

BIBLICAL TRAINING
OT500

Old Testament Survey

Douglas Stuart

Lecture Notes

These notes have been compiled from a series of lectures presented by Dr. Douglas Stuart. They do not represent actual class notes written by Dr. Stuart.

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1. Introduction

- a. This overview focuses on the content of each OT book and the corresponding events that give its context. The course is arranged (more or less) chronologically.
- b. Time is not spent on “introductory” material- critical issues that are often debated such as authorship, dates, structure, etc.
- c. Extra time is spent on selected topics that Dr. Stuart feels warrant special attention or that may be missed on casual reading. He does not cover all chapters but expects the students will read the corresponding books in their entirety and are capable of seeing the main content for themselves.
- d. Suggested resources:
 - i. *New Bible Commentary*, D.A. Carson
 - ii. *How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth*, Fee & Stuart
 - iii. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
 - iv. A Bible Dictionary

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2. Genesis

- a. Big Picture view of the content:
 - i. Origins of the world
 - ii. Origins of humanity
 - iii. Origins of Israel (Note: most space given to this topic in Genesis)
- b. Background
 - i. Author: Moses (Wrote the entire Pentateuch)
 - ii. Probably written around 1400 B.C. assuming “early chronology”
 - iii. Written while Israel was still in the wilderness as Moses was leading a nation (ethnically mixed according to Exodus 12) in its early stages of infancy

Recommended reading: *Rethinking Genesis* by Dwayne Garrett

- c. Emphases found in Genesis
 - i. God’s nature
 - ii. God’s purpose for the world
 - iii. Why humans exists
 - iv. The 1st Divine Covenants (the idea of extended kinship)
 - v. The nature of sin and the perpetual corruption of human society
 - vi. God’s intolerance of sin
 - vii. God’s election of his people
 - viii. God’s plan of redemption
 - ix. God works through sinful people
- d. Structure of Genesis (Prologue followed by 10 origin accounts (Hebrew- *toledot*)
 - i. Prologue (1:1-2:3)
 - ii. The Account of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)
 - iii. The Account of Adam’s Descendants (5:1-6:8)
 - iv. The Account of Noah and his Family (6:9-9:29)
 - v. The Account of Shem, Ham, Japheth and their Descendants (10:1-11:9)
 - vi. The Account of Shem’s Descendants (11:10-26)
 - vii. The Account of Terah’s Descendants (11:27-25:11)
 - viii. The Account of Ishmael’s Descendants (25:12-18)
 - ix. The Account of Isaac’s Descendants (25:19-35:29)
 - x. The Account of Esau’s Descendants (36:1-37:1)
 - xi. The Account of Jacob’s Descendants (37:2-50:26)

Note the disproportionate amount of space given to Terah’s descendants (the story of Abraham and Isaac); Isaac’s descendants (the story of Jacob); and to Jacob’s descendants (the story of Joseph). This makes it

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clear that Moses is emphasizing the nation of Israel as God's covenant people.

e. Additional Special Insights

- i. The prologue is a highly stylized overview of the creation account. It is tempting to read the 6 days as 6 successive stages of creation. However, close evaluation shows that it is really three stages. Day 4 corresponds to day 1; day 5 to day 2; and day 6 to day 3. God creates spaces and then fills those spaces. In essence, days 4, 5 & 6 are a resumption of days 1, 2 & 3. This helps us understand that this account was not intended as a scientific explanation of how and when creation occurred.
- ii. Two main points to notice
 1. God created everything (heaven and earth is a merism-see comments below)
 2. He liked what he created (It was exactly as he intended)
- iii. 7th Day of Rest
 1. Obviously not needed by God but he does this as a basic example for his people to follow.
- iv. God created man in his image. The Hebrew word for image is *tselem* which means idol. An idol is a representation of someone. The concept of representation was well known to the ancient people. The original plan was that there would be no representation of God on earth other than man. Mankind was to be his representatives (idols). However sin interrupted the fulfillment of our intended purpose. Idol worship, which was almost universally practiced in that day, was a corruption of God's intention.
- v. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil

Why wouldn't God want his people to discern good from evil? The term "good and evil" is a merism- an expression of opposites in order to describe completeness or everything in between. This is like saying "I've searched high and low" in place of saying "I've searched everywhere". Scripture says God has removed us from our transgressions as far as the east from the west (Psalm 103:12). This means he has completely separated us from our sins. In Genesis 2:17, the knowledge of good and evil represents more knowledge than we can morally handle. Obtaining this knowledge necessarily takes us to a place of independence from God. It represents knowledge that God didn't intend for us. Hence the question, "Who told you that you were naked?"

3. Themes in Genesis

a. Gen 2:18

It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him.

Helper is Hebrew word-*ezer*. It means a source of help.

The word translated *suitable* in some translations is the Hebrew word *neged* which means in front of or opposite to. It's the idea of "corresponding to" (according to Stuart). This description doesn't denigrate women in any way.

c. Gen 6:1-3

The flood story is preceded by an unusual account about the "sons of God" seeing the daughters of man as beautiful and taking them as wives; bearing their children. The "sons of God" typically refers to angels. Stuart believes these are demon possessed men who had relations with women of the day. This is inserted in the narrative as a short sampling of how Satan's influence was manifested on earth, spreading evil. This is followed by the flood account which serves as a sampling of how God works throughout history. He will not tolerate sin forever.

d. Gen 9:24

The "curse of Ham" is a curse against the sin of Ham and not a curse against a particular race. Ham "uncovered the nakedness of his father" means that he committed or at least came close to committing an incestuous act to his father. This is later formally forbidden in God's moral law.

e. Genesis 1-11

All of the history of the world is told in the 1st 11 chapters up to about 2000 BC. Then the story of Abraham begins which goes from chapter 12 to 24. More is written about Abraham than all of history preceding him. This represents a major slowing down of the narrative. It gives us an indication of the importance the book of Genesis places on God choosing a covenant people to accomplish his plan.

f. Gen 15

God appears to Abram and says I will be your shield which means, in effect, your boss. He goes on to say that your 4th generation will return to this land. The return will not take place until then because the iniquity of the Amorite (synonymous with Canaanite) is not yet complete. God once again demonstrates that he is long suffering with sin but will not tolerate it forever. This sets up the story of Israel entering the Promised Land as an army that God uses as his vehicle for punishing the escalation of evil among the Canaanites.

4. Exodus

a. Background

i. Written by Moses, it covers the period of time from the death of Joseph to the time Israel comes to Mt Sinai.

ii. Three major stories in Exodus

1. Israel's deliverance from Egypt (1:1-19:25)

This story informs us about the oppression of Egypt. Many people throughout history have been able to identify with oppression.

This is encouraging in that it informs us that God is aware of suffering and will act to bring relief. Note: the suffering can last a long time but he is still aware and present.

2. The establishment of God's covenant (20:1-31:18)

Israel arrives at Mt Sinai in Exodus 19 and remains there through the rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and through chapter 2 of Numbers. This was a total duration of about 13 months.

Remember (from Exodus 12) that Israel was joined by a multitude of other people therefore this was not an ethnically pure assembly. This period of establishing God's covenant was like an orientation period. They were learning what it meant to be God's people.

3. The building of the Tabernacle (32:1-40:38)

The worship of God is the first responsibility of God's people. In order to worship they needed helpers (priests) and a place to worship. In the Old Covenant all worship involved the entire assembly and one specific place. There is a de-centralization of worship under the New Covenant (where two or three have gathered...Mt 18:20) However, in heaven, worship is once again depicted as centralized.

b. Additional insights

i. Exodus 3:4

God sees Moses from the burning bush and calls his name twice-Moses, Moses. In the Semitic culture, calling someone's name in repetition is a term of endearment. It is the same as saying you are a very close friend to me. Other examples in scripture: Samuel, Samuel; My God, My God; Absalom-my son, my son; and Lord, Lord.

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ii. Exodus 4:10

In Moses' response to God's call we often interpret reluctance on the part of Moses. (I'm slow of speech, etc.) This is actually an eastern cultural practice of exaggerated humility sometimes referred to as "ritual protest". It shouldn't be taken literally and is usually followed by acceptance of the call. Other examples in scripture:

- Abraham- but I am just dust and ashes
- Saul-but I am from the smallest tribe of Israel (not really true)
- David- I am a poor and little man
- Isaiah- Woe is me...

