

Journey

**AN INTENTIONAL & INTENSE
LOOK INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT**



INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible is a Book of books, sixty-six of them, divided into two testaments, or covenants. The designations *Old Testament* and *New Testament*, though not commonly used until the end of the second century, focus on the two great covenants God made with His people: the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 24:8; 2 Kings 23:2) and the New Covenant (Matthew 26:28).

The Old Testament mainly records God's dealings with the people of Israel on the basis of the covenant He made with them through Moses on Mt. Sinai. Earlier parts of the Old Testament tell of the creation of man, the flood, the call of Abraham, and the calling of the people of Israel through the line of Isaac and Jacob.

After the account of the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant, the Old Testament records the history of God's relationship with Israel: their wilderness wanderings, their incomplete conquest of the land of Canaan; their life under judges and kings, including the division of the nation into northern and southern kingdoms; the many prophetic warnings of impending captivity; the captivities; and the return of Judah to Palestine. Throughout the Old Testament there extends a line of prophecies concerning a coming Deliverer-Saviour, the Messiah, and the institution of a new covenant. The fulfillment of these prophecies is the story of the New Testament.

Jesus loved the Old Testament; His followers should also love it. Along with the New Testament, it is God's inspired, inerrant Word. The Old Testament provides a record of God's dealings with men. The Old Testament is a book of what God has done. It serves as a necessary foundation for the New Testament.

THE DIVISION OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Probably the earliest division of the Old Testament was into two parts (see Matt. 5:18): the Law (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and the Prophets (Joshua—Malachi). A threefold division also developed (see Luke 24:44): the Law (Genesis—Deuteronomy), the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the twelve minor prophets), and the Writings (the remaining books). Our English Old Testament is divided as follows: the Law (Genesis—Deuteronomy), History (Joshua—Esther), Poetry (Job—Song of Solomon), and the Prophets (Isaiah—Malachi). The content of the English and Hebrew Old Testaments is identical, though the arrangement of the books differs.

THE ORDER OF BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The usual arrangement of the books of the Old Testament in most Bibles does not follow the chronological order in which the recorded events occurred. Our study will follow the chronological order that we understand best fits the timeline of the Old Testament (see p. 4).

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY MADE SIMPLE

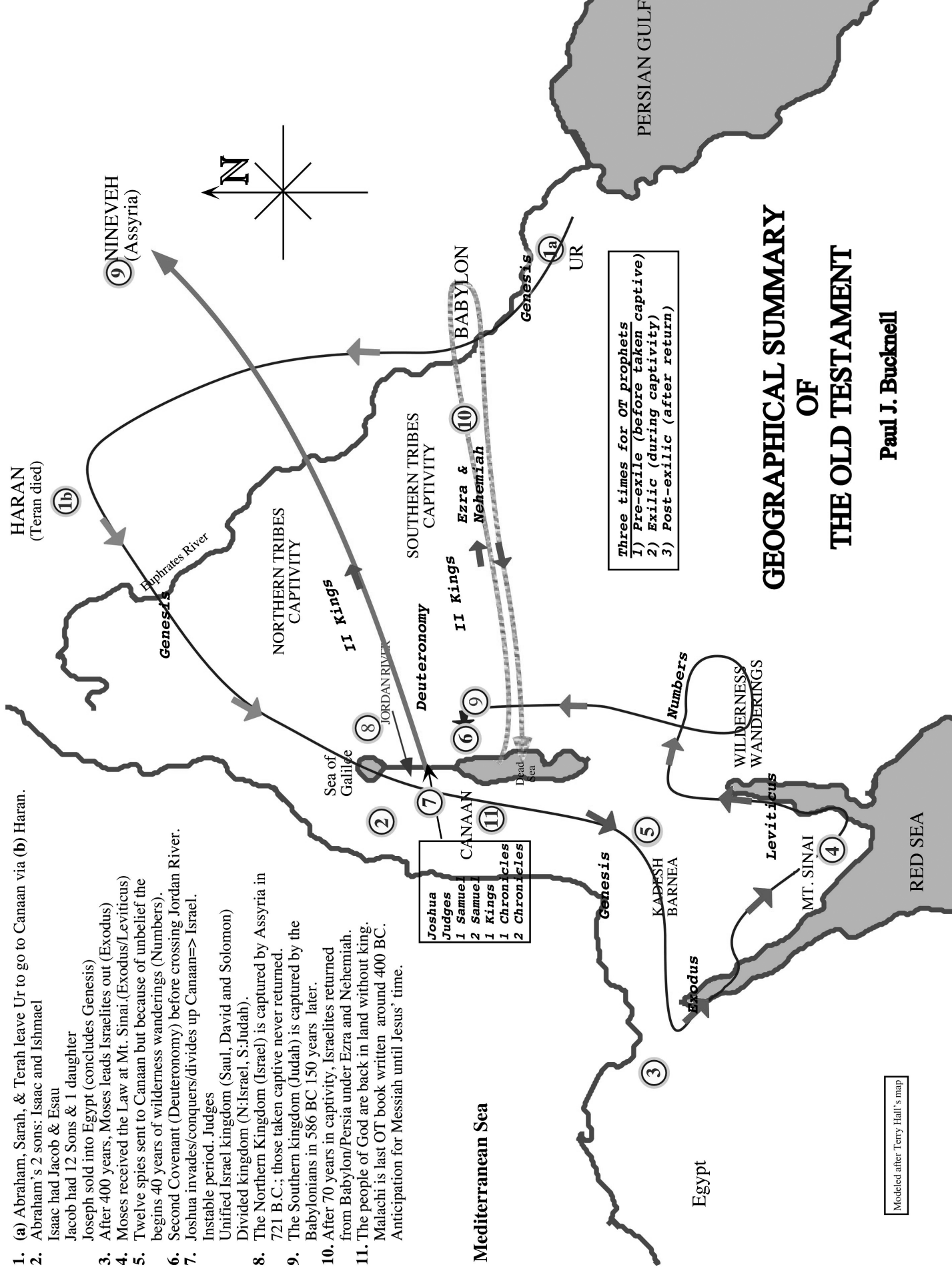
- In the beginning...nothing, then something.
- Creation...life...creatures...man made in God's image.
- The Garden of Eden becomes the location of the fall of Man, and the context for the first Messianic prophecy.
- Humankind degenerates for many generations.
- God judges the world with a flood, but he spares one righteous man—Noah—and his family.
- Humankind rebels at the Tower of Babel—the result is division and dispersion.
- A new beginning...God's faithfulness to Abraham and his family.
- Abraham's prosperity turns into Israel's slavery.
- The exodus—Moses leads Israel out of Egypt.
- God gives Israel the law.
- The people enter the promised land where they are ruled for a while by judges.
- Eventually a kingdom is established, epitomized by King David and his son Solomon.
- Solomon builds a temple, home of the Ark of the Covenant and center of the people's worship.
- After Solomon dies, the kingdom divides into Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom).
- Idolatry grows.
- Assyria destroys Israel in 722 B.C.
- Babylon destroys Judah from 597-586 B.C.
- Survivors are taken to exile in Babylon for the next 70 years.
- A remnant returns to Jerusalem and rebuilds the temple.
- But Israel still longs for the glory it knew under David.
- Thus the Old Testament becomes a story without an ending...

WHY STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT?

1. It was the only part of the Bible that Jesus and the Apostles had. Between Jesus and the Apostles, the Old Testament is either quoted or alluded to some 300 times. Jesus mentioned 22 Old Testament characters and quoted from numerous books.
2. It is God's inspired self-revelation (Psa. 19:7-14; Pro. 30:5, Matt. 5:17-20; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
3. It was written and preserved for us (Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:9-12; 10:6, 11).
4. It is God's great story of salvation. As believers we are heirs of it, stewards of it, and participants in it!

SUMMARY OF OLD TESTAMENT EVENTS

1. (a) Abraham, Sarah, & Terah leave Ur to go to Canaan via (b) Haran.
Isaac had Jacob & Esau
Jacob had 12 Sons & 1 daughter
Joseph sold into Egypt (concludes Genesis)
3. After 400 years, Moses leads Israelites out (Exodus)
4. Moses received the Law at Mt. Sinai (Exodus/Leviticus)
5. Twelve spies sent to Canaan but because of unbelief the begins 40 years of wilderness wanderings (Numbers).
6. Second Covenant (Deuteronomy) before crossing Jordan River.
7. Joshua invades/conquers/divides up Canaan=> Israel.
Unstable period. Judges
Unified Israel kingdom (Saul, David and Solomon)
Divided kingdom (N:Israel, S:Judah).
8. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) is captured by Assyria in 721 B.C.; those taken captive never returned.
9. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) is captured by the Babylonians in 586 BC 150 years later.
10. After 70 years in captivity, Israelites returned from Babylon/Persia under Ezra and Nehemiah.
11. The people of God are back in land without king.
Malachi is last OT book written around 400 BC.
Anticipation for Messiah until Jesus' time.



GEOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Paul J. Bucknell

Modeled after Terry Hall's map

Old Testament Timeline

IN THE BEGINNING...									
PATRIARCHS	1660	1260	1220	1020	UNITED KINGDOM	DIVIDED KINGDOM	FALL OF N. KINGDOM (Assyrian)	EXILE (Babylonian)	RESTORATION
B.C.	1660	1260	1220	1020	922	722	586	538	400
Creation Fall Flood Babel		Moses	Joshua	Samuel Saul David	Solomon	Northern Kingdom (Israel)			Return of Zerubbabel Ezra Nehemiah
		Bondage (400 Yrs)	Deliverance Wanderings						
Genesis Job?		Exodus	Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	1 & 2 Samuel Psalms Song of Solomon Ecclesiastes Proverbs	1 Kings 1-11... 2 Kings	Southern Kingdom (Judah)			
Books of the Old Testament			Joshua Judges Ruth		Obadiah Joel	Micah Isaiah Nahum Zephaniah Habakkuk Jeremiah	Exilic Lamentations Daniel Ezekiel	Postexilic Haggai Zechariah Ezra Nehemiah Esther Malachi	
1 Chronicles & 2 Chron. 9... 10-36									

GENESIS

Meaning of Title: The book of beginnings (or origins).

Author: Conservative circles agree upon Moses as the author of Genesis (Mk. 10:5; 12:19; Lk. 24:44; Jn. 5:46). Small portions of Genesis were added after the death of Moses.

Date: Between 1260 and 1220 B.C., the time the Israelites were led out of Egypt and Moses' death, during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings.

Historical Setting: The first book of the Bible is foundational in every aspect. Genesis covers a very long period of time, longer perhaps than the rest of the Bible put together. It begins in the distant past of creation, an event about whose absolute date we cannot be certain, and covers a tremendous amount of time before Abraham appears at the end of Chapter 11. The storyline slows down then and focuses on four generations of the family of promise as they move from Mesopotamia to the land of promise, only to conclude the book with the death of Joseph in Egypt.

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: Describes the beginnings of the world, mankind, sin, civilization, the Jewish people and God's plan of salvation. Most of the central teachings of Christianity have their roots in this book.

Portrayal of Christ: Our Creator God and the Seed of the Woman (3:15)

Uniqueness: Genesis tells us the beginning of everything except God. It is a book of foundations, both as an introduction to Mosaic Law and also as a backdrop for the history of redemption that occupies the rest of the Bible.

Outline:

- I. Creation (Chs. 1:1-2:25)
- II. The Fall, the Flood and Babel (Chs. 3:1-11:32)
- III. The Story of Salvation (Chs. 12-50)
 - A. The story of Abraham (12:1-25:11)
 - B. The story of Isaac (25:12-27:46)
 - C. The story of Jacob (Chs. 28:1-36:43)
 - D. The story of Joseph (Chs. 37:1-50:26)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God called the universe into existence by the power of His Word (1:1).
- 2. Humans are a valued creation in God's image (1:26).
- 3. God called a special people into existence (12:1-3).
- 4. God is a covenant God (9:8-17; 12:2-7; 15:1-21).
- 5. The Lord is with us (Prevalent usage throughout Ch. 39).
- 6. This book asserts that everything exists because of God.
- 7. God desires to bless mankind, but cannot tolerate disobedience.

