

Part 5: Major Guys

THE MAJOR PLAYERS

Adam	The fountain-head of humanity.	The son, the sinner, the one who received the first promise of the saviour.
Seth	The fresh start for Adam's children.	Usually missed out, but he stands at the top of the obedient, believing line of the sons of Adam after Abel was murdered by Cain.
Noah	The fresh start for creation.	The new head, another Adam in that sense; obedient, believing and saved from judgement.
Abraham	The start of the 'people of God's covenant-promise'. The first of the three patriarchs.	The promises of children, land and a name come by God's covenant to Abraham. The spread blessing to all nations comes first to Abraham. The other patriarchs were his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, also called Israel, who was the father of the tribes.
Joseph	The rescuer of Jacob's children, his brothers.	It's Joseph whom God uses to take his people into Egypt, saving them from famine; he also spares them from his own just wrath.
Moses	The great salvation-leader. The first prophet.	The leader in the exodus and in the wilderness years, as the Israelites make their way to the promised land. God's 'Sinai Covenant' was made through him.
Joshua	The warrior who saves.	He picks up where Moses left off. By the time Joshua dies, the people have settled in their inheritance.
Samuel	The last of the Judges and the king-maker.	He testifies to the shallowness of the people, the grace of God and the need for obedience. The stage for Israel's monarchy is set by Samuel.
David	The great King.	The Shepherd becomes Israel's model King as God's vice-regent on earth in Jerusalem. The Kingdom expands. David is the focus for promises that will only be fulfilled by the royal descendent, who will be 'King for ever'. Jesus will be called 'Son of David'.
Isaiah	Not the man but the message.	Of all the major prophets Isaiah is the one through whom God most clearly prepares the way for the coming Messiah, for the new covenant and the new creation. He is sometimes called the 'fifth evangelist' (=gospel-writer).
Ezra & Nehemiah	Rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem after the exile. Zerubbabel led the first returnees.	The temple and city are given new impetus by what God accomplished through these two. The temple and the city are imperfect and create the expectation of something and someone better to come.
John the Baptist	The forerunner.	He 'prepares the way of the Lord' as the last of the prophets.
Jesus	Fully God and fully man. Saviour from sin. Messiah and Last Adam.	More in Part 7 (in fact, the whole of Part 7!)
The Apostles	The remainder of 'the Twelve' (plus Matthias who replaced Judas). The 'sent ones' who must teach all that they have been taught.	Sent out to be Jesus' witnesses and to preach repentance in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. The Spirit comes upon them on Pentecost for this. Many are martyred.
Paul	The 'Apostle to the Gentiles'.	Teacher, church-planter/evangelist, author of 13 New Testament letters, brave missionary, intellectual colossus, man of prayer. Pastored people by teaching.
John the Apostle	The Apostle of the Apocalypse.	To John was given the message of the book of <i>Revelation</i> , for the sustenance of the church in our day.