5. Law

- a. Two basic typed of law
 - i. Apodictic laws- These are unconditional demands such as the 10 Commandments. They are universal rather than specific and could be expressed in either the positive (e.g. love your neighbor) or in the negative (e.g. you shall not murder).
 - ii. Casuistic laws- These are conditioned by particular instance similar to case law. They were specific rather than universal.
- b. The judicial system

Up until Exodus 18 Moses was the sole judge but Jethro, his father in law, saw the fallacy of this and recommended developing a system of lower courts (judges) to distribute the work load. This would be based on God's approval. This became the pattern for Israel from that time forward. Note: this system was in place prior to the formal giving of the law.
- c. The paradigmatic nature of the Law
 - i. Both apodictic and casuistic laws were given as paradigms. (Examples or patterns designed to show how to apply general principals to specific cases)In many ways this is superior to our modern laws which attempt to be precisely written and applied. People can get exonerated based on a technicality. This was not the case with Israel. Judges had approximately 613 laws (relatively low number compared to modern law) from which to extrapolate rulings on a host of instances.
 - ii. Examples
 - 1. 21:33 (a casuistic law) If anyone digs a pit... and an oxen falls into it... the person is responsible. From this a judge would extrapolate that if someone creates a hazard that causes property damage they are responsible for replacing the property.
 - 2. 22:18 (an apodictic law) Do not allow a sorceress to live. This would apply to anyone practicing severely deceptive behavior that would lead people away from God's truth.
 - iii. This put a lot of power in the hands of judges but a wise, honest and prayerful judge could establish real justice. Note: New Testament ethics applies the same paradigmatic pattern. It doesn't try to cover every situation one might encounter in life but it does give us examples of how to apply God's principals.
- d. The bifid structure of Exodus

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In biblical studies, if a piece of literature that has two main parts (not necessarily equal) it is considered bifid.

- i. Part One (Chapters 1-19) is the rescue of Israel and is presented in the form of stories.
- ii. Part two (chapters 20-40) is the giving of the law and is presented in the form of stipulations, sanctions and documentation.

6. The Law: Covenant Structure

- a. Covenant definition- In ancient times a covenant was a legal, binding agreement between two people or groups of people.
- b. Six parts of a covenant
 - i. Preamble- The preamble identifies the parties in a covenant
 - ii. Prologue- This gave the background information about the parties and how they have come to the agreement. The 1st half of Exodus could be considered the kingdom prologue. God basically says you are here because I have arranged it. This suzerain nature of the OT covenant. A suzerain covenant was one between a superior party and a lesser party. In ancient times, a suzerain was a great king who made a covenant with his vassals who had obligations to fulfill in order to receive his security and blessing. The first few words of Exodus 20 could be considered a summary of the preamble and prologue of the OT covenant.
 - iii. Stipulations- This was the main body of the covenant which contains the stipulations. In the case of the OT covenant, it contained some 600+ laws.
 - iv. Sanctions- In a sense this was like behavioral modification. There were various rewards (carrots) for keeping the covenant and consequences (sticks) for breaking it.
 - v. List of witnesses- In ancient times it was common to call for various gods or deities to be a witness to a covenant. In God's covenant with Israel, the most frequent reference to a witness was "heaven and earth". This was another example of a merism. It meant that all of creation would be watching the parties involved.
 - vi. Documentation- Each party always received a written copy of the agreement. Moses came down from Mt Sinai with two tablets. It would be wrong to assume that it took two tablets to contain all of the 10 commandments. More than likely this is a reference to God's copy and to Israel's copy. Both were placed in the Ark.
- c. The nature of a covenant- Frank Cross (biblical scholar) has commented that. In effect, a covenant defines an extended kinship. This is certainly true of the OT covenant. The prophet Amos refers to it as the covenant of brotherhood. God often says "you are my people".
- d. The hierarchy of the Law. (2-10-601)
 - i. [2] All of the Law can be summarized as: 1) Love God (see Deut 6:5) and 2) Love your neighbor (Lev 19:18)

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- ii. [10] In scripture, the 10 Commandments were referred to as the “Ten Words”. They are found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The first four commandments describe what it means to love God. The remaining 6 commandments focus on loving your neighbor.
- iii. [601] These are the more detailed stipulations. Some involve their relationship with God and others involve their relationship with others. As mentioned in the 5th lesson some are apodictic (unconditional) while others are casuistic (case specific).
- e. Central unity between the OT covenant and the New Covenant
Paul corrects those NT believers who thought the Law was totally abolished by Christ. Certainly the two main parts of the Law are in effect. (Loving God and loving your neighbor). In addition, all of the 10 commandments are reiterated in the NT in various places as are various moral laws. It was the sacrificial laws (which were completely fulfilled by Christ) and the civil laws (which were no longer necessary because the Kingdom inaugurated by Christ was not a civil entity nor of this earth) were no longer in effect.
- f. The dramatic difference between the Old and New Covenants

The most dramatic adjustment in the New Covenant is the universal addition of the Holy Spirit in all believers. Jeremiah (chapter 31) speaks of the day when God will write his law on the people’s hearts.

7. The Law: Numerical Parallelisms

a. Numerical parallelisms

In the Hebrew language, synonyms are often expressed numerically. The most common form is “n” followed by “n+1” but there are also examples of multipliers such as “n” followed by “n X 10”, etc. For example, look at Deut 20: 5-6. God describes himself as a jealous God who will visit the iniquity of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. This does not mean that God will unfairly punish the great grandchildren of someone who sins. This numerical parallelism is saying that God will keep applying the same consequences on the future generations as that continue in the sins of their fathers. When verse 6 is considered (showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments) he is actually contrasting his greater desire to bless his people.

b. Love and hate

Love was understood by the ancient people of that day to refer to action toward someone rather than an attitude or feeling. The concept of love really functioned to describe allegiance or personal favor granted toward someone. This has been confirmed in other ancient texts in addition to scripture. If we are to love God it should be reflected in our actions toward God. Loving our neighbor as ourselves didn't imply that we are suppose to love ourselves nor does it mean we are required to have warm feelings toward our neighbors. It means we should treat our neighbors with the same treatment we would want for ourselves. Conversely, hate didn't mean animosity but rather an absence of supportive favor. God said “Jacob I loved but Esau I hated”. This simply was referring to the fact that God chose Jacob to bear the seed.

8. Leviticus

- a. Orienting data: All of Leviticus is received at Mt Sinai. Its primary focus is the achievement of holiness in worship as well as in everyday life.
- b. Emphases
 - i. Five types of sacrifice. (Note: some would say 6 if you add the Day of Atonement, Yon Kippur.
 - ii. People should desire to worship God. It is the first thing you owe God.
 - iii. The development of the priesthood. The role of the priest was to help people connect to God. This arrangement is radically changed under the New Covenant with concept of the priesthood of all believers.
 - iv. The description of how uncleanness can occur. There is a clean versus unclean theme.
 - v. Laws are included about proper eating, sex, etc. Some of these are not re-addressed in the NT but certainly sexual morality gets plenty of attention in the NT.

9. Numbers

- a. Overview- Israel leaves Mt Sinai at the beginning of Numbers. Essentially, the Sinai Covenant is presented from Exodus 20 all the way to the end of Leviticus. However, God does not cease to provide Israel with written guidance when they leave Mt Sinai. Numbers contain a mixture of stories about Israel's journey to the Promise Land; along with a variety of additional laws that address specific circumstances and occasions along the way. These additional laws carry the same weight as the original laws much as our Constitutional Amendments carry the same weight as the original Constitution. It is not as if God forgot to give them something at Mt Sinai rather, he graciously continues to teach them at the appropriate time (much as he continues to do with us today on an individual basis).
- b. Emphases:
 - i. Transition from former slaves to a military force. (They march and camp by division)
 - ii. The essential need for constant leadership and care. (People tend to mistrust God. This culminated in their refusal to go into the Promise Land initially.)
 - iii. The Blessing of Israel through the pagan prophet Balaam. (God can use anyone to accomplish his will, even an idol worshiping pagan.)
 - iv. Israel sliding into cultic immorality. (In Numbers 25, they even get involved in cultic prostitution.)
 - v. Preparation for their conquest.
 - vi. Description of the initial (token) conquest of land in the Trans-Jordan territory which was east of the Jordan. This occurs at the end of the book.