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JOB

Meaning of Title: Job might have been derived from the Hebrew word for “persecution” thus meaning persecuted one. The Arabic equivalent means “repent” or repentant one.

Author: Unknown, no consensus...Suggestions from Moses to Solomon

Date: Conservative scholars place writing between 2000-1700 B.C.

Historical Setting: Job may have lived during the time of Abraham, about 2000 B.C. The story of Job was probably passed down from generation to generation until Solomon’s time. Both Ezekiel (14:14, 20) and James (5:11) make reference to Job.

Recipients: Job’s sufferings present a lesson for all ages.

Purpose and Themes: Job wrestles with a difficult problem: “Why does God permit the righteous to suffer?” The main purpose of the book is to challenge us to trust God’s purposes in the midst of suffering, because suffering, like all other human experiences, is directed by perfect divine wisdom. The scene depicted in heaven explains to the reader that Job suffered because God was contesting with Satan. A key word for this book is “tried” (23:10).

Portrayal of Christ: The Redeemer Who Lives (Job 19:25)

Uniqueness: One of the most wonderful poems ever written. Addresses one of life’s most pressing questions, “Why do godly people suffer?”

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1-5)
- II. Satan and God (Chs. 1:6-2:10)
- III. Job and His Friends (Chs. 2:11-37:24)
- IV. Job and His God (Chs. 38-42)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Always trust the Sovereignty of God.
- 2. Never make rash judgments about man’s situation.
- 3. Trusting in the Lord has a sure reward.
- 4. Job addresses the problem of undeserved suffering and our attitude in affliction.
- 5. It is okay to ask God questions, as Job did (3:11-12, 16, 20), but it is not okay to question God’s character and sovereignty.
- 6. God will never permit anything to come to the life of an obedient Christian that is not for his good and God’s glory (Rom. 8:28).

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EXODUS

Meaning of Title: The book of redemption. The word “exodus” itself means “departure.”

Author: Moses, the great Lawgiver (17:14; 24:4)

Date: The actual date of the Exodus has two viewpoints by assorted scholars. The scope of this summary does not allow time to detail the arguments for both. However, an early date for the Exodus itself would fall around 1444 B.C., while a late dating of the Exodus would occur around 1260 B.C. The scope of this study will assume a later date of the Exodus, around 1260-1220 B.C., during the reign of Egyptian Pharaoh, Ramses II.

Historical Setting: The book of Exodus continues from Genesis by tracing the destiny of the children of Jacob. Exodus begins in Egypt at the death of Joseph and concludes with the Israelite people camped at Mount Sinai. The people of God have been living in slavery to Pharaoh. As God delivers the Israelites, they move into the desert by way of the Red Sea and eventually come to Mount Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula. The book mainly covers the lifetime of Moses, about 150 years.

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: The departure of Israel from Egypt is the dominant historical fact in Exodus. The first half of Exodus focuses on coming to a personal knowledge of God (burning bush, God revealing His divine Name, Exodus 15:11) while the second half of Exodus focuses on knowing God, but more from the context of the special relationship between the Lord and the Israelites.

Portrayal of Christ: The Deliverer, Passover Lamb, “I Am”

Uniqueness: The book of Exodus records more miracles than any other book in the Old Testament. The exodus from Egypt marked the end of a period of oppression for Abraham’s descendants and the beginning of the fulfillment of a covenant promise to Abraham that his descendants would not only live in the Promised Land, but would multiply and become a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3, 7). Exodus introduces us to God’s most personal name, Yahweh or Jehovah (LORD).

Outline:

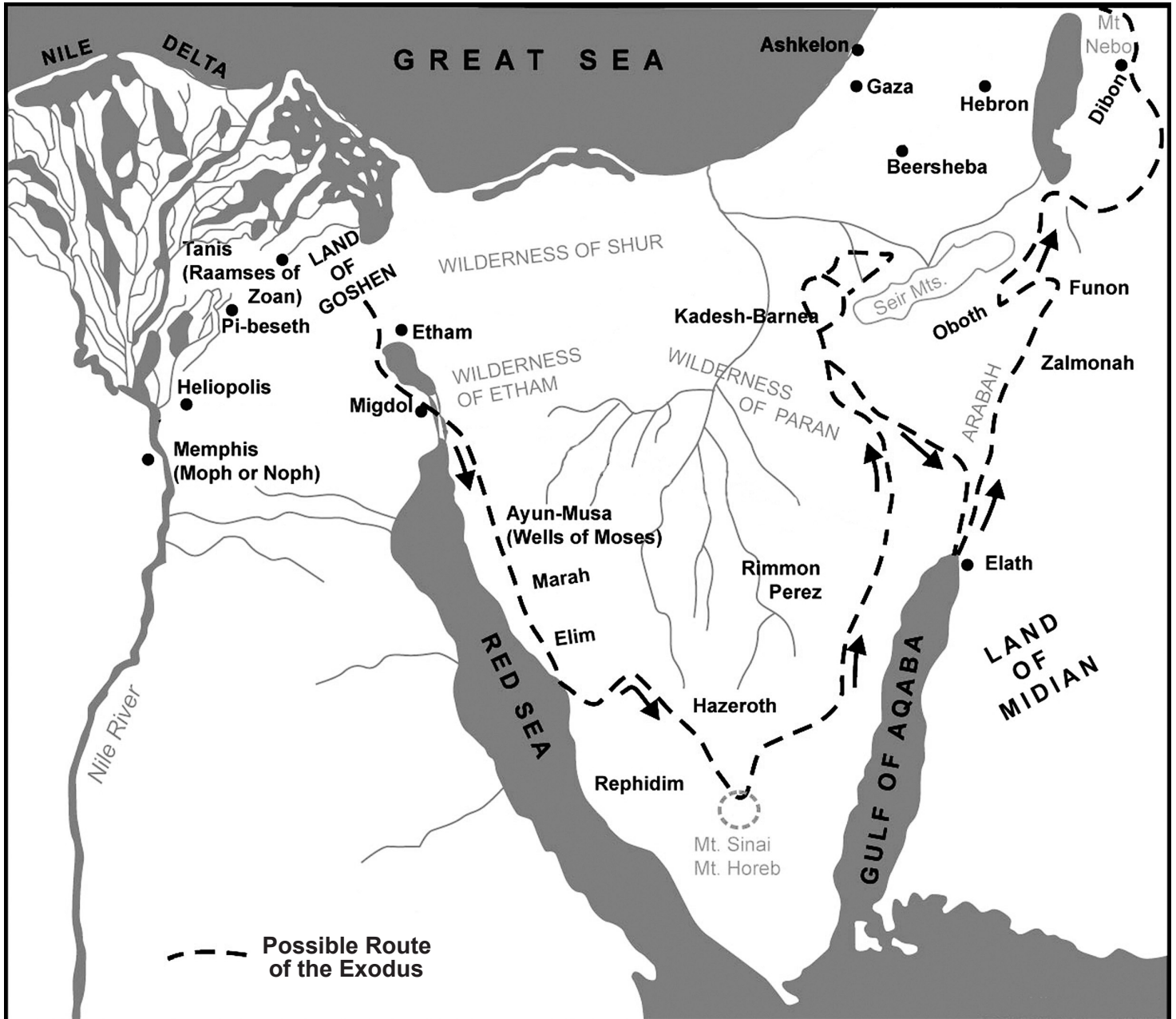
- I. Moses Leads the People out of Egypt (1:1-15:21)
- II. Journey to Sinai (15:22-18:27)
- III. The Covenant and the Law (Chs. 19-24)
- IV. The Tabernacle in the Wilderness (Chs. 25-40)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God’s divine name (3:14). *I AM WHO I AM*
- 2. God is our redeemer and deliverer (6:6; 15:13; 20:2).
- 3. God is a forgiving God (34:6).
- 4. God can use anyone for His glory (4:10-11).
- 5. God is concerned and hears our pleas (2: 24-25).
- 6. This book presents the redemption of God’s people out of bondage and the granting of a covenant with them.

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Possible Route of the Exodus



LEVITICUS

Meaning of Title: The book of atonement, holiness and worship. In the Hebrew language, Leviticus means “and he called” which corresponds to the first line of the book. A more common understanding of the title is “pertaining to the Levites.”

Author: Moses

Date: During the first month of the second year following the Exodus, around 1230-1220 B.C.

Historical Setting: While the Israelites were encamped on Mount Sinai (Lev. 7:38; 27:34). The Israelites had been captive in Egypt for 400 years; therefore, their concept of God had been distorted by polytheistic religions around them. It was at Mount Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments and other parts of the law directly from God. They built and furnished the tabernacle (Exodus 40). After the Tabernacle was filled with God’s glory, Moses received instructions regarding worship in this holy place. Those instructions are the book of Leviticus.

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: Genesis explains man’s sin and condemnation. Exodus explains redemption. Leviticus explains how sinful man may walk in communion with a holy God.

Portrayal of Christ: Lays the foundation for the sacrificial system which is perfectly fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross

Uniqueness: While sometimes viewed as not relevant to today’s Christian, the topics dealt with in Leviticus (atonement, sacrifice, worship, and holiness) are critical aspects of our Christian faith. Leviticus needs to be read in the larger context of the Pentateuch because Israel is camped at Mount Sinai (wilderness area) and they will spend a full year being molded into a holy nation before God will lead them toward the conquest of Canaan. Leviticus provides the foundation by which they will be able to establish two types of relationships: 1) with God and 2) with one another.

Outline:

- I. The Sacrificial System and the Priesthood (Chs. 1-10)
- II. Clean and Unclean (Chs. 11-22)
- III. Holy Days and Seasons (Chs. 23-24)
- IV. Laws Concerning National and Individual Stewardship (Chs. 25-27)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. The holiness of God (11:45; 19:2; 20:26)—152 times in Leviticus.
2. Worship includes proclamation *and* response.
3. The totality of human relationships is shaped by the fact the person belongs to the Lord (Chs. 17-26).
4. Sanctification is a divine activity—it is God who sanctifies (20:8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32).
5. This book is the manual of ordinances enabling the Holy God to dwell among His people by making them holy.

NOTES

NUMBERS

Meaning of Title: The book of wanderings. As the Bible was later translated into Greek, the title *Numbers* was arrived at due to the numbering of the people (2 censuses) that occurred in the book (Chs. 1-4; 26-27).

Author: Moses (33:1-2). However, as with some of the other books of the Pentateuch, there are verses that lead one to believe they were added after the life of Moses (post-Mosaic). These verses are 12:3; 21:14; and 32:34-42.

Date: The first census in the book of Numbers took place on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites' exodus out of Egypt, between 1230-1220 B.C. (1:1).

Historical Setting: The book of Leviticus was dominated by speeches outlining laws and regulations for the people of Israel, with very little emphasis on "events." This book mainly focuses on events during the 40-year period between the covenant at Sinai and the preparation to enter the Promised Land.

Recipients: The Israelites as they prepare to enter the Promised Land

Purpose and Themes: The theme of holiness carries over from Leviticus to the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers serves as a type of bridge to take the reader from the point where the Israelites received the law (Exodus & Leviticus), through wilderness wandering, and into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy & Joshua). The book of Numbers also foreshadows a theme that will later be fully revealed in the New Testament: sin, unbelief, and rebellion will bring about the judgment of God.

