads of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#) ([Genesis 21:1-6](#); [25:19-26](#); [28:10-15](#); [35:23-26](#)).

Due to a severe famine, Jacob moved his entire family from Canaan to Egypt. Before he died, Jacob gave prophetic blessings to each of his sons. To [Judah](#), he promised there would be a King among his descendants—One who would be honored by all the nations of the world. Jacob's family increased in Egypt, and they remained there for the next 400 years. Then the king of Egypt, fearing that the children of Israel would become too numerous to handle, enslaved them. God raised up a prophet named [Moses](#), from the [tribe of Levi](#), to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt and back to the land which had been promised to Abraham ([Genesis 46](#); [49](#); [Exodus 1:8-14](#); [3:7-10](#)).

The exodus from Egypt was accompanied by many great [miracles](#), including the [parting of the Red Sea](#). Once safely out of Egypt, the children of Israel camped at [Mt. Sinai](#), where God gave Moses the Law. This Law, summarized in the [Ten Commandments](#), was the basis of a [covenant](#) God made with Israel: if they kept His commandments, they would be blessed, but if they broke His commandments, they would suffer curses. Israel agreed to follow the Law of God ([Exodus 7-11](#); [14:21-22](#); [19-20](#)).

In addition to establishing a moral code, the Law defined the role of the priest and prescribed the offering of [sacrifices](#) to atone for sin. Atonement could only be made by the [shedding of the blood](#) of a spotless sacrifice. The Law also detailed how to build the holy [tabernacle](#), or tent, in which God's presence would dwell and where He would meet with His people ([Leviticus 1](#); [Exodus 25:8-9](#)).

After receiving the Law, Moses led the Israelites to the border of the [Promised Land](#). But the people, fearing Canaan's warlike inhabitants and doubting God's promises, refused to enter. As a punishment, God turned them back into the wilderness, where they were forced to [wander for 40 years](#). I. gr

God miraculously provided [food](#) and water for the entire multitude ([Numbers 14:1-4, 34-35](#); [Exodus 16:35](#)).

At the end of 40 years, Moses died. One of his last prophecies concerned the coming of another Prophet who would be like Moses and to whom the people must listen. Moses' successor, [Joshua](#), was used by God to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. They went with God's promise that none of their enemies would be able to stand against them. God showed His power at Jericho, the first city they encountered, by causing the [walls of the city to fall down flat](#). In His grace and mercy, God spared a believing harlot named [Rahab](#) from Jericho's destruction ([Deuteronomy 18:15](#); [Joshua 6](#)).

Over the next years, Joshua and the Israelites succeeded in driving out most of the [Canaanites](#), and the land was divided among the twelve tribes. However, the conquest of the land was incomplete. Through a lack of faith and simple disobedience, they failed to finish the job, and pockets of Canaanites remained. These pagan influences had an effect on the Israelites, who began to adopt the worship of idols, in direct violation of God's Law ([Joshua 15:63](#); [16:10](#); [18:1](#)).

After Joshua's death, the Israelites experienced a tumultuous time. The nation would lapse into idolatry, and God would bring judgment in the form of enslavement to an enemy. The people of God would repent and call on the Lord for help. God would then raise up a [judge](#) to destroy the idols, rally the people, and defeat the enemy. Peace would last for a while, but, after the death of the judge, the people invariably fell back into idolatry, and the cycle would repeat ([Judges 17:6](#)).

The final judge was [Samuel](#), who was also a prophet. During his time, Israel demanded a king to rule over them, in order to be like the other nations. God granted their request, and Samuel anointed [Saul](#) as Israel's first king. Saul was a disappointment, however. He disobeyed God and was removed from power. God chose [David](#), of the tribe of Judah, to succeed Saul as king. God [promised](#) David that he would have a descendant who would reign on the throne forever ([1 Samuel 8:5](#); [15:1](#), [26](#); [1 Chronicles 17:11-14](#)).

David's son [Solomon](#) reigned in Jerusalem after David's death. During the reign of Solomon's son, civil war broke out, and the kingdom was [divided](#): the northern kingdom was called Israel, and the southern kingdom was called Judah. The Davidic dynasty ruled in Judah ([1 Kings 2:1](#); [12](#)).

The kingdom of Israel had an unbroken series of wicked kings. None of them sought the Lord or attempted to lead the nation according to God's Law. God sent prophets to warn them, including the miracle-working [Elijah](#) and [Elisha](#), but the kings persisted in their wickedness. Finally, God brought the Assyrian nation upon Israel in judgment. The Assyrians deported most of the Israelites, and [Israel](#) was

end of the northern kingdom ([1 Kings 17:1](#); [2 Kings 2; 17](#)).

The kingdom of Judah had its share of wicked kings, but the chain was broken by an occasional godly king who truly loved the Lord and sought to govern according to the Law. God was faithful to His promise and blessed the people when they followed His commandments. The nation was preserved during the Assyrian invasion and endured many other threats. During this time, the prophet [Isaiah](#) preached against the sins of Judah and foresaw the Babylonian invasion. Isaiah also predicted the coming of the Servant of the Lord—He would [suffer for the sins](#) of His people and be glorified and sit on David's throne. The prophet [Micah](#) predicted that the Promised One would be [born in Bethlehem](#) ([Isaiah 37; 53:5](#); [Micah 5:2](#)).

Eventually, the nation of Judah also fell into gross idolatry. God brought the [nation of Babylon](#) against Judah in judgment. The prophet [Jeremiah](#) experienced the fall of Jerusalem and predicted that the Jewish captives in Babylon would return to the Promised Land after 70 years. Jeremiah also prophesied a future covenant in which the Law was not written on tablets of stone but in the hearts of God's people. This [new covenant](#) would result in God's forgiveness of sin ([2 Kings 25:8-10](#); [Jeremiah 29:10](#); [31:31-34](#)).

The [Babylon captivity](#) lasted for 70 years. The prophets [Daniel](#) and [Ezekiel](#) ministered during that time. Daniel predicted the rise and fall of many nations. He also predicted the [coming of the Messiah](#), or Chosen One, who would be killed for the sake of others ([Daniel 2:36-45](#); [9:26](#)).

After Babylon fell to the [Persians](#), the Jews were released to return to Judah. Many Jews returned home to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. [Nehemiah](#) and [Ezra](#) led those endeavors, with encouragement from the prophets [Haggai](#) and [Zechariah](#). One of Zechariah's prophecies included a description of a future King who would come into Jerusalem humbly, [riding on a donkey](#). ([Nehemiah 6:15-16](#); [Ezra 6:14-15](#); [Zechariah 9:9](#)).

Not all of the Jews returned to Judah, however. Many chose to stay in Persia, where God still watched over them. A Jewess named [Esther](#) rose to the rank of queen of Persia and was instrumental in saving the lives of all the Jews in the kingdom ([Esther 8:1](#)).

[Malachi](#) wrote the last book of the Old Testament. He prophesied that the Lord would come to His temple, but, before His arrival, another [messenger](#) would prepare the way for the Lord. This messenger would be [like the prophet Elijah](#) of old. After Malachi's prophecy, it was another [400 years](#) before God spoke directly to man ([Malachi 3:1](#); [4:5](#)).



The Old Testament is the story of God's plan to bring about the [redemption](#) of man. At the close of the Old Testament, God has a unique [Chosen People](#) who understand the importance of blood sacrifices, who believe the promises made to Abraham and David, and who are awaiting a Redeemer. In short, they are ready to receive the Serpent-crusher of Genesis, the Prophet like Moses, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the Son of David, the Messiah of Daniel, and the Humble King of Zechariah—all to be found in one person, Jesus Christ.

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