10. Deuteronomy

- a. Overview- This is 40 years later when Israel is in the area of northern Moab. This first generation to arrive at the Promise Land refused to trust God and has now died off in the wilderness. It is important for this next generation to once again receive the Law from God, hence the name Deuteronomy which means “2nd Law”. It is reorganized and reformatted, much like a final draft. The importance of this book should not be underestimated in understanding the rest of the OT.
- b. Structure:
 - i. Extended prologue- (Long summations of what God has done for his people)
 - ii. Brief mention of witnesses (heaven and earth)
 - iii. Solid preamble
 - iv. Numerous stipulations
 - v. Extensive document clause
 - vi. Extensive sanctions (Again there is mention of heaven & earth as witnesses)
 - vii. More document clause
 - viii. Both the Word of God - Most of the Pentateuch has been written therefore the concept of the Word of God is developed. It serves primarily to help God’s people understand how to live as his people. It is also added as a witness.
 - ix. A poem- More sanctions are given in poetic form in the Song of Moses (chapter 32)
 - x. Brief Epilogue- This acknowledges the transition of leadership that will occur when Moses dies by introducing Joshua.

11. Joshua

- a. Overview of OT Redemptive History (simplified form)
 - i. Creation and pre-history
 - ii. Patriarchal dialogue
 - iii. 2nd kind of creation or, more accurately, a continuation of creation is represented in the Promise Land
 - iv. Israel under blessing. The book of Joshua begins a long period of blessing.
 - v. Israel under curse. In the giving of the covenant, God gives consequences for disobedience (Deut 28). This part of biblical history is especially centered on the exile.
 - vi. Restoration- After the exile comes a new period of blessing and a continuation of God's creative work.

This is an OT view of redemptive history but it is also reflected in the NT as well. When Paul says he is living in the latter days he is talking about this final phase. We are in this period of restoration/blessing. There are no other epochs to follow. The next great event in history will be Christ's return, judgment and the creation of the new heaven and earth. Dispensationalism is a theological system that tends to over define these periods with distinct separation. In reality there is overlap between them.

- b. Overview of Joshua

The Book of Joshua looks at the conquest of Canaan and its aftermath. It is followed by Judges; then Ruth which correlates to one particular family during the time of the Judges. The Book of Joshua begins with Israel in northern Moab where they have an initial conquest in what is called Transjordan territory. They then cross the Jordan and set up stones at Gilgal. They then attack Jericho which was protected by a huge wall complex. By God's help they take the city which sets the stage for their military campaigns. The first 10 ½ chapters of the book cover these campaigns. In order: 1. The hill country campaign; 2. The southern campaign; 3. The northern campaign

There is a basic pattern to these military conquests that set up some things in the Book of Judges.

- c. The Bifid Structure of Joshua
 - i. 1st 10 ½ chapters deal with conquests. This is the story of former slaves who form themselves at God's direction into an army who invaded a territory formerly promised to them. This parallels our own situation.
 - 1. Chapters 1-8 is the entry campaign (in the hill country)

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2. Chapters 9-10 describe the southern campaign
3. Chapter 11 is the northern campaign followed by a wrap up summary.

It is important to note that there were large land areas that were not conquered. The narrator lets the reader know that they were not completely successful.

- ii. Balance of the book deals with the allotment of land and an epilogue. The allotment of land may be boring reading but it was still important for God to place that in scripture. We may not enjoy reading the title to our house but it sure is valuable to us.
- c. God's culture breakers
- i. In the pagan world it was common for the women to leave her family and go to the man but the man stayed with his family. In Genesis God says for a man to leave his family.
 - ii. The oldest son was to be the heir but this was not the case with Abraham; or Jacob.
 - iii. The culture of the day believed that there was an obligation to take blood if blood was shed, even if it was accidental. This thinking still exists in the Arab- Israeli conflict. Chapter 20 provides for special towns of refuge for accidental killers. They were safe until the priest died which was another way of saying that they were in God's hands. God doesn't let corrupt man thwart his plan or system of justice. These cities of refuge were run by priests. This was another way of saying this nation would be special and break from the cultural trend.
- d. Covenant renewal
- i. The book ends with Joshua urging obedience which indicates covenant renewal. 1st the covenant came at Sinai. Then it was renewed in Deuteronomy. Now it is renewed once again at the end of Joshua.

12. Holy War

One main passage to look at the rules of war is Deuteronomy 20.

a. 11 Characteristics of Holy War

- i. Fought without a standing army (completely voluntary-see Deut 20)
- ii. No pay for soldiers
- iii. No spoil or plunder allowed (unlike historically traditional armies)
- iv. In general, they were only undertaken to defend the Promise Land
- v. The king did not have the right to declare a war on his own
- vi. The instructions for war comes from God through a prophet
- vii. Yahweh does the real fighting (e.g. Judges 5)
- viii. It is a religious undertaking (therefore self-denial such as fasting is often involved. Note: fasting is never an end in itself; rather a prayer intensifier. When David and his men are pursued by Saul they are allowed to eat the show bread at Nob because they had kept themselves ceremonially clean by keeping themselves from women.
- ix. Total annihilation was required. (Remember this was a war that involved God's judgment but it doesn't say that anything about the eternal destiny of innocent children.
- x. Rules had to be obeyed. (Violators became the enemy)
- xi. There were exceptions to the rules. (e.g. If people were enemies but didn't live in the Promise Land, treaties could be made. See Joshua 9)

b. The Story of Achan-What happened in the event of defeat (death)

- i. Remember, chapter 1-8 was programmatic. In chapter 7 you have the story of Achan. This is a detail story but it suggests that disobedience was going on with others.
- ii. This disobedience resulted in a rout by Ai. There were only 36 casualties but this was enough to melt their hearts because they knew God was not with them.
- iii. Point of the story- we are not to think that Israel was doing the Holy War in perfect obedience. By the end of the book of Joshua, large portions of land had not been taken. They were not totally successful. This sets the stage for the book of Judges.

13. Judges

- a. Background- Judges covers centuries (as much as 300 years) of desperate struggle to keep the kingdom intact. It's important to remember that from Joshua we learned that the conquest wasn't completely correct. If one compares the number of territories conquered by Joshua to those named in Judges, you find that many are back in the hands of the Canaanites. It wasn't a disaster but it certainly wasn't totally successful. The conquest of the Promised Land was not completed until David's day.
- b. Emphases of Judges
 - i. Decline-The Book of Judges is a tragedy as it depicts decline on a number of fronts: military decline, spiritual decline, religious decline, and moral decline.
 - ii. The tenuous nature of the conquest
 - iii. How revival can quickly fade (an obedient generation was replaced by a disobedient generation).
 - iv. The failure to preserve values
 - v. How low people can slide
 - vi. God's continued display of mercy
 - vii. The effectiveness of charismatic leadership (raised up by the Spirit of God)
 - viii. The need for a true and good king (by the end of the book, tribal unity falls apart)
- c. Structure (outline of Judges)
 - i. Military decline- Chapter 1 and part of 2
 - ii. Spiritual decline-Chapter 2
 - iii. List of judges- Chapters 3-16
Twelve judges are mentioned beginning with Othniel in 3:7. There are 6 major judges (those given extended mention) and 6 minor judges. However, evidence points to the fact that this is not a complete list by any means. Some of the judges were localized, implying that there were probably others. The author is being programmatic as was the case in Joshua with the list of battles. It is interesting to note that Samson was dysfunctional but received the most press.
 - iv. Religious disorder- Chapters 17-18
 - v. Moral disorder- Chapters 19-21
- d. The Deuteronomistic Cycle- There is a pattern introduced in the Book of Judges that goes on for a 1000 years. It begins with a new generation "who did not

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know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel". (Judges 2:10) The cycle pattern had these components:

- i. Israel turned from God and served the baals
- ii. The Lord becomes angry and allows their enemies to have victories
- iii. The people cry out
- iv. God raises up a judge (primarily a military deliverer)

This same pattern followed with the kings. There never seems to be two kings in a row that do good in God's sight.

e. The ending of Judges

After a great battle, Israel defeats the Benjamites but in chapter 21 they try to solve the problem of losing a tribe by making a foolish oath. Finally the book ends with everyone doing as they please, thus demonstrating their ongoing need for help.