Portrayal of Christ: The Star out of Jacob (24:17), the Smitten Rock, Our Lifted-up One (21:4-9; cp. John 3:14)

Uniqueness: It is interesting to note there are two censuses spoken of in Numbers. When the second one is taken 40 years later (26:2), only Caleb and Joshua are alive to be recounted, just as God had predicted in Numbers 14:30.

Outline:

- I. The Israelites at Mount Sinai (Chs.1:1-10:10)
- II. Wilderness Wanderings (10:11-21:35)
- III. Conquest of Canaan and Division of the Land (Chs. 22-36)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. The divine providence of God (God fulfills Genesis 12:1-3, Israel to be a land and a people).
2. We must trust God and not man in the day of crisis (13:26-14:25; Ps. 37:5).
3. God will supply all our needs (1:1-3; 11:6-9, 31-33; 14:7-8; 20:8; Phil. 4:19).
4. We must worship God according to His instructions (Ch. 26).

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DEUTERONOMY

Meaning of Title: The book of remembrance. In the Hebrew Bible, the title comes from the phrase, “these are the words,” in reference to the words Moses spoke to the people of Israel. However, the Greek translation, and the name which we would be more familiar with, means “second law.” The title is suggestive of the content because there is a “second giving” of the law in the book of Deuteronomy to serve as a reminder to the people.

Author: Generally accepted to be authored by Moses, but again several passages must be understood to be post-Mosaic in nature. For example, Chapter 34 which deals with the death of Moses.

Date: Around 1220 B.C. based upon a late Exodus date, at the end of the 40-year wilderness wanderings.

Historical Setting: The Israelites are standing on the verge of entering the Promised Land and Moses outlines God’s agenda for the future. This outline focuses on the special covenant relationship which exists between the Lord and Israel. At the heart of the covenant is a commitment by both parties to love the other wholeheartedly and faithfully. As Moses invites the people to renew their covenant relationship with the Lord, he sets before them an important choice, a choice between “life and death, blessings and curses” (30:19).

Recipients: Israelites

Purpose and Themes: This book is a series of discourses by Moses at the end of the wilderness wanderings showing the blessings of obedience and the curse of disobedience. It only covers about a two-month period relating final preparations for entering the Promised Land.

Portrayal of Christ: The True Prophet (Deut. 18:15-19)

Uniqueness: This book was among our Lord’s favorites. He quoted from it more than any other Old Testament book. It is quoted over forty times in the New Testament—exceeded only by Psalms and Isaiah.

Outline:

- I. Looking Backward: Instructions for the Journey (Chs. 1-11)
- II. Looking Upward: Instructions to Obey the Law (Chs. 12-26)
- III. Looking Forward: Final Instructions from Moses (Chs. 27-34)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God has set before us a choice to make between life and death (30:19; 4:1-4).
- 2. Strongly monotheistic in nature (6:4).
- 3. There is a link between a covenant life and ethical conduct (5:6; 27:16; 21:18; 5:17; 5:18; 5:19; 25:13; 5:20; 19:15; 22:1; 23:19).
- 4. When life is going well don’t forget God (Chs. 8-9).

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JOSHUA

Meaning of Title: The book of conquest. The name Joshua was originally Hoshea, meaning "Yahweh saves."

Author: Primarily Joshua (24:26) with minor additions by Eleazar the high priest and his son Phinehas (24:33).

Time Period: Conquest and settlement of Canaan from about 1220-1200 B.C. Joshua completes what Moses began.

Historical Setting: This book is both history and biography as the story of Joshua's life is entwined with the history of Israel during the time of the conquest of Canaan. The book opens with the call and commission of Joshua, and ends with his death. The book recounts the success of Israel under Joshua's leadership in the conquest and possession of the Promised Land (1:11).

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: The conquest, division, and possession of Canaan fulfilling God's promise to the patriarchs (Gen. 12:2-3; 13:15; 15:18-21; 17:19-21).

Portrayal of Christ: Captain of our salvation and Commander of the Lord's army

Uniqueness: Joshua introduces a new method of teaching for the Israelites. Until now, God had spoken in dreams, visions, or by angels. In Joshua, they were to heed God's voice in and through the book of the Law, the Pentateuch (1:8).

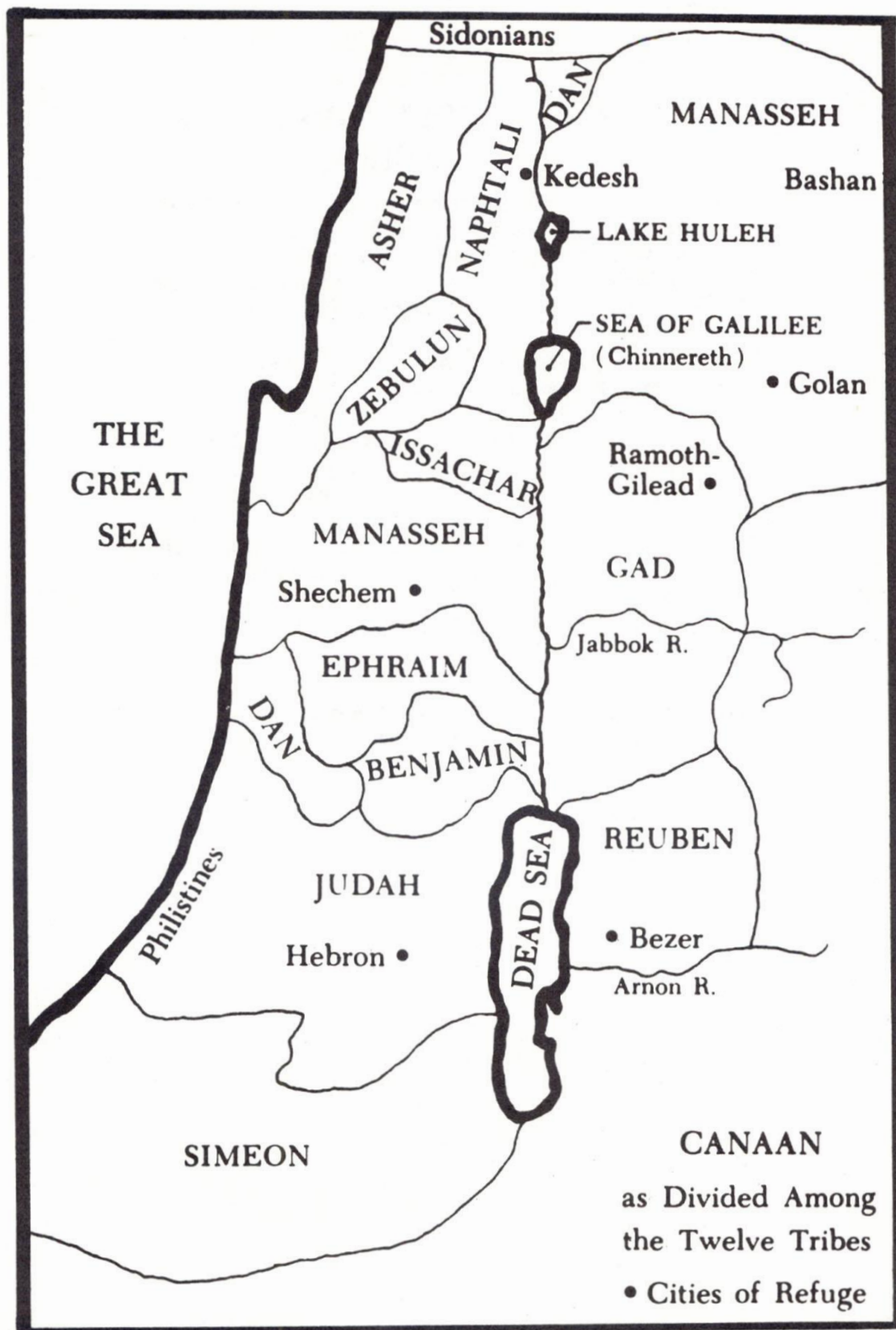
Outline:

- I. The Invasion of Canaan (1:1-5:12)
- II. The Conquest of Canaan (5:13-12:24)
- III. The Division of Canaan (Chs. 13-21)
- IV. The Farewell Address of Joshua (Chs. 22-24)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. God faithfully keeps His promises (11:23; 21:44-45).
2. God raises up the leadership He needs (1:1-9).
3. When God's people obey victory results.
4. Each must choose whom they will serve (24:14-15).
5. Trust God even when it makes no sense to you.

NOTES



JUDGES

Meaning of Title: The book of defeat and theocracy (God rules). The book is named from the history of various (12-15) judges raised up by God to defeat a particular enemy in a particular place and give the people rest. The Hebrew word for “judge” means “deliverer.”

Author: Samuel, last Judge and first Prophet (1 Sam. 10:25)

Date: Written between about 1040 and 1020 B.C.

Historical Setting: The book of Judges covers a 170-year period from the death of Joshua and ending with the coronation of Saul, the people’s choice as their first king (1220-1020 B.C.). This book records one of the darkest periods of Israel’s history. The people forsook God (2:13) and God forsook the people (2:23).

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: This is a book of defeat and disgrace (17:6; 21:25). In 2:10-19, there is a summary of the entire book: blessing, disobedience, chastening, repentance, and deliverance. This book demonstrates divine judgment on Israel’s apostasy.

Portrayal of Christ: Our Deliverer Judge (6:11, 14, etc.)

Uniqueness: It contains the oldest parable in the world (9:8-15). It contains a great battle song (Ch. 5). It contains the earliest historical record of the emergence of a woman, Deborah (probably a widow), into prominence and leadership in a nation.

Outline:

- I. The Disobedience of the Israelites (1:1-3:6)—Apathy
- II. The Judges of Israel (3:7-16:31)—Apostasy
- III. The Religious and Moral Decline of the Times (17:1-21:25)—Anarchy

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Prosperity is due to obedience to the will of God; adversity is due to disobedience and rebellion against God.
- 2. There is no safety in sin, only in absolute separation from sin.
- 3. God pardons the truly penitent.
- 4. God’s people must not fail to trust God’s Word and claim His power.
- 5. We read of man’s constant failure and God’s constant mercy.
- 6. The wickedness of the human heart (2:11-13, 17, 19; 8:33-35; 10:61; 13:1).
- 7. God delights in using weak things (1 Cor. 1:26-29).
- 8. God’s Holy Spirit is at work (3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25, etc.).

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RUTH

Meaning of Title: The book of love and restoration. Ruth was not Jewish, but a Moabitess who married a Hebrew man named Boaz living in Moab.

Author: Probably Samuel, the Judge-Prophet

Time Period: This book covers the same general period as the time of the Judges, perhaps during the rule of Gideon or Jephthah.

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: Ruth establishes the lineage of David and David's Lord (4:18-22). Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David. During a period of great irresponsibility, Ruth was a call to obedient and responsible living.

Portrayal of Christ: The Kinsman-Redeemer (Boaz)

Uniqueness: Ruth and Esther are the only two books in the Bible named for women. In addition, Ruth is the only book in which the entire story is devoted to the history of a woman. Ruth is listed in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1:5). God used Ruth to perpetuate the line of the Messiah.

Outline:

- I. Ruth's Sorrow (Ch. 1)
- II. Ruth's Service (Ch. 2)
- III. Ruth's Surrender (Ch. 3)
- IV. Ruth's Satisfaction (Ch. 4)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. Ruth demonstrates the power of true love to overcome all difficulties (1:16-17).
2. Ruth exalts a high ideal for marriage (4:11-17).
3. Even in the darkest times God is at work in the hearts of those who fear and trust Him (Ruth and Boaz).
4. No person is so far outside the reach of God's grace that he or she cannot be saved.
5. God is present and powerful in the lives of His people in times of crisis and great pain.
6. Our great God is concerned about the lives of "little" people.

NOTES

1 & 2 SAMUEL

Meaning of Title: The books of transition and David's reign. The name Samuel means "Heard of God," i.e., asked of God, offering of God, appointed by God. First and Second Samuel were originally together in one book.

