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*The Rector writes:*

## ‘GOD’S STORY, OUR STORY’



Winston Churchill won the Nobel Prize for literature for it, Henry Ford described it as ‘bunk’, Alan Bennett (most recently) was among those who described it as ‘just one \*\*\*\* thing after another’, according to some it has a habit of repeating itself, and it happened to be one of my favourite subjects at school. It is of course – **History**.

History features in our Bible too, and there are twelve ‘history’ books in the Old Testament which take up the story of God’s people from the conquest of the promised land, through the rise and fall of the monarchy, into exile under foreign powers, and finally to the return from exile and beginning of the Jewish nation.

- **JOSHUA** – tells the story of the conquest of the ‘promised land’ led by Moses successor as leader, and the division of the spoils. Though probably written 800 years after the events it describes by an unknown author.
- **JUDGES** – takes the story on from the death of Joshua to the establishment of the monarchy. Nick Page in his ‘Bible Book’ describes this as a book about ‘a bad, mad world’ as it depicts a dark and often violent society, as the people abandon God and descend into anarchy. From time to time God appoints judges to deliver his people. The most famous of these are Deborah, Gideon and Samson. Often attributed to Samuel, though probably a collection of writings, perhaps edited in the time of Samuel.
- **RUTH** – a lovely story about love and faithfulness which counters the horrors of Judges. Authorship unknown. The striking feature of the story is that its heroine was ‘foreign and female’ – a reminder that God is a God for all nations and peoples.
- **1 & 2 SAMUEL** – originally believed to be one book gathered from a variety of sources, written after the death of Solomon. Covers a period of 100 years and the establishment of the monarchy through the stories of Samuel, prophet and kingmaker; Saul and David the first two kings – their triumphs and downfall provide a kind of Old Testament soap opera!
- **1 & 2 KINGS** – perhaps should have been called 3 & 4 Samuel as it continues the ‘royal story’ beginning with the reign of Solomon. Things soon go downhill as the kingdom is split and a succession of bad kings lead God’s people into exile. God begins to speak through the voice of prophets – Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah. The books were compiled in exile in Babylon.
- **1 & 2 CHRONICLES** – a condensed version of Samuel and Kings, possibly written by Ezra after the return from exile. Key themes are – the ‘House of David’ – the southern kingdom, and the ‘House of God’ – the temple.
- **ESTHER** – another oasis, the story of Queen Esther, a Jewish girl who becomes a Persian queen and rescues her people. The only book in the Bible that never mentions God. Though it perfectly explains his purposes of liberation and justice for the oppressed.
- **EZRA & NEHEMIA** – tell the story of the return from exile, the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, and the re-establishment of the Temple. Ezra, the scribe and Nehemiah, the king’s cup-bearer offer two versions of the same story of the restoration of God’s Law.

The biblical histories serve as a reminder of the complexity and fragility of the peoples relationship with God. Things often go wrong and there are dark times along the way. C S Lewis describes this well when he says, ‘History is not just the story of bad people doing bad things, it is quite as much a story of people trying to do good things – but sometimes something goes wrong’.

Just as we can learn from biblical history, we can also learn from our own histories. This coming Lent we are hoping to explore some of our history as we journey towards Holy Week and Easter, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We need to keep in mind that for the Christian,

**His story** shapes our history and relationship with God today.

Yours in Christ  
Reverend John