14. Ruth

- a. Background- The story takes place during the time of the Judges. The book of Judges is a tragedy; the book of Ruth is not.
- b. Some themes in Ruth:
 - i. You don't have to follow the crowd. Even though most of Israel was in spiritual and moral decline, the people in this story are still attentive to God's law and therefore an exception to the rule.
 - ii. God allows hard times to come to righteous people.
 - iii. Part of the way one demonstrates obedience to God is in the way they treat others.
 - iv. A few people can prevail even in the midst of tragic times.
 - v. The human lineage of the Messiah has both common and noble strands.
- c. The story- Elimelech and Naomi (Israelite couple) move to Moab with their two sons because of the famine in Israel. Elimelech dies and the two sons take Moabite wives. Both sons later die leaving only Naomi and her two daughter-in-laws, Ruth and Orpah. After returning to Judah, Naomi releases them to go back to their native land but Ruth decides to stay with Naomi. ("Where you go I will go; your God will be my God"). One could call this an Old Testament version of a conversion.

Ruth and Naomi go back to Bethlehem where Ruth gleaned from the field of Boaz. Mosaic Law required land owners to leave some of the harvest for the poor. While this law may have not been faithfully observed throughout Israel, we at least know that it was practiced by Boaz in Bethlehem.

At Naomi's encouragement, Ruth proposes to Boaz and he agrees thus placing in position to be their kinsmen redeemer. One other relative was closer but was unwilling to marry Ruth thus placing Boaz in position to redeem the land that had been owned by Elimelech.
- d. Genealogy
 - i. The book ends with a genealogy from Perez to David that includes Boaz. This is clearly the messianic line. The expanded genealogy of Jesus includes incest (Judah and Tamar), foreigners (Boaz married the Moabite, Ruth), and adulterers (David and Bathsheba). God's plan in bringing forth a Messiah was not thwarted by man's dysfunctions or inappropriate actions. God providentially orders human life in spite of our failures.

15. 1 & 2 Samuel

- a. Introductory matters- These books cover the reign of Saul and David. Coupled with the 1st eleven chapters of 1 Kings (Solomon's rule), this era was known as the united monarchy. Following Solomon, the kingdom was divided and the following 40 kings presided over a divided kingdom. The period of the united monarchy was probably about 120 years. (Saul's length of rule is questionable but indications are that each of the three initial kings ruled for about 40 years.) The number 40 in Hebrew is not always meant to be taken exactly literal. It is sometimes used idiomatically similar to our use of the term "several dozen".

1 & 2 Samuel are actually one unit with a bifid structure which begins with the birth of Samuel; thus the incipit naming. 1 Samuel covers the reign of Saul and the life of Samuel. 2 Samuel covers the reign of David. Solomon reigned at least as long as Saul and David; and had more worldly notoriety. However, he is hardly given as much press in the narrative. This is yet another example of programmatic narration similar to the earlier examples cited in Joshua and Judges. Remember this is theological history. The author is more concerned about making a point than given equal attention to historical time periods.

- b. Three levels of biblical narrative
 - i. Upper level- The big picture sometimes referred to as the meta-narrative. This has to do with the God's over-arching plan of redemption
 - ii. Middle level- Large blocks of writing about a specific subject or character.
 - iii. Lower level- A specific small story within the larger block sometimes referred to as a pericope. These self-contained short stories often become much richer by stopping to ask how it pertains to the upper level (meta-narrative) story.
- c. Geographical control during Solomon's reign
The Philistines controlled the coastal area of the Promised Land during Saul's kingship. Israel maintained basic control of the rest of the land with the exception of one area near Jerusalem and another at Beth Shan (near Mt Gilboa). Both of these remained in the hands of Canaanites while Saul was in power. Saul was actually killed in battle at Mt Gilboa after being pushed back by the Philistines.
- d. Orienting Data

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- i. 1 Samuel marks the transition from the era of the judges to the era of the kings. Samuel is the last of the judges and the contrast between Samuel and Samson is obvious.
- ii. 2 Samuel chronicles the rise and tumultuous reign of David. Although he was a great military leader, he had significant failures in family life. This is one more reminder that God uses imperfect people to accomplish his great plan of redemption.
- iii. Authorship and date- The writing was probably commissioned by Solomon but there is no proof of that. The author/authors are unknown but many believe it was recorded by early prophets. For this reason the OT narrative books are often referred to in Judaism as the Former Prophets. Thus they would divided the OT scripture into four main blocks:
 1. The Books of Moses
 2. The Former Prophets (narrative stories)
 3. The Prophets
 4. The Writings
- iv. Emphases
 1. The continuation of God's redemptive plan
 2. The need for transition
 3. Samuel's good service
 4. The danger posed by God's enemies (the more culturally advanced Philistines)
 5. Saul's tragic reign (began with great promise but ended tragically)
 6. The hopeful rise of David (note: David's name is actually mentioned more frequently in 1 Samuel, before he becomes king, than in 2 Samuel when he actually reigns.)
 7. The protection of God's people
 8. The need for a good king, not just any king. (see Deut 17)
 9. The Messianic Davidic Covenant
 10. The completion of the conquest (accomplished by David)
 11. The choice of Jerusalem (becomes a metaphor for heaven itself)
 12. The consequences of David's adultery (the sword will not depart from your family, i.e. family warfare would mark his later reign)
 13. Various rebellions against the throne of David
 14. Initial plans for the temple (thus the transitions from a tabernacle to a temple)

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e. Final overview

- i. 1 Samuel 1-7 focus on Samuel alone
- ii. 1 Samuel 8-15 focuses on Samuel with Saul together
- iii. 1 Samuel 16-31 focuses on Saul with David
- iv. 2 Samuel focuses on David alone

This simplified breakdown demonstrates the orderly nature of the transitions during the united monarchy. The following transitions that occur during the divided kingdom will not be nearly as orderly and often chaotic, especially in the northern kingdom of Israel. On another note, all of the kings in the southern kingdom of Judah will be descendants of David.

16. Three Kings

- a. A man after God's own heart
 - i. David is referred to by God as a man after my own heart. How can this be? He is an adulterer, a murderer, a failure as a father, etc. This title is not for those who live model lives but rather reserved for those who place their trust exclusively in the true God. A closer examination of the two rulers that sandwich David's kingship will highlight a significant contrast:
 - ii. Saul- In 2 Samuel 2:8, Saul declared his son, Ish-bosheth, as king over Israel. This name means man of shame. Of course Saul would never name his son that. In 1 Ch 8:33 his name is given as Eshba'al meaning man of Baal. It is likely that this was the given but it was changed by redactors in 2 Samuel because of the shame of referring to a leader of Israel as a man of Baal. The given name of Eshba'al is a clear indication that Saul was syncretistic in his religious practice.
 - iii. Solomon- 1 Kings 11: 4 clearly paints the picture of Solomon and his syncretistic practices in his later years and contrasts that to his father David.

This is a good reminder that the criteria for God's heart is not that we live perfect lives but rather we trust in him exclusively.

- b. Particulars in the story
 - i. 1 Samuel 1- The birth and dedication of Samuel
Hannah's dedication of Samuel at the temple is not the norm. The firstborn (according to the Law) belonged to God, but typically they were redeemed for a price. (See Lev 26 and Numbers 18) This practice was a picture of God's ultimate redemption of his children through the price of his perfect substitute, Christ. However in this case Hannah, in a sense actually does commit Samuel to a lifetime of service to God.
 - ii. 1 Samuel 12- Covenant renewal speech
This is one more example of many places in the OT where a covenant renewal speech occurs. It has all the elements: Preamble/prologue; stipulations, sanctions, document clause and implied witness (God and Samuel). Under the New Covenant, covenant renewal is practiced at every Lord's Supper. Covenant renewal is the heart of this church ordinance.