Author: Possibly Samuel, also includes writings from the prophets Nathan and Gad (10:25; 1 Chron. 29:29).

Date: 1 Samuel (1105-1025 B.C.), 2 Samuel (1025-930 B.C.)

Historical Setting: The book begins in the day of the judges and describes Israel's transition from a theocracy (led by God) to a monarchy (led by a king), a period of about 175 years. Samuel, Saul, and David are the key figures in the books.

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: God is always at work in this world. Even when we can't see what He is doing, we can be confident of God's sovereignty. When Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David disobeyed God, they faced tragic consequences. Sin affected what they accomplished for God and how some of them raised their children. Being a real leader means letting God guide all aspects of your activities, values, and goals, including how you raise your children. God is always in control, He is able to bring His people back to Him. Other themes include leadership, obedience, and God's faithfulness.

Portrayal of Christ: The Rejected Ruler (8:7), the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Overcoming King, the Son of David

Uniqueness: This is Israel's first choice of a king, and the lesson learned is that only God is the one true King overall.

Outline:

- I. The Story of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1-7:17)
- II. The Election and Rejection of Saul (1 Sam. 8:1-16:13)
- III. The Rise of David (1 Sam. 16:14-2 Sam. 5:10)
- IV. The Reign of David (2 Sam. 5:11-24:25)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God answers prayer (2:1-10).
- 2. The kind of person we are is more important than anything we do (3:1-19).
- 3. When others see a shepherd, God sees a king (1 Sam. 16:11-13).
- 4. Parents need to discipline their children responsibly (1:13-36).
- 5. We are not as responsible for what happens to us as we are for how we respond (1 Sam. 14-2 Sam. 6).
- 6. A trustworthy companion is one of God's greatest gifts—Nathan's story (2 Sam. 7).

NOTES

PSALMS

NOTES

Meaning of Title: The book of "praise," which indicates that the main contents of the book are praise, prayer, and worship. Hebrew, "zamar," meaning to "pluck," the plucking of strings implies that the Psalms were originally composed to be accompanied by stringed instruments. The Greek word is "psalmoi," a praise song.

Author: Many of the psalms have superscriptions, traditionally taken as indicating authorship: David (73), Asaph (12), sons of Korah (11), Solomon (1), Heman (1), Ethan (1), and Moses (1).

Time Period: 1075-425 B.C., Moses to Post-Exilic

Historical Setting: Beginning with Moses and ending with the post-exilic community, the history of Israel from its inception to following their exile.

Recipients: The original hearers of the psalms would have been those associated with the formal worship of Israel, mostly in the context of the temple. However, the fact that they are so "generic" with respect to historical and personal details indicates that the compositional intent went beyond the first worship participants to give future hearers a form to follow for similar expressions of trust and worship.

Purpose: Psalms, a collection of prayers and poems, helps us journey through the valleys and peaks of our lives, ultimately leading us to focus our thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Special Psalms include: Penitential (6, 32, 38, 51, 107, 130, 143); Ascent (120-134); God's wrath invoked (35, 37, 69, 79, 109, 139, 143); Psalm 119 honors God's Word; Passover (113-118).

Portrayal of Christ: The Shepherd and the Lord, Liberator of man from sin, despair, and death

Uniqueness: More than any other book of the Bible, Psalms displays the most intimate, heart-to-heart communication between man and his God. The Psalms is known as the national hymnbook of Israel. At least 20 quotations from Psalms are direct references to Christ's life and death. This book could be the most often read book in all the Bible.

Outline:

Book I: (1-41) Man's Sin and Redemption
Book II: (42-72) Israel's Ruin and Redemption
Book III: (73-89) Holiness of Israel's Sanctuary
Book IV: (90-106) God's Sovereign Kingdom
Book V: (107-150) Sufficiency of God's Word

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. God is holy (Ps. 99 & 15).
2. Practice the presence of God (Ps. 23).
3. Love God's Word (Ps. 1 & 119).
4. Praise God continuously (Ps. 145).
5. Trust God alone (Ps. 62).

1 & 2 KINGS

Meaning of Title: The books of 1 & 2 Kings are so named because they record and interpret the reigns of all kings of Israel and Judah except Saul. They are but a continuation of the books of Samuel. Like Samuel, First and Second Kings were originally in only one book.

Author: Unknown, possibly an exile who lived in Babylon, perhaps Ezra, Ezekiel or Jeremiah.

Date: Probably completed in their final form between 580-538 B.C.

Historical Setting: These books provide a record of Israel's history from the beginning of the movement to place Solomon on David's throne, through the end of the reign of Zedekiah, Judah's last King (961-586 B.C.)—covers about a 400-year period.

Recipients: The Israelites

Purpose and Themes: To preserve the record and teach lessons from history. The kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were of greater interest to the writer. The chief concern of the writer seems to be to show the religious aspects of the reigns of the kings.

Portrayal of Christ: Our Redeemer, Lord and King of all

Uniqueness: These books were written before the captivity and emphasize the prophet's point of view.

Outline:

- I. The Kingdom United under Solomon (1 Kings 1-11)
- II. The Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12-22)
- III. The Kingdom Taken Captive (2 Kings 1-25)
 - A. Israel's captivity by Assyria—722 B.C. (Chs. 1-17)
 - B. Judah's captivity by Babylon—606-586 B.C. (Chs. 18-25)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Whatever a nation sows it reaps—both Israel and Judah sowed rebellion and reaped the judgment of captivity.
- 2. Wisdom, power and achievement do not ultimately come from any human source.
- 3. A beautiful house of worship doesn't guarantee heartfelt worship of God.
- 4. God hears us and forgives us when we pray—if we are willing to trust Him and turn from sin.
- 5. Power, money, and physical attractiveness can become idols.
- 6. God is patient with us. He gives us many chances to hear His message to turn from sin, and to believe Him.

NOTES

1 & 2 CHRONICLES

Meaning of Title: The Hebrew title means “words (events) of the days.” These books serve as supplementary material to Samuel–Kings. Originally, they were together in one book.

Author: Ezra or Ezekiel, according to Jewish tradition

Date: During Babylonian captivity between 450–430 B.C.

Historical Setting: These religious history books of Judah and Israel span from about 1000–960 B.C., primarily during the reigns of David and Solomon. Chronicles essentially covers the same period of Jewish history as 2 Samuel through 2 Kings.

Recipients: All Israel

Purpose and Themes: To preserve the record and teach important history lessons, especially for the kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Portrayal of Christ: Heir to the throne of David

Uniqueness: Unlike Kings, these books were written after the captivity and emphasize more of a priest’s point of view.

Outline:

- I. The Genealogies of Israel (1 Chron. 1-9)
- II. The Reign of David (1 Chron. 10-29)
- III. The Reign of Solomon (2 Chron. 1-9)
- IV. The Kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 10-36)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. Events in history lay the foundation for a nation.
2. God is always faithful to His people.
3. We can experience God’s Kingdom by giving Christ control of our lives.
4. We should encourage each other to faithful worship.
5. God still answers prayer today.
6. Only God can bring true peace.
7. All our power, wisdom and wealth come from God.
8. The history of Israel is an object lesson to nations today. If we obey God, He will protect and bless us; if we turn away from Him, He will deal severely with us.

NOTES

SONG OF SOLOMON

Meaning of Title: “Song of Solomon” (or “Song of Songs” as sometimes referred to) means “the finest of all songs” of the 1,005 songs written by Solomon (1 Kings 4:32).

Author: King Solomon (1:1)

Date: Around 961 B.C., early in Solomon’s reign

Historical Setting: Within the land of Palestine during the time of the united kingdom of Israel.

Recipients: A beautiful poetic love song, a conversation between Solomon and his love, with a universal application to all people.

Purpose and Themes:

1. Literal approach: It extols the love, marriage, and sex between a man and a woman as a gift from God.
2. Figurative approach: It expresses God’s intimate relationship between Himself and His people.

Portrayal of Christ: The early Church fathers interpreted the Song of Solomon as the communion between Christ Jesus, the husband, and His Church, the bride.

Uniqueness: The literary form of the Song of Solomon is unique in the Bible and offers what may be the richest portrayal of the variety of expressions of love in all of Hebrew Scripture.

Outline:

- I. Anticipation: The Courtship (Chs. 1:1-3:5)
- II. Consummation: The Wedding (Chs. 3:6-5:1)
- III. Celebration: The Marriage (Chs. 5:2-8:14)

Theology/Life Lessons:

The great message of the Song of Solomon is that God has given men and women the gift of the pleasures of love and sex to be enjoyed for a lifetime in the covenant of marriage. The mutual expression of this love between a husband and wife is the highest of all human relationships.

1. Keep God in the center of your marriage.
2. Don’t take love for granted, romance your spouse daily.
3. Husbands, keep yourselves pure.
4. Wives, respect your husbands.
5. Husbands, affirm and adore your wives.

ECCLESIASTES

Meaning of Title: “Ecclesiastes” is not a Hebrew word at all. It comes from the Greek *ekklesia*, which is translated “church” or “assembly” in the New Testament. It carries the idea of a preacher speaking to an assembly of people (1:1-2; 12:8-10).

Author: Jewish and early Christian traditions attribute the book to Solomon, “the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1).

Date: Around 945 B.C.

Historical Setting: The reign of Solomon, 961-922 B.C.

Recipients: The people of Israel

Purpose and Themes: To show that self-gratification and worldly success do not bring true satisfaction. Life without a knowledge of and fellowship with God is vain and empty (1:14). But, a true fear of God leads to a meaningful life (12:13). “Vanity” is a key word in this book (2:11; etc.).

Portrayal of Christ: Though no Messianic predictions or types appear in this book, every disappointment and vanity described in Ecclesiastes has its remedy in Christ, the wisdom of God and the only truth to be found in life.

Uniqueness: No other book of the Old Testament so challenges our Christian faith for a response to the questions we ask ourselves today, questions that are as old as man’s search for the meaning of life.

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1-11)
- II. The Futility and Oppression of Life (1:12-4:12)
- III. The Vanity of Life in All Its Forms (4:13-7:14)
- IV. Secular Philosophy and Its Failures (7:15-10:3)
- V. Summary of the Vain Life and How to Overcome It (10:4-12:14)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Nothing in our materialistic society will bring true meaning and happiness—not wealth, fame, pleasure or success.
- 2. Only in God can you find real fulfillment.
- 3. Fear God (12:13-14).

NOTES

PROVERBS

Meaning of Title: The Hebrew title, *Mishle Shelomoh*, is translated "Proverbs of Solomon." A proverb is defined as a short sentence of wisdom drawn from experience. Proverbs is the greatest "how-to" book ever written.

Author: King Solomon is the principal writer of Proverbs, 1-24; Men of Hezekiah, 25-29; Agur, 30; Lemuel (Solomon), 31. Solomon wrote 1,005 songs and 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:31-32).

Date: End date for Solomon's portion is between 950-922 B.C.

Historical Setting: As wisdom literature, Proverbs does not arise out of any specific historical situation. Rather, the situations and issues dealt with by Proverbs in general are those that all people encounter in life.

Recipients: Proverbs was written to equip the Israelites to live appropriately in the world created by God; however, the book has a universal and timeless appeal to all of God's people.

Purpose: "To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth" (Pro. 1:2-4). Practical wisdom for daily living.

Portrayal of Christ: "Christ Jesus, who for us became wisdom from God" (I Cor. 1:30). He is the personification of all the wisdom of Proverbs.

Uniqueness: May be considered the James of the Old Testament as well as an extended commentary on Matt. 7:24-27, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man..." Proverbs is to the Old Testament what the book of James is to the New Testament.

