THE BIG STORY OF THE BIBLE UP TO JESUS (Some very helpful history)

The Ancient Stories (Genesis 1-11)

God:  God creates an ordered world that is beautiful and good.

Humanity:  God creates humans to care for his world and represent Him.
Things go terribly wrong when humans believe a lie instead of truth and follow their own plans and desires.
Sin enters the world. Sin spoils the world. Sin destroys the world.
But God still loves his creation, especially humanity.

The Chosen Family (Genesis 11-50)

Abraham and Sarah:  God chooses two people to start a family that will grow into a nation (the Israelites) who will represent Him and bless the world.
Abraham and Sarah have a son, Isaac.
Isaac and Rebekah have a son, Jacob.
Jacob and Rachel have 12 sons, one who is Joseph.
Joseph ends up in Egypt (because bad brothers), and eventually becomes second in command.

The Chosen Nation (Exodus - Judges)

Jacob aka Israel:  Jacob and his 11 other sons move to Egypt, where Joseph is. Their descendants, the Israelites, become numerous and strong. The Egyptian king fears their growing population and power, so he enslaves them.

Moses:  Moses helps lead God's people out of slavery into freedom.
Things don't go well (sin!). They wander in the wilderness for 40 years.
They worship God in a tabernacle tent, led by priests.

Joshua:  After Moses dies, Joshua leads the Israelites into a land God promised.
They are identified by family clans — the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Judges:  A series of strong leaders (male and female) rule and lead the Israelites.

The Monarch Nation (1 and 2 Samuel)

Saul:  The Israelites demand a human king so they can be “like other nations.”
Saul is king #1. Starts out good. Ends bad. Because, well, sin.


The Divided Nation (1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles)

More kings: After Solomon dies, Israel splits into two. Ten tribes become the northern nation, Israel (capital: Samaria). Two tribes are the southern kingdom, Judah (capital: Jerusalem). Both Israel and Judah have many generations of kings. A few follow God and lead well. But most rebel against God because … SIN.

The Fallen & Exiled Nations (2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chronicles 32-26, Daniel, Jeremiah, &c.)

Prophets: God speaks to both Israel and Judah through appointed messengers, the prophets. They warn of God’s judgement (because: sin), remind of God’s care (because: love), and tell about a future Messiah who will rescue and restore God’s people (because: grace).

Enemies: A powerful enemy nation overthrows Israel. The people are exiled to Assyria, never to return home. Later, another powerful enemy nation overthrows Judah. The temple is destroyed. Most of the people are exiled to Babylon. The people cry out to God for justice and rescue.

The Remnant Nation (Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Frenemies: A super-power nation overthrows the powerful enemy that defeated Judah. That new king allows the exiled Jewish people to go back home and to rebuild their temple. But things are difficult and discouraging back in Judah. The people continue to cry out to God for justice and help. God promises that someday, a Messiah (a rescuer) would come to save his people, restore the temple, and establish a new kingdom.

The Occupied Nation (between the Old and New Testaments)

Tough guys: World powers keep shifting. Judah is ruled by Persians, then Greeks, and finally Romans. The Jews still wait for the promised Messiah to rescue them from their enemies. They hope for a strong and mighty warrior who will defeat the Romans and then sit on a throne as king to rule his people. They wait 400 years. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. And then …

The Invaded World (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

Jesus: Jesus arrives — not as a mighty warrior on a battle stallion with spear and sword to defeat the enemy, but as a newborn human babe in a stable of animals, with nothing but baby lungs and baby cries to communicate with.

Jesus conquers — not with sword and spear, but with love and forgiveness and the ultimate sacrifice of his own life.

Jesus rules — not from an earthly throne of silver and gold, wearing a crown of jewels, but from heaven where he sits beside his Father, our God, after being raised back to life.

It didn’t happen how they expected, but the Messiah did come, as God promised, and not just for the defeated and discouraged people of Judah, but for the entire world. For you. And me. And all of us.