17. 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings

a. Episodes in 1 & 2 Samuel

i. Saul's rejection as king (1 Sam 15)

Saul's disobedience in regards to God's instruction to attack the Amalekites resulted in God's judgment against Saul. The Amalekites had become God's sworn enemy after they attacked Israel without provocation before they had even reached Mt Sinai. God repeatedly reminded his people not to forget this; therefore his call for Saul to destroy them was no surprise. Saul defeated the people of Amalek but spared their king Agag and kept the best of their livestock against God's direct instructions. Saul elected to offer God a sacrifice rather than execute the holy war as God commanded. God's view of sacrifice offered in lieu of obedience is made clear by Samuel pronouncement of God's judgment in verse 22-23. Later, in verse 28, Samuel said to him "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours". This is a reference to Saul being from Benjamin and David from Judah.

ii. David at Nob (1 Sam 21)

In this account David and his men eat the holy bread from the priest Ahimelech at Nob. (The background and instructions for consecrated bread can be found in Exodus 25 and Leviticus 2) In the New Testament, Jesus uses this incident to justify an exemption and to demonstrate the Pharisees' misinterpretation of the nature of holy things.

iii. Saul and the Witch of En-dor (1 Sam 28)

This event occurs after the death of Samuel and during a time when the Philistines are gaining the upper hand. Saul disguises himself and seeks the counsel of Samuel by employing the services of a medium to conjure up the spirit of Samuel. The Hebrew for medium, *Baalah ob* literally means a woman who owns a pit. It was a common belief in that day that connections could be made with the underworld at certain caves, holes, or fissures in the earth. While these mediums were charlatans with no real power, God intervenes and allows her to actually hear Samuel at which time she realizes that he is Saul. Through the vision Samuel announces that God has done exactly what he had previously pronounced- "The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor" (1 Sam 28:17). From this point forward, Saul knew he couldn't win and his days of ruling Israel were numbered.

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- iv. The conspiracy of Absalom (2 Sam15) and the rebellion of Sheba (2 Sam 20)
- v. The census of David (2 Sam 24)
- b. Themes in 1 Kings
 - i. The importance of orthodox worship- Solomon obviously failed in this area, at one point even funding the worship of idols around Jerusalem.
 - ii. No gift or status shields one from the potential of apostasy. Even the wisest man in the world turned from God and God's commandments.
 - iii. The promises of God are carried out even in the midst of rebellion. Rebellion is a major theme, particularly after the death of Solomon.
 - iv. True unity by belief even in the midst of political division as seen in the stories of Elijah and Elisha.
 - v. Social oppression-when kings acquire too much power they can use that power to suppress the people.
 - vi. The power of the king can influence religion.
 - vii. The story of Elijah describes a lone true prophet standing in the midst of false prophets.
 - viii. The passing/transition of the prophetic office is a theme. (Elijah to Elisha)
 - ix. The tendency of people to be fascinated with things new and foreign (see 1 Kings 3 & 1 Kings 11)
 - x. Divine truth is confirmed by miracles as seen at the end of 2 Samuel with the stopping of the plague by King David's offering at Araunah's threshing floor.
- c. Additional comments on Solomon
 - i. To some degree Solomon is the fulfillment of some of the warnings in the Pentateuch concerning kingship- don't multiply horses, don't multiply wives, and don't multiply your silver and gold. (Deut 17)
 - ii. At the conclusion of the temple construction the narrator informs us that Solomon spent 7 years building the temple but 13 years building his palace. This was noted to show that his priorities were actually towards himself.

18. Psalms

The Psalms are both God's Word to us and our words to God.

The following is an overview of 10 types of Psalms.

- a. Lament- about 70 Psalms (almost half) are laments though some of these are actually a mix. A lament is a prayer to God in a state of unhappiness in which relief is requested. These laments reflect severe misery that generally fit into 4 categories:

- i. Enemies are about to overcome the writer. (most common)
- ii. Facing death
- iii. Confinement or entrapment
- iv. Drowning imagery

These miseries appear to be stereotyped (standardized) language in order to expand their applicability. We can apply these to current situations knowing this. For instance, enemies can be a substitute for problems that tend to overcome us and usurp our hope.

The typical lament includes the following parts in a variety of proportion and order:

- Address (whom you are praying to)
- Complaint (the basis for the misery or unhappiness)
- Expression of trust (God is faithful and trustworthy)
- Deliverance plea
- Assurance (affirmation that God will deliver)
- Praise

Note: penitentiary and imprecatory psalms are a subcategory of laments.

- b. Thanksgiving- a form of psalm that is offered after one is delivered from the problem.

Parts of thanksgiving psalm:

- Introduction or intention to praise
- Misery you previously experienced
- Appeal that was previously spoken
- Rescue description
- Testimonial

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c. Hymns

Hymns include the following parts:

- Summons (e.g. let all God's people praise him)
- Reasons (why God should be praised)
- Re-capitulation or restatement

Four general categories of hymns:

- Creator hymns- focus on God's creative ability. Remember God's creative work in ongoing; it didn't end at Genesis 1.
- Israel hymns- those that reflect on God's relationship and faithfulness to his people.
- History hymns- typically follow a long sequence which reviews God's faithfulness over time. Our faith, unlike other religions is rooted in actual historical events.

- d. Enthronement Psalms- not characterized by certain parts or structure as much as vocabulary. Mostly they remind us that God is King.
- e. Royal psalms- praise God for human governance showing the importance of godly leadership. These are often messianic in nature as they point to the ultimate King, Christ.
- f. Zion psalms- focus on God's presence among his people. Mt Zion was the mountain on which Jerusalem was built.
- g. Wisdom psalms- Biblical wisdom has nothing to do with IQ or education; rather the ability to make the right choice. This is often referred to as "2 ways" literature- the good choice contrasted to the bad choice. This is an effective way of giving ethical guidance. Psalm 1 is an example of a wisdom psalm.
- h. Trust psalms- these emphasize the trust portion of a lament. Psalm 23 is an example of a trust psalm.
- i. Liturgies- somewhat of a catch all that includes psalms which are hard to categorize. A liturgy means "words spoken in worship".
- j. Torah psalms- psalms that focus on God's law. God's Law is often used in scripture to refer to God's word. Psalm 1 and Psalm 119 are the two major torah psalms.

19. Proverbs

a. Overview

- i. Pursuit of wisdom (importance of making the right choices) Proverbs 1-9
- ii. Proverbs of Solomon (10–22:16)
- iii. Words of the wise (22:17–24:22)
- iv. More words of the wise (24:23–24:34)
- v. More proverbs of Solomon (25-29)
- vi. Words of Agur (30)
- vii. Words of King Lemuel (31:1-9)
- viii. Praise of a godly woman (31:10-31)

Note: Agur and Lemuel were Arab kings. Solomon was as much a collector of wise sayings as a writer.

b. Applicability of Proverbs

While there are themes in Proverbs about the worship of Yahweh, many deal with basic values for living such as good speech, family life, sexual morality, etc. It is not a book specifically written for theological instruction. Therefore it can be useful to the believer and nonbeliever alike. It is fundamentally concerned with training young people in how to grow up making the right decisions in life.

c. Puzzling nature of proverbs

Proverbs are not intended to be understood immediately. They are essentially puzzles that are designed to require some reflection in order to resolve the meaning. This process enhances the lasting impact of a proverb. In the original language, they were written in a style that would make them easy to memorize; using cadence, rhymes, etc. A modern day example: "A stitch in time saves nine."

20. Job

In contrast to Proverbs which convey wisdom through monologue; Job is an example of dialogical wisdom literature. The largest portions of the book involve a dialogue between Job and a set of friends.

- a. Chiastic structure of Job
 - i. Prologue (1:1-2:13)
 - ii. Job's opening lament (3:1-26)
 - iii. Dialogue with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (4:1-26:14)
 - iv. Monologue (closing discourse) by Job (27:1-23)
 - v. Wisdom Interlude (28:1-28)
 - vi. Monologue (call for vindication) by Job (29:1-31:40)
 - vii. Dialogue with Elihu (32:1-37:24)
 - viii. Job's closing contrition (38:1-42:6)
 - ix. Epilogue (42:7-17)

- b. Overview of debate:

Satan challenges that he can get Job to curse God if Satan is granted the unusual ability to intervene directly in Job's life and inflict pain and suffering. As a result of the ensuing misery, Job determines that is better to have not lived at all.

Job is visited by a series of friends, all of whom have the same basic message to Job- his pain and suffering is a result of sin. God is good and would allow such suffering only if Job deserved it. God helps the righteous therefore Job just needed to repent. They were arguing what is known as extreme prudential wisdom which simply states that if you learn and keep the rules then things will go well for you.