Outline:

- I. The Virtues of Wisdom (Chs. 1-9)
- II. The Proverbs of Solomon (Chs. 10-22:16)
- III. The Sayings of the Wise (Chs. 22:17- 24:34)
- IV. Proverbs of the Men of Hezekiah (Chs. 25-29)
- V. The Words of Agur (Ch. 30)
- VI. The Words of Lemuel (Ch. 31)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. The recurring promise of the book of Proverbs is that those who choose wisdom and follow God will be blessed in numerous ways. Those who reject Him, on the other hand, suffer shame and death.
2. Wisdom that leads to godliness is very practical.
3. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (1:7; 9:10).
4. There is a proverb for every day of the month (31).

NOTES

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS (922 – 400 B.C.)

The prophetic books belong to the dark ages of God's chosen people. The prophets were Jewish men whom God raised up during the dark days of Israel's history. Read what God says about them in 2 Kings 17:13, "Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.'" We read in the New Testament that God spoke through His prophets (Heb. 1:1). The period of the prophets in Israel covered 500 years from the 9th to the 4th Century B.C. Then the voices of the prophets were silenced until John the Baptist. These prophets spoke bravely to kings and people alike of their sins and failures. The office of prophet was initiated in Samuel's time. When the kingdom was divided and Judah (SK) and Israel (NK) were established as separate monarchies, these prophets arrived on the scene.

MAJOR AND MINOR PROPHETS

There are 17 prophetic books in the Old Testament. They are subdivided into 4 major prophets and 13 minor prophets. This difference is made not because of importance of their content but because of the length of their material. The major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah (Lamentations), Ezekiel and Daniel. The minor prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The captivities of Israel (the Northern Kingdom made up of 10 tribes) and of Judah (the Southern Kingdom comprised of only 2 tribes (Benjamin and Judah) are largely the theme of the Old Testament prophets. The record of these is found in 2 Kings 17:1-23; 24:11-25:21. These are called the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Some of the prophets served before the exile (pre-exilic), some during the exile (exilic), and some afterwards (post-exilic).

PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS (11 Books)

In order of their writing: Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah. The prophets to Israel (NK) during this period were Jonah, Amos, and Hosea. The prophets to Judah (SK) during this period were Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah.

EXILIC PROPHETS (3 Books)

The prophets during the exile and captivity in Babylon were Ezekiel and Daniel. Jeremiah probably wrote Lamentations during that time. They prophesied to all the Israelites. Jeremiah extended for a while into this period.

POST-EXILIC PROPHETS/LEADERS (3 Books)

Those who prophesied after the exile were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Other leaders, but not prophets, who served alongside of them were Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

LESSONS

In each prophetic book there lies a threefold lesson: (1) Historical—each of the prophets preached and wrote to address an immediate need in the lives of the people, (2) Prophetic—each prophet illustrates or announces something about Israel's future, both in judgment and in restoration, and (3) Practical—the sins of the nation in that day are still with us today, and there are many practical lessons for us to learn from these books.

Israelite Kings & Preexilic Prophets Date Chart (Based on the chronology of John Bright)

The United Monarchy					
Dates (BC)	Kingdom of the Israelites				
1020-1000	Saul				
1000-961	David				
961-922	Solomon				
The Divided Kingdoms					
Dates (BC)	Israel (Northern)			Judah (Southern)	Dates (BC)
922-901	Jeroboam I			Rehoboam	922-915
				Abijah	915-913
				Asa	913-873
901-900	Nadab				
900-877	Baasha				
877-876	Elah			Jehoshaphat	873-849
876	Zimri	Tibni			
876-869	Omri				

	Dates (BC)	Israel (Northern)		Judah (Southern)	Dates (BC)		
E L I J A	869-850	Ahab		Jehoshaphat	873-849		
	850-849	Ahaziah		Jehoram	849-843	Obadiah	
E L I S H A	849-843	Joram (Jehoram)		Ahaziah	843		
	843-815	Jehu		Athaliah (non-Davidic Queen)	843-837		
	815-802	Jehoahaz		Joash	837-800	Joel	
H O S E A	802-786	Jehoash (Joash)		Amaziah	800-783		
	786-746	Jeroboam II	Jonah/Amos	Uzziah (Azariah)	783-742		
	746-745	Zachariah		Jotham (co-regent)	750-742		
	745	Shallum		Jotham (king)	742-735		
	745-737	Menahem					
	737-736	Pekahiah					
	736-732	Pekah		Ahaz	735-715		
	732-724	Hoshea					
	721	Fall of Samaria					
				Hezekiah	715-687		
				Manasseh	687-642	Nahum	
				Amon	642-640		
				Josiah	640-609	Zephaniah	
				Jehoahaz	609		
J E R E M I A H				Jehoikim (Eliakim)	609-598	Habakkuk	
				Jehoiachin (Jeconiah)	598-597		
				Zedekiah (Mattaniah)	597-587		
				Fall of Jerusalem	587		

OBADIAH

Meaning of Title: The book of justice. The name Obadiah means “Worshiper or Servant of Yahweh.”

Author: Obadiah

Time Period: Between 848-844 B.C., in the reign of Jehoram. If date is accurate, this makes Obadiah the earliest of the writing prophets, and perhaps contemporary with Elija and Elisha. He preached to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Historical Setting: The struggle between Jacob and Esau began in the womb of Rebekah, progressed as Jacob secured the birthright in deceit, robbing his brother, and continued through their descendants. The Edomites, descendants of Esau, refused to let the Israelites, descendants of Jacob, pass through their land when Israel was on the way to the Promised Land. (Num. 20:14-21). Both Saul and David fought with and finally subdued Edom, and Solomon put down an attempted revolt during his reign. The Edomites liberated themselves from Judah’s control during the reign of Jehoram, and gave aid to enemies of Israel, encouraging Babylon to destroy Jerusalem (Ps. 137:7).

Recipients: Edomites, the descendants of Esau, Jacob’s twin

Purpose and Themes: The theme of this book is the utter destruction of Edom because she rejoiced over the defeat of Jerusalem by foreigners. Obadiah has two concerns: the haughty pride of the Edomites, whose mountain stronghold in Mount Seir (south of Judah) had given them a false sense of security, and their quickness to aid those who would destroy Judah.

Portrayal of Christ: The King and Judge of Nations (v. 15)

Uniqueness: Shortest book of the Old Testament (21 verses). Only one of three Old Testament books not addressed to Israel. Esther and Jonah are the others.

Outline:

- I. Edom’s Destruction (vv. 1-9).
- II. Edom’s Crimes (vv. 10-14).
- III. God’s Judgment on Israel’s Enemies (vv. 15-16).
- IV. God’s Blessings on Israel’s People (vv. 17-21).

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. The doom of the proud and rebellious, and the deliverance of the meek and the humble.
2. God is a just God who is concerned for the oppressed and will bring justice as reflected in the predictions of God’s judgment upon Edom (vv. 1-9), and his future restoration of Israel when the kingdom of the Lord is established on earth (vv. 15-21).
3. Human defenses are utterly useless when the power of God comes against them.
4. It is criminal to rejoice in the calamity of another and to gloat over his misfortune.

NOTES

JOEL

Meaning of Title: The name Joel means “Yahweh (Jehovah) is God.”

Author: Joel, the son of Pethuel. His name is found fourteen times in the Old Testament.

Date: 830-810 B.C., during reign of Joash

Historical Setting: The occasion of the book was a devastating locust plague. The prophet after describing the plague and its resulting chaos, urges the nation to repent of its sins and then goes on to predict a worse visitation, the future Day of the Lord. As a youth, Joel may have known Elijah or Elisha.

Recipients: Inhabitants of Judah, the Southern Kingdom

Purpose and Themes: Joel’s topic is the “Day of the Lord.” Thirteen of the seventeen prophets speak to this subject. Joel has been called “the prophet of religious revival.” He knew that revival follows true repentance. He sought to bring his people to that place. Spiritual deliverance after genuine repentance is the great central promise of this powerful book.

Portrayal of Christ: The Restorer and Hope of His People (3:16)

Uniqueness: Peter quoted 2:28 on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).

Outline:

- I. The Locust Plague (1:1-20)
- II. The Coming Day of the Lord (2:1-11)
- III. A Renewed Call to Repentance (2:12-17)
- IV. Promises of a Glorious Future (2:28-3:21)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Repent of sin in your life for God takes sin seriously and will judge sin (1:13-14; 2:12-13).
- 2. In the Day of the Lord God will ultimately judge the nations and will dwell on earth in peace with His people (2:30-31; 3:12-21).
- 3. God will pour out His Holy Spirit on His people (2:28).
- 4. The externals of religion are not to be lightly regarded (1:9, 13, 14; 2:12-17).
- 5. Disasters serve to turn people to God and prepare them to hear His voice.

NOTES

JONAH

Meaning of Title: Jonah means “Dove.”

Author: Jonah, a Hebrew, son of Amittai (1:1)

Date: Approximately 760 B.C.

Historical Setting: His ministry occurred during the reign of Jeroboam II (NK: 785-745 B.C.). See 2 Kings 14:25. Jonah is commanded to deliver a message to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, during the height of Assyrian power. The Assyrians were political enemies of Israel. The Ninevites were pagans and despised by Israel. Jonah was contemporary with Amos and Hosea.

Recipients: The Gentile Ninevites of Assyria

Purpose and Themes: God’s primary purpose is for *all* to see His love and mercy. He loves and seeks to redeem even the worst of people. Secondly, God desires for His people to see the pagan world with love and mercy. God’s people should long for others to experience what God has done for them.

Portrayal of Christ: Redeemer, Rescuer, the Risen from the Dead

Uniqueness: Jonah uniquely ministers to Gentile people, the people of Nineveh in Assyria. Other Old Testament books focus on the Jewish people. The book also demonstrates, in a unique way, the unconditional love of God for individuals and nations. Much attention has been given to the great fish that swallowed Jonah. Jesus, in speaking about his own death, refers to this act in literal terms. Though many see the story as allegory, the testimony of Jesus and the text itself (1:17 – fish was prepared for Jonah) lead the reader to understand the full story as historical fact and a miracle of God. Jesus made this book important when He made reference to Jonah’s experience (Matt. 12:38-40).

Outline:

- I. The Disobedience of Jonah (Chs. 1-2)
- II. The Re-Commissioning of Jonah (3:1-4)
- III. The Repentance of Nineveh (3:5-10)
- IV. The Rebuke of Jonah (4:1-11)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God uses people who don’t want to be used to do His will (1-2).
- 2. No one group can claim exclusive rights to God’s love (4:11).
- 3. God continually seeks to redeem humanity (3).
- 4. God rebukes those who do not demonstrate His love to all (4:4-11).
- 5. The great message of Jonah is the missionary message—saved people are to take the gospel to the unsaved.
- 6. Jonah is the test book of the Bible. It challenges our faith. Our attitude toward Jonah reveals our attitude toward God and His Word.
- 7. Everyone and everything in this book obeys God except Jonah.
- 8. Prejudice is displeasing to God.

NOTES

AMOS

Meaning of Title: The name Amos means “burdensome” or “burden bearer.”

Author: Amos (1:1); a herdsman and grower of sycamore fruit from Judah

Time Period: Amos’ ministry was around 780-752 B.C.

Historical Setting: Amos prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel or Ephraim during the reign of Jeroboam II. It was a time of peace and prosperity; Israel was at the height of its power. Amos spoke against the Northern Kingdom (Israel) for their excess and lack of concern for the poor as well as their idol worship. Jeroboam had led the people to combine their worship of the Lord with worship of Baal. Amos was contemporary with Jonah. Both Amos and Jonah may have known Elisha.

Recipients: Primarily, Israel – Northern Kingdom, but did speak to Judah

Purpose and Themes: Amos’ subject is the sins of the nations, particularly those of social justice, spiritual poverty and hypocrisy. He eloquently calls Israel to return to righteousness and justice. True commitment to the Lord requires righteous behavior. Thus, the primary theme is found in 5:24; “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Authentic worship is not about rituals and offerings, but about changed lifestyle.

