

Welcome to our **AUGUST** Reflections & Corrections episode. Let's start with the **REFLECTIONS**: We just finished our 29th book of the Bible, and we're currently working our way through 2 others, so let's get the 30,000-foot view on where we are in the chronological timeline of the Bible's overall metanarrative.

The Bible is one unified story. Way back in Genesis, God set out to build a relationship with one particular family, but things go terribly wrong when they fracture the relationship through sin. But their sin doesn't surprise God. He already had a plan in place to restore this relationship even before it was broken, and He continues working out that plan immediately, undeterred and unhindered by their rebellion. He sets apart a man named Abraham to be the patriarch of the family God calls the Israelites. They're a bunch of sinners, just like all of us. God blesses them despite their sin, but sin still has its consequences. One of the long storylines of consequence is of the 400 years they spent enslaved in Egypt.

God sends a man named Moses to demonstrate His power to the Egyptian ruler, who reluctantly agrees to let the Israelite slaves go. They flee to the desert, led by God and His servant Moses. And then little by little, God gives these people the basic rules of how to have a stable society. They're uncivilized, ungrateful people who have only just met God and Moses, and they're not keen on obeying either of them.

But in the midst of their sin and stubbornness, God knows that what their hearts need is HIM. So He sets up camp among them in the desert. More than anything, He wants them to remember who He is to them -- the God who rescued them out of slavery! But they keep forgetting, and every time they forget, they either get *fearful* and disobey or they get *prideful* and disobey.

Forty years after He rescues them from Egypt, God raises up a new leader, Joshua, to lead them into the Promised Land, and commands them to eradicate their enemies who live there, the Canaanites. But this new life of luxury and ease makes them forget God, so they never fully conquer the land completely -- there are still pockets of Canaanites all around. God has warned them repeatedly that if they don't drive out the Canaanites, they'll become a snare and lead them away into apostasy. And that's exactly what happens.

God raises up military leaders -- or *judges* -- to drive out the enemies who are leading them astray, but this doesn't deal with the problem of their *hearts* leading them astray. The Israelites do whatever they want, which results in near-anarchy at times. and things grow continually worse in the Promised Land. Despite this, there are pockets of faithfulness among the Israelites, and even among *foreigners* whose hearts have *turned* toward YHWH -- people like Rahab and Ruth, pagans who turn to follow God and His people and abandon their lifestyles that may fit with cultural norms but that are *actually* unrighteous. God has been telling us all along that He's going to build His people from *among every nation*, and this is evidence of that!

Next, God raises up a prophet named Samuel to lead the people, but what they *really* want is what all the other nations have—a *king*. God tells Samuel to give the people what they want, but that it's not going to go well for them. Their first king is Saul, a fearful man who makes rash decisions without consulting God. Then a shepherd named David is positioned as Israel's *second* king. He's a man after God's own heart, but he's still deeply flawed. He makes a few wicked decisions that mark him for life, but they don't mark him for *eternity*. God shows him *astounding* amounts of mercy and grace.

David is succeeded on the throne by his son Solomon, known as the wisest man who ever lived. But he has a bit of a problem with womanizing and worshipping other gods. YHWH is generous to him nonetheless and gives him the distinguished assignment of building Israel's first temple, the place where God came to dwell among the people in the midst of the Promised Land!

After Solomon dies, his son Rehoboam -- *we call him Rey* -- takes over the throne. But King Rey is harsh toward the people and lots of them don't want to follow him. And that's how the nation-state of Israel is divided into two separate kingdoms — the Southern Kingdom of Judah, ruled by King Rey, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, ruled by Jeroboam -- *we call him Jerry*.

Because God had promised to continue the line of kings through the tribe of Judah, He always seems to be on their side especially, but He takes good care of the Northern Kingdom of Israel as well. The Northern Kingdom has a string of exclusively bad kings, but God still sends the prophet Elijah to help set things straight. Elijah has a pretty lonely life of speaking hard truths to the kings and the people, but he has a rich intimacy with God that sustains him nonetheless.

Over the 350-ish years of the divided kingdom, God sends *several* prophets to warn both Northern Israel and Southern Judah about what's going to happen. Both of them will be overcome by other nations. First the Assyrians defeat Northern Israel and take them into captivity. Southern Judah still survives under mostly bad kings, with the exception of King Josiah who brings lots of reforms — He renovates the temple, prioritizes God's Word, and tears down the places of idol worship. But the four kings after him turn away from YHWH and eventually fall under siege by the Babylonians, just like God's prophets have been saying all along.

When Jerusalem eventually falls to Babylon, some people try to stay behind and are killed, while others are carried off into exile. But God promises them that there's a timeline on this exile — He'll bring them back into the land in 70 years. Not only that, but He will punish the enemies who are oppressing them. They will be judged for their sins too!

God's prophets keep reminding His people that His character has remained the same through all the generations, through all their sins, through all their wanderings, and that He's always aiming to bring His people back to Himself. And He keeps giving us glimpses of the coming Messiah, the servant-king who will first come and die, and then return to establish an eternal kingdom of peace on earth!

Okay, that's all for the REFLECTIONS part of this episode. And thank God! I am so grateful that there were no corrections so far to report in August. So that's all for this episode! From Day 1 until now, I hope you're seeing more and more that *He's where the joy is*.

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