Job is not convinced as he notes that wicked people are actually doing quite well. He equates God's lack of intervention as God's distance and therefore sees justice as being hard to obtain.

- c. Primary message of the book

Finally, in Chapter 38 the Lord speaks to Job. He doesn't explain his Job's plight but asks a series of questions. Do you know how nature works; etc? The point being that God is in control. He runs creation and he knows what he is doing. Job's response of contrition is regret for questioning God.

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The primary point is to remind us that this life is not fair. Many disappointments and sufferings may come our way which we may or may not deserve. In the epilogue God expresses his anger with Job's friends because they did not speak correctly. We cannot control our fortunes simply by obeying the rules.

The Book of Job is reminding us that this life is unfair and that what we need is something beyond this life. God's blessings are returned to Job in his later life to an even greater degree than his former life. This hints at God's ultimate work of restoration of his creation. In other words, the best is yet to come.

21. Ecclesiastes

The bulk of the writing of Ecclesiastes actually falls in line with existentialism. This is a philosophy that says this life is all there is and there is no God; or if there is a god, he is distant and uninvolved. Therefore, this life is meaningless and the best we can do is live authentically in the moment without regard to life after death because it really doesn't exist.

This is the language of Ecclesiastes. Over and over you read that life is meaningless, everything is really a vain pursuit, even the pursuit of wisdom. Chapter 5 emphasizes to just live life authentically because that is the best you can do.

However, at the close you find this statement:

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. Ecc 12: 13-14

What was the writer doing with all the previous material if he really believed the concluding summary? Much of the material in Ecclesiastes is presented as a foil. In literature, a foil is tempting, misleading alternative to the truth. The advice of Job's friends was all foil material. It sounded good and was tempting to buy into it but it wasn't true.

The reader of Ecclesiastes should be careful not to take passages out of context because much of it is existentialist fatalism. It is there to show us that without a God who judges and without a life after death this life really is futile and has no real meaning.

22. Song of Songs

This is a book about romance using poetic language. The general story line involves the courtship, marriage and romantic relationship between Solomon and his bride.

“Shulammite” in Hebrew actually means Mrs. Solomon. The courtship poetry includes temptations that could prevent the union and are told through dreams and reflections.

The basic message is that romantic happiness comes in being exclusive and faithful to the same person. True love preserves romance and is demonstrated with shared activities and values. It is pure and permanent. While this message was obviously lost on Solomon, it shouldn't be with us. The poetic language using comparisons can seem weird to us today but it actually has many parallels with modern poetry and songs. The idea in the comparisons is to express what is special and exceptional.

23. Prophetic Books

- a. Points to keep in mind when reading and teaching the prophets:
 - i. The prophetic messages depend on the Pentateuch. Much of what the prophets say refers to God's covenant law.
 - ii. The prophetic messages do not contain new or novel ideas. They are primarily calling the people to pay attention to what has been around for 2000 years.
 - iii. Be wary of liberal assumptions. Many commentators will claim that because the Law is never quoted specifically by the prophets, the Law must not have been in existence. It must have been given some time after 450 BC. However, closer studies have demonstrated that the concept of "legal citation" actually began with Roman law. Studying thousands of cases of ancient rulings in Mesopotamia, it has been noted by scholars that the Code of Hammurabi is never cited in the rulings. Ancient laws (including Mosaic Law) were paradigmatic rather than exhaustive as is the case with modern law. They were meant to be guidelines from which specific case rulings could be extrapolated.
 - iv. The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators. They frequently explain that God hasn't previously acted on disobedience is a testimony to God's patience but this should not be interpreted with the presumption that he will not enforce his sanctions (curses). In fact they warn that his judgment is imminent.
 - v. The indictment is often presented in the form of a *rib* (pronounced *riv*) which simply means a lawsuit. In the case, God plays the role of a prosecuting attorney, the judge, and often the plaintiff.
 - vi. Prophets are messengers. They understood clearly that their message is from God, often describing visions of scenes in God's heavenly court. The "messenger formula" will usually use 1st person language even though the prophet is simply quoting what they have memorized from God's message; beginning the prophecy with something like "thus says the Lord...". They are emphasizing that nothing they are saying comes from them but rather they are speaking the words of God verbatim.
 - vii. The frequency of the messenger language is typically proportional to the amount of opposition that is encountered by the prophet. The messenger formula was based on the need of the people to be convinced that the prophecy was from God and therefore credible.

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- viii. The vision of what was seen should not be interpreted literally. It should be considered more as a visual aid. What was actually spoken is primary while the vision is secondary. Prophets would, at times, use angels to interpret the visions.
 - ix. There is an eschatological pattern to the prophecies. They look back at the past and then at the present circumstance bringing judgment. Finally they will look at the future (e.g. post exile) which brings hope. It follows a blessing/ curse/ blessing pattern. In the end, all is not lost. God will not abandon his people forever. This future aspect points to a time when God will end the tragedy and all things will be made right.
 - x. Be wary of a tendency to localize or personalize prophecies, often confusing the church with the state. The prophecies should not be used to predict specific current events.
 - xi. Often the prophecies include oracles against foreign nations. (e.g. Amos 1-2) These should not be interpreted as saying God hates the nations other than Israel. The nations were all border nations to Israel and Judah who were guilty of ongoing disputes with God's people. God is opposed to all such unnecessary conflicts between nations. The fact that both Israel and Judah are included in the above reference denunciation indicates that God had now considered his own people as a foreign nation. The oracles against nations actually serve as an encouragement to God's people that he will not tolerate evil behavior forever. He will bring justice in his own timing.
 - xii. Prophets would sometimes use drama to deliver their message. Ezekiel built a model of Jerusalem and destroyed it with a mock siege. (Ezekiel 4:1-3) Isaiah went naked or scantily clad for 3 years. (Isaiah 20:3) The concept of naked or exposed was a synonym for exile of the Hebrews.
- b. Some themes found in the prophets:
- i. God will act with sudden reversals or pleasant surprises. "I will heal their apostasy..."(Hosea 13: 4)
 - ii. The reliance on human diplomacy will fail but reliance on God will not.
 - iii. God is determined to redeem a people for himself.
 - iv. Ritual is no substitute for substance
 - v. Corruption of clergy is a precursor to the corruption of the people.
 - vi. Sin is infidelity to God.
 - vii. Sin exacerbates political corruption.
 - viii. Divine forgiveness is a reality.

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c. The historical period of the prophets

The 1st prophet, Amos, prophesied around 760 BC and the last, Malachi, prophesied around 460 BC. This represented a period of approximately 300 years. This period included the fall of Israel in 722 BC, the fall of Judah in 586 BC, the exile from 586 to 516 BC, and the beginning of the restoration. These 300 years represented a time of dramatic change and transition for God's people—from a political entity to a people identified by faith. In the end, their future would rest on their trust in God rather than their identity as a nation.

24. Hosea, Amos, & Jonah

All three of these prophets were contemporaries, starting their ministries around 760 BC.

a. Hosea

Hosea preached for over 4 decades (about 760 BC to 720 BC). He was a northern prophet from Israel preaching to the northern kingdom. There is a strong emphasis on husband/wife imagery. Note: God's instruction to marry a prostitute should be taken metaphorically and not literally.

The book of Hosea contains a long section on judgment but at the end, in chapter 14, there is a sudden reversal to focus on God's mercy and restoration.

b. Amos

Amos was a southern prophet preaching in the northern kingdom. The book begins with oracles against foreign nations that actually include the denunciation of Israel and Judah. The oracles are followed by 4 chapters of judgment against Judah. Then there are visions of Amos accompanied by narrative about Amos. Finally, the book ends with a restoration promise.

Emphases in Amos:

- How people's morality affects their future. (immorality is in conflict with God's character)
- Why Judah and Israel were considered not better than other foreign nations
- Personal sin as well as social injustice are addressed as counterproductive to God's plan for his people
- Visions of God's coming judgment as well as his determination to save a remnant for himself

c. Jonah

Storyline:

- God call Jonah to go to Nineveh because their "evil" had come before him. Some translations use "wickedness" rather than "evil". A more accurate translation would be "trouble" or "calamity".
- Jonah rejects the call because he considers them to be an enemy of Israel.
- Jonah attempts to flee from God indicating he had a typical near eastern religious understanding about the presence of God/gods. It was common

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to believe that the god's presence was primarily localized around the area of worship or sacrifice.