Portrayal of Christ: Righteous Judge, Warrior, Restorer of the House of David (9:11; Acts 15:15-16)

Uniqueness: Amos offers a unique and carefully crafted warning to the Israelites. He employs puns and numerical parallelism to speak to his Hebrew audience. Ironically, Amos is not a prophet, but a shepherd who spoke great truth to people of influence. His message of placing a greater value on justice and righteousness than on wealth still rings true today.

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. The Eight Judgments (1:3-2:16)
- III. The Reason for Judgment (3:1-6:14)
- IV. The Results of the Judgment (7:1-9:10)
- V. Restoration after the Judgment (9:11-15)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God will judge the nations and His people (1:3-2:16).
- 2. God condemns empty religion (3:1-15).
- 3. His love/judgment is to return His people to Himself (4:1-13).
- 4. A person transformed by God sees people and things as they should be (7:14-17).
- 5. God’s mercy is still seen beyond His judgment (9:5-15).

NOTES

HOSEA

Meaning of Title: The name Hosea means “Salvation.” Hosea is a shortened version of Joshua/Jesus.

Author: Hosea, son of Beerli (1:1)

Date: Hosea’s ministry spanned from approximately 750–725 B.C.

Historical Setting: Hosea prophesied during the moral decline and the closing years of the Northern Kingdom - Israel (2 Kings 15-17; 2 Chronicles 26-32). Under Jerobaom II, the nation experienced military peace and prosperity, but he led the nation into the worship of false gods and ritualism. After Jeroboam II, six kings ruled in twenty-five years with four being assassinated and finally in 722 B.C., Israel fell to the Assyrians. Hosea foresaw this collapse. Hosea’s contemporaries were Jonah, Amos, Isaiah and Micah.

Recipients: The Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim or Israel)

Purpose and Themes: Like other minor prophets, Hosea is committed to the covenantal agreement between God and Israel. Israel was to be loyal to God alone and worship Him alone. Hosea’s adulterous marriage to Gomer portrayed in the book symbolizes Israel’s current relationship with God. This imagery demonstrated the simple pattern of Hosea’s message: sin, judgment, and salvation. The book presents a beautiful picture of God’s love for His people and His demonstration of mercy to them in spite of their rejecting Him.

Portrayal of Christ: Judge, Faithful Lover of His People, Redeemer

Uniqueness: Hosea had to live out his message (prophetic act). Hosea is the only minor prophet that portrays God’s love so dramatically. The marriage to Gomer presents God (Yahweh) as the faithful husband and Israel as the unfaithful wife. Repentance is the only thing that will restore the relationship. In either case, God will not give up on His people.

Outline:

- I. Hosea’s (God’s) Love for His Unfaithful Wife - Israel (Chs. 1-3)
- II. Israel’s Unfaithfulness and their Judgment (Chs. 4-10)
- III. God’s Love for Israel and their Hope for Restoration (Chs. 11-14)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God loves even the unfaithful (Chs. 1-3, 11).
- 2. We bring judgment upon ourselves when we reject God’s command for our lives (Chs. 4:1-3; 5).
- 3. Sin always reaps more than it sows (Chs. 8-9).
- 4. Repent and return to God (Ch. 14).

NOTES

MICAH

Meaning of Title: The name Micah means “Who is like Yahweh?”

Author: Micah, from the tribe of Judah (1:1)

Date: His ministry was from 742–700 B.C. The book was probably written prior to 701 B.C.

Historical Setting: Micah was a country preacher who was a younger contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham (750-732), Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-686). Assyria was asserting their supremacy in the world and Israel fell to them in 722 B.C. Hezekiah’s reforms angered Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, and he unleashed the army upon Judah destroying at least 46 cities and capturing over 200,000 people.

Recipients: Mainly to the common people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah

Purpose and Themes: Micah’s purpose is to announce condemnation and pending judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He addresses three areas of abuse by Israel. First, he criticizes the rich for abusing the poor and being dishonest in the marketplace. He denounced the religious practices of the nation as well as the other prophets for their attitude toward God’s wrath. Finally, he warned of God’s judgment for their worship of other gods. Despite these strong warnings, Micah does provide a ray of hope for the nation as he declares a time of peace after the judgment, thanks to a new ruler.

Portrayal of Christ: Jealous, Holy, the Prince of Peace, the Bethlehemite

Uniqueness: Micah sets God as the prosecuting attorney, primary witness against, and the final Judge for the accused, Israel. As Judge, he reserves the right to exercise grace and forgiveness. Chapter 7:19-20 speaks of Him casting our sins into the depth of the sea. Micah also addresses every level of society: princes, prophets, and the people. Like many other prophetic books, the style is Hebrew poetry rather than prose.

Outline:

- I. God Pronounces Judgment on Israel and Judah (Chs. 1-3)
- II. God’s Promise of Peace (Chs. 4-5)
- III. God’s Case Against the People and His Plea for Repentance (Chs. 6-7)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God is the ultimate witness of people (1:1-2).
- 2. God judges all who do not adhere to His covenant promise (6:1-7:6).
- 3. God promises a true deliverer, the Messiah (5:2-15).
- 4. God is patient, compassionate and forgiving (7:18-20).

NOTES

ISAIAH

Meaning of Title: The name Isaiah means “Yahweh is my Salvation.” The name symbolizes the message, as the word salvation is repeated often in the book.

Author: Isaiah (Son of Amoz)

Time Period: 742-680 B.C.

Historical Setting: Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, as was his co-worker, Micah. Both witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the Northern Kingdom to Assyria in 722 B.C. Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. His call to serve came upon Uzziah’s death in 742 B.C. Isaiah’s ministry spanned some 60 years. Hosea and Micah were his contemporaries. According to tradition, Isaiah was sawn asunder by wicked King Manasseh (Heb. 11:37). Isaiah experienced the events of the first 39 chapters, but he prophesied the events of the last section of the book (Chs. 40-66).

Recipients: All Israel, especially the Southern Kingdom of Judah

Purpose and Themes: Isaiah told of the judgment that must fall on Judah (SK). Yet, through the book there is the ultimate plan of God’s victory through His Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ.

Portrayal of Christ: The Suffering Servant (53), Messiah, King of Glory, Coming Ruler, Holy One of Israel

Uniqueness: No Old Testament book gives such a full picture of Jesus Christ. Isaiah foretells of the coming Savior more than any other prophet. Isaiah is the most frequently quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament.

Outline:

- I. The Judgment of God (Chs. 1-39)
 - Before Babylonian captivity
 - Judah’s victory over Assyria
 - Theme—condemnation of sin
- II. The Comfort of God (Chs. 40-66)
 - After Babylonian captivity
 - Remnant delivered from Babylon
 - Theme—consolation after trial

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God always has a remnant of believers through whom He works.
- 2. Sin will be judged (Chs. 1-39).
- 3. Repentance leads to pardon and comfort (Chs. 40-66).
- 4. A life is never a failure when lived according to the will of God.
- 5. Genuine heart change is more important than conforming to rules of ritual.

NOTES

NAHUM

Meaning of Title: The book of vengeance. The name Nahum means “consolation” or “comfort.”

Author: Nahum (1:1)

Date: Sometime between the fall of Thebes in 663 B.C. and the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., perhaps around 645 B.C.

Historical Setting: This book is a prophetic oracle to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Assyria was a world power for over 100 years. It was a pagan culture and an enemy to Israel. Nahum is placing the burden of destruction upon Nineveh for their actions against God and against Israel.

Recipients: Assyrians, primarily city of Nineveh, about 100 years after the revival of Jonah’s day in Nineveh

Purpose and Themes: The judgment and doom of the Ninevites, and hope and comfort for Judah—God is in control.

Portrayal of Christ: Judge and a Stronghold in the day of trouble

Uniqueness: Nahum and Zephaniah confirm the righteousness of God and His wrath on those who reject His commands. This book provides a clear picture of God’s understanding of right and wrong and presents His judgment as clear and swift.

Outline:

- I. God’s Judgment of Nineveh is Certain (Ch. 1)
- II. God’s Judgment of Nineveh is Described (Ch. 2)
- III. The Reason for God’s Judgment of Nineveh (Ch. 3)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. God is a jealous God (1:2).
2. God’s judgment is guaranteed for those who oppose His will and abuse His people. (1:3; 3:1-7).
3. God is specific in His judgments (1:8-15).
4. His judgments are justified (3:1-11).
5. God is good and comforts those that are His (1:7).
6. There is a limit to the patience of God.

NOTES

ZEPHANIAH

Meaning of Title: The book of denunciation. The name Zephaniah means “Hidden by Yahweh” or “Yahweh treasured.”

Author: Zephaniah (1:1), believed to be the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah of Judah; and thereby, a distant relative of King Josiah

Time Period: According to 1:1, Zephaniah’s ministry was during the reign of good King Josiah (640-609 B.C.). His prophecy was probably given sometime after Josiah’s revival in 622, but before Nineveh’s destruction in 612. Around 630-625 B.C. is a suitable date. See 2 Chron. 34-35.

Historical Setting: Judah is extending its power militarily because the other world powers are declining. But, theologically, this is a dark period as Judah’s history is defined by sin and idolatry. Manasseh and Amon were wicked kings who led the people into the worship of false gods. Josiah is now king but Zephaniah’s warning of God’s wrath is written before Josiah’s reforms. Probably contemporary with Jeremiah.

Recipients: Primarily the Southern Kingdom, Judah, particularly Jerusalem

Purpose and Themes: This work’s major theme is “the Day of the Lord,” which describes God’s coming judgment and wrath for God’s people because of their wickedness and injustice. God will expose any and all corruption and rebellion. He will vindicate His own righteousness. His judgment of His people is drastic, but not final as the book ends with a ray of hope. God will restore a faithful remnant that will remain as His covenant People.

Portrayal of Christ: Jealous Lord, Judge, Ruler and Redeemer

Uniqueness: Zephaniah offers a clear picture of both God’s judgment and mercy. He is specific about those who are in rebellion and He will judge those in rebellion (1:4-17). But, He offers His great love, shelter, and encouragement to the faithful (2:1-3). Zephaniah speaks of the day of the Lord when all will be gathered to worship the Lord and the King of Kings will rule.

Outline:

- I. The Day of the Lord (Chs. 1:1-2:3)—God will judge Judah
- II. The Judgment of the Nations (Ch. 2:4-5)—He will also judge the nations
- III. The Sin of Jerusalem and the Future Salvation (Ch. 3)—God will restore His people

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God is the judge of His people and the whole earth (1:1-2:3).
- 2. He calls His people to repentance (2:1-3).
- 3. He offers the promise of salvation and restoration (3:9-20).
- 4. God loves to sing and be joyous over His people (3:15-17).
- 5. What a person believes about God largely determines his conduct.

NOTES

HABAKKUK

Meaning of Title: The book of faith. The name Habakkuk means “to embrace.”

Author: Habakkuk

Date: 609-597 B.C.

Historical Setting: Toward the end of the reign of Josiah, after the destruction of Nineveh by the combined forces of the Babylonians, Medians, and Scythians in 612 B.C. Habakkuk grieves over the evil in Judah. Probably contemporary with Jeremiah at home and with Daniel in Babylon.

Recipients: This is a conversation between the prophet and God, but since God instructed him to write it down, his sphere of ministry, the people of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, would be the intended audience.

Purpose and Themes: To answer the question, “Why?” In this case, why do You make me look at injustice? Why do You tolerate wrong? Why are You silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? Godly people pray, but it seems as though their prayers do no good. This is the problem faced and solved in Habakkuk.

