
HISTORICAL WALK-THROUGH

A STAGE: THE FERTILE CRESCENT

As you can see on the map below, the Fertile Crescent is bounded by mountains to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the desert to the south. Because the winds from the Mediterranean brought moisture to the region, along with the rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates, this crescent shaped section of land was fertile. It could be farmed, settled and easily traveled, unlike all of its borders. Although Israel, on the western side of the Fertile Crescent was the least fertile portion, it was still a good land that was strategic in the ancient near east.



AN OVERVIEW: WHO, WHAT, WHEN?

At this point we'll assign key words and memorable phrases to help us think our way through the most important historical markers of the Old Testament.

A. Genesis:

We'll assign the following key words and phrases to the first twelve chapters of Genesis.

1. Chapters

1 - Creation

2 - Special Events of Creation

These events are really a recap and an expansion of the events of day six of creation.

3 - Fall of Adam and Eve

4 - Story of Cain and Abel

5 - Genealogy

6, 7, 8 - Noah *and* the Flood

9 - Noah *after* the Flood

10 - Genealogy

11 - Tower of Babel

12 - God calls Abram (Abraham) from Ur of the Chaldees

2. Events

a. God tells Abraham to pack his bags, walk around the Fertile Crescent to the land He promised to give him (Israel).

b. God also promised Abraham many descendants to fill and enjoy the land: God promised that those descendants would come through a special son. Abraham had two sons: the first son was not the one God had promised as the channel of blessing - his name was Ishmael.

The second son was the one God had promised - his name was Isaac.

c. Isaac also had two sons - the first son was not the one God had promised would be the channel of the blessing - his name was Esau.

The second son was the one God had promised - his name was Jacob.

- d. Jacob had 12 sons!
- e. Jacob and his family went to the land of Egypt. They lived there for a total of 400 years. Towards the end of this time they became enslaved and desperately needed a leader.

B. Exodus

1. God raised up Moses. Moses asked the Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh said "No way, Mose." (Yes, this is the literal Hebrew :-). God then sent 10 plagues upon the land to demonstrate his power and set the people free.
2. Moses led the people through the Red Sea and into the wilderness. Twelve spies were sent out to see if they could capture the land. Two spies said "yes." Ten spies said "no." The people voted "no," so God voted "no" in effect saying, "if you won't trust me then I won't bring you into the land." They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until the people who failed to trust Him passed away.

C. Historical books

1. A new leader was raised up whose name was Joshua. He led the people through the Jordan River and divided the land into 12 sections (for each of the 12 tribes of Israel).
2. Upon Joshua's death the people were ruled by a group of people called the Judges. This lasted for 400 years. During this time, there was series of economic, social, political, and spiritual ups and downs.
3. After 400 years the people tired of the instability and asked for a king. God gave them: (1) Saul, (2) David, and (3) Solomon. Each reigned for 40 years.
4. After Solomon died, the country split into two sections:
 - a. The one to the North was called Israel. The capital was Samaria. The number of tribes in the North was 10.
 - b. The one to the South was called Judah. The capital was Jerusalem. The number of tribes in the South was 2. This lasted approximately 200 years.
5. On the North side of the Fertile Crescent was a country called Assyria. The capital was Nineveh. The king of Assyria was Shalmanezar. In 722BC, the Assyrians conquered and captured the 10 northern tribes.

They were taken away to captivity never to be heard of again (sort of).
(Some of the godly remnant of the 10 tribes had previously migrated south to Judah.)

6. In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon, around the Fertile Crescent, destroyed the city, smashed the Temple, and took away the two southern tribes to captivity. They remained in Babylon for 70 years. This also the time of Daniel.
7. At the close of the Babylonian captivity God raised up two more leaders - Joshua (priestly) and Zerubbabel (royal) to lead the people back to the land. Zerubbabel gave leadership to the rebuilding of the temple (out of the rubble) that Nebuchadnezzar had left.
8. Seventy years later, Nehemiah, rebuilt the wall around the city. Then we have 400 "silent" years with no prophets until John the Baptizer announces the coming of Messiah.