- Jonah boarded a Philistine ship from Joppa and was subsequently thrown overboard after God brought a storm upon them.
- Jonah is swallowed by the fish but is delivered by God leading him to proceed to Nineveh and preach. Nineveh receives the message and repents.
- Chapter 4 is a flashback. It provides the story of God first providing shade to Jonah from a vine and then destroying the vine with a worm. Jonah is furious about the destruction of the vine but has no remorse or compassion for God's looming judgment on the people of Nineveh. Jonah demonstrates a lack of understanding of God's priorities in his creation.
- This is a story about God's concern for lost and wayward people, a theme that shows up elsewhere in the prophets

25. 2 Kings

a. Rise of the Assyrian Empire

In 824 BC the Assyrian Empire was no closer to Jerusalem than Damascus but by 640 BC it covered all of Israel and Judah, all the way down as far as Egypt. A lot of what we read in 2 Kings during this time period has to do with the rise of this empire. It comes to the forefront with the Assyrian King Tiglath Pileser III who is referred to in scripture simply as King Pul.

King Pul began his conquest of Palestine with a series of military raids beginning around 745 BC. The lust for more land was common among ancient kings as they sought to amass wealth. There means of extracting wealth consisted of **tributes** (forced payments from conquered territories in return for protection, **taxes**, and **tolls**).

b. Overview of 2 Kings

i. Chapters 1-8

1st 8 chapters deal with Elijah and Elisha. In 2 Kings 2, Elisha makes what seems to be a strange request from Elijah to receive a double portion of his spirit. This is just an idiomatic way of asking Elijah if he could inherit his ministry. In Israel, the eldest got a double portion in relation to the other siblings. This was achieved by adding one in the division and then giving the eldest two portions. (a double portion)

Elijah tells Elisha that if he is present to witness God taking Elijah that this would constitute a sign that it was God's intent for Elisha to carry on the ministry of Elijah. This happened and both ministries were marked by miracles. This has a close parallel to the ministry of Jesus whose ministry was also affirmed by miracles.

ii. Chapters 9-10

This includes an account of the brutal massacre of the prophets and worshipers of Baal by Jehu, King of Israel.

iii. Chapters 11-14

This is an account of kings of Judah

iv. Chapters 15-17

This includes the destruction of the northern kingdom by Assyria.

Assyrians relocated and intermarried with Israelites in the territory that later became Samaria resulting in separation and distrust of Samaritans by Jews found in the New Testament.

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v. Chapters 18-25

Judah carries on for 1 ½ centuries after the fall of the northern kingdom.

Three kings stand out in these chapters:

- Hezekiah- a good king who instituted reform
- Manasseh- a wicked king who reigned 55 years (longest reign of any king of Judah or Israel)
- Josiah- the last of the good kings.

The book ends with the fall of Judah to the Babylonians who had already overtaken the Assyrians.

26. Historical Overview

a. Historical context

It is essential to take the historical context in consideration in order to understand the message of the prophets. They preached about future events but their message was rooted in the current situation.

b. Divided Monarchy

During the rise of classic prophecy, there was a divided monarchy between Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom). It was an unresolved civil war much like the modern day example the Korean War. Only three kings reigned over a united kingdom. They were followed by 40 kings that reigned during the split. (20 southern kings and 20 northern kings)

c. Northern kingdom versus southern kingdom

There were an equal number of kings between the north and south even though the southern kingdom lasted almost 140 years longer. This fact points to the instability of the northern kingdom where assassinations and rebellions were more prevalent. It is important to remember that none of the kings of the north were descendants of David therefore they did not meet God's criteria under the Davidic Covenant. While the kings of the south did not have an exceptional record (only 8 of the 20 were described as good), none of the kings of the north were described as good. The north had several strikes against it:

- None of the kings were from the lineage of David as mentioned above.
- They did not worship God in his chosen city of Jerusalem.
- They consistently practiced idol worship.

Nevertheless, the southern kingdom can be characterized by increasing apostasy. Manasseh, one of the last kings of Judah, reigned the longest and was one of the most evil.

d. Isaiah 9 prophecy concerning Zebulum and Naphtali

All of the 10 tribes of the north fall to Assyria after a failed attempt by the north to bring Judah into an alliance with itself and Syria against Assyria. However, Isaiah speaks of God bring glory to two relatively obscure northern tribes in the latter days- Zebulum and Naphtali. This prophecy has messianic implications. Later day Nazareth was in the middle of Zebulum and Naphtali included the area of Galilee where Jesus would focus much of his ministry.

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e. Special Emphases of Chronicles

Much of the information found in Chronicles is duplicated from Samuel and Kings however there are special emphases:

- i. Chronicles emphasizes the importance of the temple. The Chronicler wrote during the period of the return of the exiles. The rebuilding of the temple was a primary consideration.
- ii. Chronicles focuses mostly on Judah because the northern kingdom of Israel no longer existed.
- iii. The Chronicler focused on the monarchy of David's line often emphasizing the good aspect of David and Solomon's reign. This was a way of encouraging the people concerning God's plan for his people.
- iv. Theocratic rule of God was another emphasis, again encouraging the people by reminding them of God's authority and power.
- v. The priesthood is central in a return to true worship.
- vi. Proper forms of worship are reiterated from God's Law.
- vii. Lineages are important therefore genealogies are prevalent in Chronicles.
- viii. Centralized worship is another theme of Chronicles.
- ix. The restoration of God's people following the exile.

In summary, the big theme behind Chronicles is encouraging God's people to have faith and hope in God's plan.

27. Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum

These were all late 8th century prophets. The big issue of the day was the threat of the Assyrians. They would become the nation that God would use to exercise his sanctions against the northern kingdom.

a. The Roles of a prophet:

i. Prophets were diplomats.

In a sense, they had diplomatic immunity. This was generally accepted by the rulers of Israel and Judah. Elijah was pursued by Jezebel because she was a pagan who did not accept this Israelite custom.

ii. Prophets were divine counsel reporters.

Often they describe visions of scenes within the divine court were they witness God developing his plan to deal with his people.

iii. They were messengers.

As stated previously, they make it clear that the words they spoke were not their own; but from God.

iv. They often acted as intercessors.

Moses was, in a sense, the prototype for the prophets. Clearly, he interceded on behalf of Israel. There are others examples such as Amos who prayed for Israel.

v. They were preachers to the world.

The messages were sometimes directed to, and heard by, the foreign nations.

b. The era of the classical prophets.

There were many prophets throughout biblical history but the period between 760 BC and 460 BC is known as the period of the classical prophets. During this time there was great emphasis on recording the messages. God was recording these because they would have relevance for future generations.

c. Common themes of Isaiah, Micah and Nahum

These three prophets preached around the time of the fall of Samaria. They were called by God because there had been a long history of covenant violations. God was recognized as the national god but was no longer worshiped as the true God who had established his covenant law. Some common themes include:

i. God's judgment

ii. God's righteousness

iii. Preaching against idolatry

iv. Social injustice

v. Both personal and corporate morality

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- vi. Class division
Increasing urbanization brought about an economic shift. As people moved into cities they left their dependence on the land and became dependent on others. This led to the potential for exploitation of the poor by the rich. (E.g. In Isaiah 5:8- The wealthy would expand their holding by lending money then foreclosing when payments weren't received. This was a practice that was forbidden by the law.)
- vii. Punishment
Emphasis on both individual as well as corporate punishment can be found.
- d. Specific themes found in Isaiah
 - i. The idea the creation is ongoing
 - ii. The concept of apocalyptic (that which refers to revealed material)
 - iii. Cleansed re-use of pagan myths
 - iv. Messianic themes [There is an interesting relationship between Christ and Israel that is portrayed by Isaiah. He will refer to "my servant Israel" at times; and later refer to an individual (Christ) as "my servant". The Apostle Paul later developed the concept of "the body of Christ" from Isaiah.]
 - v. The counsel of Yahweh (Isaiah is a witness to God as he makes his plans)
 - vi. The role of the prophet as an advisor to the king.
 - vii. The blessing/ curse/ blessing pattern
 - viii. The sovereignty of God
 - ix. Redemption that depends on divine opportunity
The people have no hope in themselves during the fall and subsequent exile but God raised up Babylonia to defeat Assyria and then Persia to defeat Babylonia.
 - x. The Servant Lord concept
 - xi. Zionism- the hope of heaven as pictured through Jerusalem, the city that represented the presence of God.
 - xii. Forgiveness of sin
- e. Structural overviews
 - i. Isaiah- Isaiah is a long and complex book to organize. (See the *New Bible Commentary* or *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* as a suggested resource for outlines.)
 - ii. Micah- This book can be organized into three groups of Woe (affliction) and Weal (prosperity).