Portrayal of Christ: Ruler in His Holy Temple (2:20)

Uniqueness: Most prophets declared God’s message to people, while this prophet talked with God about people. Most Old Testament prophets pronounced divine judgment while this one pleaded for judgment. From this book, the battle cry for the Protestant Reformation comes, “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith” (2:4). This verse is quoted in three New Testament books (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

Outline:

- I. The Prophet Wonders (Ch. 1)
- II. The Prophet Watches and Waits (Ch. 2)
- III. The Prophet Worships (Ch. 3)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. “Why?” is best answered by “Who?”
- 2. God is aware of evil and will judge it.
- 3. No matter how bad it gets, when you have faith in God it is enough.
- 4. When the just choose to live by faith, worry is transformed into worship, terror becomes trust, and anguish melts into adoration.
- 5. God never stifles a sincere questioner.

JEREMIAH

Meaning of Title: “Jehovah Throws” ... The name has the sense of laying down a foundation or “Jehovah Establishes,” or appoints or sends.

Author: Jeremiah, composed in stages during the prophet’s ministry. He prophesied for more than forty years in the Southern Kingdom.

Time Period: Nearly fifty years, from about 627 B.C. to his death about 580 B.C. Read 2 Kings 21:1-25 to find the history of Jeremiah’s time.

Historical Setting: Jeremiah was the premier prophet during the decline and fall of Jerusalem and Judah’s being taken into captivity by Babylon. He spanned the final five decades of Judah’s history. Jeremiah prophesied during the reign of the last five Kings of Judah until the deportation. He was contemporary with Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—perhaps even Nahum.

Recipients: Predominately the Southern Kingdom, Judah and Jerusalem

Purpose and Themes: Jeremiah was a prophet pronouncing the pending judgment of Judah because of sin and disobedience. He was a weeping prophet to a wayward people.

Portrayal of Christ: Jeremiah pictured Christ in his writings more than any other prophet. He portrays Christ as the Fountain of Living Waters (2:13), the Great Physician (8:22), the Good Shepherd (23:4), the Righteous Branch (23:5), the Lord our Righteousness (23:6), David the King (30:9) and the Redeemer (50:34).

Uniqueness: Jeremiah uses many symbols as object lessons to teach God’s truths to His people, including an almond rod, a girdle, clay, etc. (Chs. 1, 13, 14, 18, 19, 24, 27, 32, 43, 51).

Outline:

- I. The Call of Jeremiah (Ch. 1)
- II. Prophecies BEFORE the Fall of Jerusalem (Chs. 2-39).
 - A. During the reign of Josiah (Chs. 2-12)
 - B. During the reign of Jehoikim (Chs. 13-20; 25:1-27:11)
 - C. During the reign of Zedekiah (Chs. 21-24; 27:12-39:10)
- III. Prophecies AFTER the Fall of Jerusalem (Chs. 40-52)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Concept of the New Covenant (31:31-34).
- 2. The survival of a remnant (32:26-44).
- 3. Formal repetition of pious phrases and the offering of costly sacrifices are an insult to God.
- 4. Genuine repentance must precede the giving of God’s blessings in individual lives.
- 5. True religion is an inward, spiritual, genuine response of the heart to the righteous God.
- 6. Be a blessing and make a difference wherever you are.

NOTES

LAMENTATIONS

Meaning of Title: Comes from Greek “to cry aloud” or “alas.”

Author: Unnamed but most conservative Bible scholars attribute this poetic book to Jeremiah

Date: Possibly penned in late 586 B.C. or early 585 B.C., shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, to commemorate the death of the Holy City.

Historical Setting: Written after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar, resulting in many of her citizens being taken into captivity. This book is a mournful postscript to the book of Jeremiah.

Recipients: Written to the remnants of God’s people in Babylon and Judah

Purpose and Themes: Written about the fall of Jerusalem which was not only the capital of the nation of Israel’s beloved King David, the site of the Temple of God, but also the place of God’s redemptive work of salvation on the cross. The middle verses of Lamentations (3:22-24) speak of the Lord’s mercies and loving-kindnesses, that they are new and everlasting.

Portrayal of Christ: Man of Sorrows (3:1)

Uniqueness: Lamentations is a blend of form and content. Acrostics, dirges, complaints, and vivid descriptions of suffering describe the doom and hope of a people, whose judgment is the precursor of future grace. No book in all the Bible reveals the suffering heart of God over sin as does this one. This book enjoys a unique structure, as it is really a poem and each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in proper order.

Outline:

- I. The Destruction of Jerusalem (Ch. 1)
- II. The Anger of God (Ch. 2)
- III. The Prayer for Mercy (Ch. 3)
- IV. The Siege of Jerusalem (Ch. 4)
- V. The Prayer of Restoration (Ch. 5)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. The awfulness of God’s judgments (1:1-6).
- 2. The tenderness of God’s heart (1:12-16).
- 3. The righteousness of God’s wrath (1:18-22).
- 4. The truthfulness of God’s Word (2:17).
- 5. The faithfulness of God’s mercy (3:18-36).

NOTES

DANIEL

Meaning of Title: The book of interpretations. The name Daniel means "God is my Judge."

Author: Daniel, while exiled in Babylon. Jesus referred to Daniel as a prophet (Matt. 24:15). From Ezekiel we learn Daniel was known for his righteousness and wisdom (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3). Daniel stands out as one of the greatest men of Old Testament history.

Date: 607-538 B.C.

Historical Setting: The historical and visionary sections of the book are slightly in excess of Hebrew exile in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar deported Daniel to Babylon in 605 B.C. when he was about the age of 16. He lived past 90 years of age. Book covers a 69-year period (1:21). Daniel was in the palace in Babylon the same time that Ezekiel was toiling in a slave gang.

Recipients: Primarily the Gentile Babylonian rulers and secondarily to all the Israelites

Purpose and Themes: This book shares Daniel's personal dedication and faithfulness to God. It also emphasizes God's power over all the nations. Further, it outlines the course of Gentile history.

Portrayal of Christ: The Smiting Stone and the Coming Ruler of the World (7:13-14)

Uniqueness: The prophecy of Daniel is the first great book of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. Daniel is most quoted in Revelation. Daniel brings the outstanding Old Testament word concerning the resurrection (12:2-3). Unlike the other prophets, Daniel deals more fully with the Gentile nations than with his own Jewish nation.

Outline:

- I. Daniel's Life in Babylon (Ch. 1)
- II. Daniel's Early Visions in Babylon (Chs. 2-6)
- III. Daniel's Visions of World Empires (Chs. 7-8)
- IV. Daniel's Visions about History and Salvation (Chs. 9-12)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. God is all-knowing. He can predict the future.
2. God rules over human affairs. He works in and through our choices.
3. Evil will ultimately be overcome.
4. God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, is vital in God's plan for the world.
5. Resurrection is a reality.
6. A believer can remain true to God in the most hostile of circumstances.

NOTES

EZEKIEL

Meaning of Title: The book of symbolism. The name Ezekiel means “God strengthens.”

Author: Ezekiel was a faithful preacher to the discouraged exiles in Babylon for twenty-two years. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was not only a prophet, but a priest as well.

Date: 592-570 B.C.

Historical Setting: Ezekiel was a prophet during Babylonian captivity. He was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C., eleven years prior to the fall of Jerusalem, about nine years after Daniel. Jeremiah remained among the Jews in Jerusalem. While Ezekiel was prophesying in Babylon to the common exiles, Jeremiah was doing the same thing in Judah, and Daniel was growing in prominence in the court of the rulers of Babylon.

Recipients: The Jewish exiles in Babylon

Purpose and Themes: Describes life in exile and encourages faith and traditions. Vision of restoration of the Temple. Prophet’s many visions: dry bones (37:1-14); Yahweh’s chariot (Ch. 1); eating of the scroll (Ch. 2:1; Ch. 3:15). Culminates in the vision of the new Jerusalem. God will judge the nation of the world (25:11-17). God rules and reigns (Ch. 29).

Portrayal of Christ: The Shepherd-Prince (34:23) and the Son of Man

Uniqueness: The prophet presents the Messiah as a “Shepherd.” Ezekiel is frequently referred to as “Son of Man,” a title later given to Jesus by Dr. Luke. The phrase “The Word of the Lord came to me” is found 49 times in this book.

Outline:

- I. Divine Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (Chs. 1-24)
- II. Prophecies Against Surrounding Gentile Nations (Chs. 25-32)
- III. Israel Restored (Chs. 33-39)
- IV. Israel in the Land in the Kingdom Age (Chs. 40-48)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Two dozen times Ezekiel states “I saw” or “I heard” from the Lord. He heard from God, so can we (1:1).
- 2. Ezekiel focuses on the glory and character of God (1:28; 3:12; 10:4, etc.).
- 3. Men and women who pray and stand in the gap will find favor with God (22:30, 31).
- 4. God wants to breathe life into His people (Ch. 37).
- 5. Ezekiel predicts the final overthrow of an evil world and the establishment of the kingdom of God (Chs. 40-48).
- 6. God’s judgment on sin is certain and severe. His redemption is equally certain when it is welcomed by the human heart.

NOTES

SUMMARY OF THE POST-EXILIC PERIOD

Key People of the Era: Three prophets ministered during the post-exilic period (538-430 B.C.): Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Three additional leaders provided great influence during this same period: Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah.

CHRONOLOGY OF THIS ERA

Persian Kings	Dates of Their Reigns	Biblical Events	Scripture References	Dates
Cyrus	559-530 B.C.	Edict of Cyrus for the return—first return of the exiles, under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple	Ezra 1:1-4 Ezra 2	538 B.C. 538
		The altar and temple foundation built	Ezra 3:1-4:5	536
Cambyses	530-522			
Smerdis	522			
Darius I	521-486	Haggai prophesied	Book of Haggai	520
		Zechariah prophesied	Book of Zechariah	520-518
		The temple completed	Ezra 5-6	516
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	485-465	Accusation against Judah	Ezra 4:6	486
		Esther became queen	Esther 2:17	479
Artaxerxes I (Artashasta)	464-424	Artaxerxes stopped the rebuilding of Jerusalem	Ezra 4:7-23	ca. 464-458
		Second return of 4,000-5,000 exiles, under Ezra to beautify the temple and reform the people	Ezra 7-10	458
		Third return of exiles, under Nehemiah to build the walls of Jerusalem	Book of Nehemiah	444
		Nehemiah's second return	Nehemiah 13:6	432
		Malachi prophesied	Book of Malachi	424-404

HAGGAI

Meaning of Title: The book of reconstruction. The name Haggai means “festival.”

Author: Haggai. No less than twenty-five times in his brief book does Haggai affirm the divine authority of His message.

Date: About four months in 520 B.C., the second year of King Darius’ reign.

Historical Setting: After seventy years of Babylonian captivity, Cyrus, the Persian King, issued a decree, allowing Jews, including Haggai and Zechariah, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. After two years the foundation was laid; however, external opposition and internal depression halted the project for sixteen years. In second year of King Darius, Haggai preached four sermons to awaken the people and stir them from their apathy. Haggai prophesied for only four months. Zechariah, his contemporary, ministered for four years. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all written after the captivity in Babylon and the return of the Jewish people to Palestine.

Recipients: The Jews who had returned to Israel from Babylonian captivity

Purpose and Themes: Repent from your apathy and in obedience rebuild the temple.

Portrayal of Christ: The Desire of All Nations (2:7)

Uniqueness: Only person in Old Testament named Haggai. The first prophetic voice heard after the exile. Next to Obadiah, Haggai is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

Outline:

- I. The Call to Rebuild the Temple (Ch. 1)
- II. A Prophetic Promise of the Future Glory of the Temple (2:1-9)
- III. A Priestly Decision to Illustrate the Present Blessings of Obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. A Messianic Prophecy Concerning Zerubbabel (2:20-23)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. When your priorities are wrong you’ll never be satisfied (1:2-6).
2. Life can become futile when we are concentrating on our needs and wants while ignoring God and His instructions for us (1:3-11).
3. Everything belongs to God (2:8).
4. The effects of evil are serious and lasting (2:10-19).