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OTHER CHARACTERS

Aaron	<p>Moses' brother and spokesman; first high priest of Israel: Exodus 4 – Numbers 33</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before Pharaoh: Exodus 5ff • Aaron's robes and consecration: Exodus 28-29; Leviticus 8 • The golden calf: Exodus 32 • Atonement ritual: Leviticus 16 • Aaron and Miriam challenge Moses: Numbers 12 • Aaron's rod: Numbers 17 • Death: Numbers 33: 38-39
Artaxerxes	King of Persia: Ezra 4:7ff; Nehemiah 2:1
Barnabas	A Levite from Cyprus; commissioned with Paul by the church at Antioch for missionary service: Acts 4: 36; 9: 27; 12: 25ff
Boaz	Landowner of Bethlehem who became Ruth's husband and ancestor of David: Ruth 2-4
Cyrus	King of Persia who overthrew the Babylonians and returned the Jews from exile: Ezra 1: 1ff – 6: 14; Isaiah 44: 28ff; Daniel 1: 21
Elijah	<p>One of Israel's greatest prophets, contemporary with Ahab: 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The drought: 1 Kings 17 • Contest with the prophets of Baal: 1 Kings 18 • The 'still small voice': 1 Kings 19 • The chariot of fire: 2 Kings 2 • Appearance at the transfiguration of Christ: Mark 9: 4ff
Elisha	<p>Elijah's successor as prophet of Israel: 1 Kings 19: 16ff; 2 Kings 2-9; 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisha and the Shunammite woman; 2 Kings 4 • Healing of Naaman: 2 Kings 5
Hezekiah	One of Judah's most outstanding kings; contemporary of Isaiah; besieged in Jerusalem by the Assyrians: 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39
Jacob	<p>Son of Isaac who supplanted his elder brother Esau: father of the 12 tribes of Israel: Genesis 25-49</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The birthright: Genesis 25 • Isaac's blessing: 27 • Dream at Bethel: 28 • Jacob and Laban: 29-31 • Jacob wrestles with God: 32 • God's promise: 35 • Journey to Egypt: 44 • Blessing of his sons: 49
Nebuchadnezzar	King of Babylon who captured Jerusalem in 587 BC and took the Judeans into exile; Daniel interpreted his dreams: 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 21: 2-52: 30; Ezekiel 26:7ff; 29:18ff; 30: 10; Daniel 1-4
Samson	Champion of Israel against the Philistines in the time of the Judges: Judges 13-16
Sennacherib	King of Assyria who besieged in Jerusalem in King Hezekiah's reign. 2 Kings 18: 13ff; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36: 1ff
Silas/Silvanus	A leader of the Jerusalem church who went with Paul on his missionary journeys and acted as his secretary for some of the letters to the churches: Acts 15:22-18:5; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12
Solomon	<p>David's son; king of Israel in its golden age; gifted with great wisdom; builder of the Temple; composer/collector of wise sayings: 2 Sam 12:24; 1 Kings 1-11:1; 1 Chron 22:5-23: 1; 28 – 2 Chron 9; Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made co-regent: 1 Kings 1 • Prayer for wisdom: 1 Kings 3; 2 Chronicles 1 • Building of the Temple: 1 Kings 6-7; 2 Chronicles 3-4 • Dedication of the Temple: 1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 5-7 • Visit of the queen of Sheba: 1 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 9 • Death: 1 Kings 11: 43; 2 Chronicles 10: 31
Timothy	Paul's young companion and fellow-missionary, later with responsibility for the church at Ephesus; Paul sent him two letters on the subject of leadership in the churches: Acts 16: 1ff; 17: 14; 18: 5; 19: 22; 20: 4; 1 Corinthians 4: 17; 16: 10; 2 Corinthians 1: 19; Philippians 2: 19; 1 Thessalonians 3: 2ff; 1 and 2 Timothy; Hebrews 13: 23
Titus	Paul's companion and fellow-missionary; smoothed things over with the Corinthian church; sent to Crete, where Paul sent him a letter of advice: 2 Corinthians 2: 13; 7: 6ff; 8; 12: 18; Galatians 2; 2 Timothy 4: 10; Titus

Part 5: Major Guys

WHY WE STUDY PEOPLE

- **Because of the plot**
When we see that the Bible is one book with plot-lines that run from the beginning to the end, the people involved in progressing the plot become crucial.
- **Because of God**
God is far more interested in the people that he has made than in anything else in the rest of all creation. Why? because although every part of creation is made for his glory, only the human bits are made in his image and only the human bits offer what Romans calls 'reasonable, [or intelligent, or knowing] worship'.
- **Because of the way we learn**
What God has done with people in Scripture gives us many examples of what God might want to do with us. We learn from their weak points and from their strong points as God gives us a window onto his transforming work in the soul.

HOW WE STUDY PEOPLE

When we're learning from the characters in the Bible, some of the following questions might help us to stick to the text:

- What's just happened and what happens after they are off the stage? (Where do they fit in the plot?)
- How did God fit them for the part they played? (What did they have to learn; how did God teach it?)
- Were there any major changes in their lives?
- What were their strengths of character?
- What were their weaknesses?
- How did they relate to God in terms of their obedience to his will?
- What do they make me aware of about myself and about what God might need to do in my life?

WHO WE STUDY

THE MAJOR PLAYERS

Think of the huge electricity pylons that support power lines as they weave across the country. The plot-lines of the whole Bible are the cables and the people, in one sense, are the pylons. These are the main guys upon whose backs God carried his work from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. Most did major stuff; some spoke major stuff. We could easily add more names, by the way!

OTHER CHARACTERS

Many other men have played key supporting or background rôles in the Bible's story. Some of them are from among God's people but others are not; some are baddies whom God used.