NOTES

ZECHARIAH

Meaning of Title: The book of Apocalypse. The name Zechariah means “remembered.”

Author: Zechariah, a Levite born in Babylon, contemporary of Haggai

Date: Zechariah’s ministry began in 520 B.C. and lasted four years (520-516 B.C.). He appeared on the scene about two months after Haggai’s first sermon.

Historical Setting: After seventy years of Babylonian captivity, Cyrus, allowed Jews, including Zechariah, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. After two years the foundation was laid; however, external opposition and internal depression halted the project for sixteen years. Zechariah began encouraging the people to spiritual renewal and motivating them to rebuild the temple by revealing God’s plans for Israel’s future. Temple reconstruction was finished in 516 B.C.

Recipients: The Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from captivity (same as Haggai)

Purpose and Themes: Zechariah was the prophet of restoration and glory. Alongside Haggai, they challenged the people to rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel’s leadership.

Portrayal of Christ: The King of Zion (9:9) and the Righteous Branch (3:8; 6:12)

Uniqueness: It is the book of Revelation of the Old Testament. He foretells the Savior more than any other prophet, except Isaiah.

Outline:

- I. Eight Night Visions: Apocalyptic (Chs. 1-6)
- II. Four Messages: Ethical Prophecy (Chs. 7-8)
- III. Two Oracles: Predictive Prophecy (Chs. 9-14)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. God calls us to return to Him so that He can extend His hand of blessing rather than discipline.
- 2. God desires holy living rather than hollow worship.
- 3. Present difficulties are minor compared to ruling with Jesus in His Kingdom.
- 4. God remembers His covenant and will eventually fulfill all the promises made to Israel: regathering of scattered Israel, coming of Messiah to rule and reign from Jerusalem.
- 5. Dispense true justice, practice kindness and compassion, speak truth, take care of widows and the poor.

NOTES

EZRA

Meaning of Title: The book of return. The name Ezra is a Hebrew name meaning “Jehovah helps.” Like Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible.

Author: Ezra (7:1), the priest and scribe

Time Period: Ezra was written during the Jews return to Zion (Caanan) following the close of Babylonian captivity, roughly 586-436 B.C. Although Cyrus, King of Persia, had given the Jews the freedom to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple in 538 B.C., the book of Ezra records a second group returning in 458 B.C. under the leadership of Ezra. Nehemiah and Esther cover a similar time period, and supply most of our knowledge of Jewish history from 538-430 B.C. Though no exact date can be fixed, circumstances point to a time before 400 B.C., perhaps 430 B.C.

Recipients: Jewish nation

Purpose and Themes: It contains historical narrative of the Jews moving back to Canaan. It also aims to encourage the Jewish community to persevere in hope and to bring them to repentance. It further describes how Ezra gets the people to bind themselves to the Law of God, and how he successfully completes the mission given by his king when he is allowed to return. Ezra 7:10 is a key verse.

Portrayal of Christ: The Restorer of the Wanderer (1:1-4)

Uniqueness: As 1 Corinthians 1:26 states, “Not many mighty, not many noble are called...,” the book of Ezra records his leadership and influence to the upper class group of people, who in turn had influence on others. This does not always happen. But it is refreshing to see the Holy Spirit move and people respond regardless of their position in society (Chs. 7-8).

Outline:

- I. First Return of Exiles Led by Zerubbabel (Chs. 1-6, Temple rebuilt 520-515 B.C.)
- II. Second Return of Exiles Led by Ezra (Chs. 7-10)

Theology/Life Lessons: Summarized in one verse (7:10)

1. Ezra knew God and studied the Word of God.
2. Ezra knew God and showed others that he knew God. Knowledge is never an end in itself, but must find practical expressions in our walk.
3. Ezra knew God and shared His ways with others.

NOTES

NEHEMIAH

Meaning of Title: The book of rebuilding. The name Nehemiah means “whom God has comforted.”

Author: Both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author.

Time Period: At the end of Babylonian exile and captivity around 444-432 B.C.

Date: Before 400 B.C., maybe 430 B.C.

Historical Setting: Nehemiah covers about an eleven-year period. This was the third and final return of the captives. Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. This book serves as a parallel account to Ezra.

Recipients: The Jewish nation

Purpose and Themes: Nehemiah is a narrative of Nehemiah leading God’s people to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem. Careful attention to the reading of God’s Word in order to know and do His will is a common theme. Neh. 6:3 is a key verse.

Portrayal of Christ: He is our Restorer and Rebuilder of our lives

Uniqueness: While no New Testament writer quotes or alludes to this book, Nehemiah is a part of one of the defining moments in Jewish history in repairing the wall. He is one of three significant figures God used to restore His people after the exile. Nehemiah led in the rebuilding of wall, Zerubbabel led in rebuilding of temple, and Ezra led in renewal of law.

Outline:

- I. The Return of Nehemiah (Chs. 1-2)
- II. The Rebuilding of the City Walls (Chs. 3-7)
- III. The Repairing of God’s People (Chs. 8-13)

Theology/Life Lessons:

- 1. Persevering under difficulty.
- 2. Whenever God wants to get a work done, He uses willing people.
- 3. Ezra and Nehemiah were very different people, but God used them both.
- 4. Prayer is the most important privilege of a Christian (Ch. 9).
- 5. Provides some key insights into effective leadership.

NOTES

ESTHER

Meaning of Title: The book is named for a Jewish orphan who became queen of Persia. Her name means “Star of the East.”

Author: Unknown, but Josephus attributes the writing to Mordecai

Date: Written after the reign and death of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.). The events in Esther take place between chapters six and seven of the Book of Ezra. Probably somewhere between 479-444 B.C., best fits before 400 B.C.

Historical Setting: The book is a portrait of the Jews who continued to live in exile 70 years after the fall of Jerusalem. It was at the time of the Persians conquering the Babylonians and during the return of many to the Holy land. Esther was raised by her cousin Mordecai in Persia. The events of the book took place 100 years after the leading citizens of the Jewish nation were carried into exile by Babylon. After the Persians overthrew Babylon, the Jews were allowed to return to their land. Esther is one that stayed.

Recipients: Written to the Jewish nation as a testament to the struggle of God’s people surviving in a hostile world

Purpose and Themes: Esther saved her people from a plot by Haman to eliminate the Jews in Persia. God will always raise up a deliverer for His people.

Portrayal of Christ: Our Advocate (4:16)

Uniqueness: The book is unique in that it does not mention the name of God, but every page is full of God. This book and Ruth are the only books of the Bible which bear the name of a woman. Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jew; Esther was a Jew who married a Gentile—and God used both of them to save the Jewish nation.

Outline:

- I. The Selection of Esther as Queen (Chs. 1:1-2:18)
- II. The Formulation of the Plot by Haman (Chs. 2:19-4:17)
- III. The Triumph of Mordecai over Haman (Chs. 5:1-8:3)
- IV. The Triumph of Israel over Her Enemies (Chs. 8:4-10:3)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. God will always bless His covenant people.
2. God will bring a curse on those who oppose them.
3. God will ultimately protect us from our enemy, Satan.
4. God will guide and intervene in response to fasting and waiting upon Him.
5. Every moment in life is filled with divine opportunity, so seize the day!

NOTES

MALACHI

Meaning of Title: The name Malachi means “My Messenger.”

Author: Malachi

Time Period: 424-404 B.C., perhaps close to 433 B.C.

Historical Setting: By this time, more than a hundred years had passed since the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity, rebuilt the temple, and the wall of Jerusalem was being rebuilt or had been completed by Nehemiah’s crew. Life was hard, harvests were poor, and most hearts were indifferent or resentful toward God. Both the priests and people were failing to keep the Mosaic Law regarding sacrifices and tithes. The people were practicing divorce and marrying pagans. Most likely, in Malachi’s day, the wall of Jerusalem was being rebuilt or had been completed (by Nehemiah’s crew).

Recipients: Post-Exilic Jews who had returned to Israel

Purpose and Themes: Malachi’s message applied the Mosaic Covenant to the problems of these post-exilic people. They lost hope that the Kingdom would be established, as they doubted God’s covenant faithfulness. This led to negligence of the priests in worship, and of the people in giving tithes and offerings. Their unfaithfulness spread over into their home life, resulting in divorce and marrying pagans. Malachi rebuked them and pointed to God’s past, present, and future dealings with Israel in order to renew their perspective, re-establish their hope, and motivate them to proper covenant faithfulness.

Portrayal of Christ: The Sun of Righteousness (4:2) and the Messenger of the Covenant (3:1)

Uniqueness: Use of the rhetorical question and answer in the book as opposed to prophetic sermons. After Malachi’s prophecy, there is no word from God for the next 400 years—only silence.

Outline:

- I. The Sins of the Priests (1:1-2:9)
- II. The Sins of the People (2:10-3:18)
- III. Coming Things (Ch.4)

Theology/Life Lessons:

1. God is worthy of our respect which should be reflected in our worship (1:6-14).
2. How you view your marriage is important to God—God hates divorce (2:13-16).
3. God will use adversity to refine His people (3:2-3).
4. We rob God when we withhold our offerings (3:8-10).
5. God will remember those who fear Him (3:16-4:3).
6. Insincerity in worship is an insult to God.
7. The Day of the Lord will be a joyous day for those who have been obedient, while those who have disobeyed will experience a day of judgment.

NOTES

SUMMARY OF OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS

Paul highlights the value of the Old Testament when he pens these words in 1 Cor. 10:11, “Now these things (Old Testament events and teachings) happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction...” What life lessons can be summarized from the Old Testament to help us in our journey with Jesus? What can we learn about God and ourselves?

1. God is creator and sustainer of everyone and everything.
2. Sin is to be taken seriously, and we will be judged for it.
3. God is all-powerful and sovereign.
4. God expects and deserves our obedience and our worship.
5. His people are to be His witnesses to the nations.
6. God always has a remnant.
7. God’s love is unconditional.
8. God is faithful to see His people through the most difficult times of life.
9. Repentance brings restoration.
10. The Old Testament points to a fulfillment of all the promises of God. That fulfillment has come—Jesus!

A QUICK REVIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

PERIOD OF PATRIARCHS: ADAM TO MOSES

Bible account found in the book of Genesis. During this period we have:

- God's chosen men—Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Shem

The important events during this time were Creation (Gen. 1-2), Fall (Gen. 3), Flood (Gen. 6-8), Babel and dispersion (Gen. 11).

- God's chosen family—the race had failed (Gen. 6:5), so God limited His promises to a single family. He called Abraham to become the father of this nation.

The important events are: Abraham called (Gen. 12:1-25:11), Jacob chosen (Gen. 25:19-36:43), and Joseph cherished (Gen. 45-46).

- God's chosen people—the 12 tribes become a nation.

PERIOD OF GREAT LEADERS: MOSES TO SAUL

Bible account given in Exodus to 1 Samuel. During this period we find:

- The Exodus—Book of Exodus
- The Wanderings—Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- Conquest of Canaan—Book of Joshua
- Rule of the Judges—Books of Judges and Ruth

PERIOD OF THE KINGS: SAUL TO BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

Bible account found in Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and the Prophets. We find in this period:

- The United Kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon
- The Divided Kingdom

Kings of Israel—Northern Kingdom
Kings of Judah—Southern Kingdom
The fall of the Northern Kingdom
The fall of the Southern Kingdom

PERIOD OF FOREIGN KINGS: CAPTIVITY TO CHRIST

Biblical account found in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezekiel, and Daniel. God was preparing the land, the people, and the world for the birth of Jesus.