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- iii. Nahum- this book begins with an acrostic poem that goes through the Hebrew alphabet. It includes these emphases:
 - 1. Reversal language
 - 2. Defeat of those who see themselves as undefeatable
 - 3. Prophecy against those who oppose Israel

28. 2 Kings 22-25

The Story of Josiah

a. Background

The Assyrians are still in power but the Babylonian Empire is on the rise. It will eventually encompass all the territory from modern day Turkey to Ethiopia. Josiah became king when he was only 8 years old and reigned from 640 -609 BC.

b. Discovery

In 622 BC (Josiah's 18th year as king) the temple underwent a restoration. In the process, an ancient copy of the law was discovered. It had been placed there 3 ½ centuries earlier at Solomon's dedication ceremony. King Josiah had the law read in its entirety and then sent for a prophet to confirm its authenticity.

c. Revival

After hearing the blessings and curses, Josiah calls the people to a covenant renewal (a return to obedience). This is one of a number of renewals that are recorded in the O.T. (e.g. Deuteronomy, Joshua 24, 1 Samuel 12, 1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 15, Ezra, Nehemiah)

2 Kings 23:4-20 provides a list of objects of disobedience that Josiah had removed/destroyed. The length of the list gives insight into the extent to which Yahweh had been obscured from the nation.

d. Josiah's mistake

The backdrop of the revival is an Assyrian empire that was losing ground to the rising power of the Babylonians. In 609 BC, Assyria appealed to Egypt for help against the Babylonians. Josiah foolishly attempted to intervene by fighting Egypt. His logic appeared to be that "the enemy of my enemy (Assyria) is my friend". God requires dependence on him alone and Josiah failed in that regard. He was mortally wounded in the battle against Egypt. Egypt joined Assyria but Babylonians still prevailed and eventually turned their focus on Judah.

e. The Babylonian exile

The book of 2 Kings concludes with a series of stories of the last kings of Judah. The Babylonians began a series of exiles for the purpose of suppressing Judah. The 1st exile was in 605 BC. It included Daniel. The 2nd exile in 598 BC included a king named Jehoiachin. The 3rd and largest exile (around 588 BC) was precipitated by the rebellion of a puppet king, Zedekiah. In retribution, the Babylonians forced Zedekiah to witness the execution of his family members before blinding him.

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f. Historicity confirmed

According to 2 Kings 25:27, Jehoiachin was released from prison by a Babylonian king and a place of prominence and provision at the king's table. For centuries, this story was believed to have been fabricated by the narrator or redactors. However a researcher/ professor in London later discovered an ancient tablet among artifacts that were from that period which actually described the provision by the Babylonian king to Jehoiachin thus confirming the account.

29. Jeremiah

a. Background

Jeremiah began his ministry in 627 BC, 5 years prior to the revival of Josiah's reign. It lasted until 585 BC (48 years) and spanned from a time of Assyrian power through the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. At the close of his ministry Jeremiah pursued the Judeans who fled to Egypt in an attempt to escape Babylonian reprisal for murdering their governor. His message was rejected and the Judeans returned to idol worship.

b. Emphases

- i. He was a prophet to the nations. In Jer 1:5, God appoints Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. (Note Jeremiah's ritual protest response.) He describes the vast and rapid changes in the power of nations. He predicts the fall of the Babylonians in three different places.
- ii. God is causing the Babylonian invasion. They serve as God's agent of punishment. It follows that his messages often preach against resistance.
- iii. There is reassurance that captivity will not last forever. Chapter 29 includes a long letter to the exiles for encouragement. However, his messages contrasted sharply to that of the false prophets who claimed that the exile would be very brief. By the Lord's word the exile would last a lifetime (70 years). Eventually the people came to believe this 70 year prophecy. 516 BC became a target date for those returning and rebuilding the temple.
- iv. The relationship between prophet and disciple is made evident in Jeremiah. He first calls his disciple Baruch in chapter 36. Jeremiah dictates his message to Baruch and has him record it on a scroll. Later in the same chapter, King Jehoiakim rejected the message and had the scroll burned. God had the message re-written and even gave further revelation. It is likely that most of the prophetic books were actually recorded by a disciple of the prophet as was the case with Jeremiah and Baruch.
- v. Corrupt national leadership has consequences for the people. People tended to follow the misleading of government.

c. Structural overview

The book can be broken down into 4 major sections:

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- i. 1st section includes prophecies are against Judah and Jerusalem. Much of these are in poetic form.
 - ii. 2nd section contains biographical material on Jeremiah. This was likely written by Baruch.
 - iii. 3rd section contains oracles against foreign nations.
 - iv. Final section is a historical conclusion that reflects 2 Kings 24.
- d. Opposition to Jeremiah
- Jeremiah is one of the more complete resources that describe the opposition encountered by most of the prophets.
- i. Opposition came from false prophets who were often winsome and more accepted because they delivered messages that the people wanted to hear.
 - ii. Opposition came from the government. (e.g. the burning of the scroll by King Jeoiakim in chapter 36)
 - iii. Opposition came from the priest who had a vested interest in the system and the status quo. The strict fidelity to worship as preached by Jeremiah was not embraced by the priests.
 - iv. Opposition came from the people in general. It was more popular to continue in idolatry than to trust in the word of the Lord.
- e. Prophetic lament form
- Jeremiah and other prophets used a literary style known as a prophetic lament. This form of lament is different from the laments found in Psalms. It was a literary style used in the ancient world to mourn the death of someone.
- i. Corporate call to mourning
 - ii. Direct address to the dead
 - iii. Eulogy
 - iv. The extent of loss to the survivors.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others used this form often to lament the demise of Israel. They also had occasion to use it in an ironic, mocking dirge toward foreign nations. (e.g. Jeremiah 48 against Moab)

30. Joel and Obadiah

a. Joel

i. General comments

The interesting question of Joel is how to interpret the invasion of the locusts. Some scholars believe it to be a literal plague of locusts. This assumption makes it particularly hard to date the book because there is no record of this. Others interpret it to be a metaphoric description of the Babylonian invasion. In Joel 2:11- the Lord thunders at the head of his army... This appears to be more like a human army. Assuming that this is speaking of the Babylonian invasion which addressed the national concern of the day, it would date the book around 590 BC.

ii. Four themes found in Joel

1. The idea of the Day of the Lord

In ancient days, there was a popular belief that a truly great king could defeat his enemy in one day. It appears that God inspired many of the prophets to pick up on this notion, hence- the Day of the Lord or the Day of Yahweh. From Joel 2:28 we see that it is a spiritual victory in reality. It is dreadful news for those who reject God but wonderful news for those who call on the name of the Lord.

2. Oracles against nations

There are general oracles against the nations. In Joel 3:1-8, the nations will be brought to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat literally means *God judges*.

3. War oracles

These are calls to prepare for war. (e.g. Joel 3:9)

4. Emphasis on the coming of the Spirit

Joel not only emphasizes the coming of the Spirit but the democratization of the Spirit. Previously, the general public was not endowed by the Spirit; only select prophets, etc. The New Covenant, predicted by Joel, would bring a time when even the least of God's kingdom would be endowed with the Spirit to even a greater extent than those elected in the OT times. The receiving of the Spirit would not be limited by age, gender or status.

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b. Obadiah

Obadiah is even shorter than Joel and consists primarily of oracles against the specific nation of Edom. Though only a small nation, Edom had consistently, throughout history, opposed Israel. This explains the special attention this nation received. The enmity had begun with the rivalry between Esau and Jacob. In Obadiah's day, much of the farmland of Judah was deserted during the siege of Jerusalem from 588 to 586 BC. The people sought refuge in Jerusalem. The Edomites took advantage of this situation by seizing the wealth of the Judeans (their land). In addition, they were known to round up Judean refugees and turn them over to the Babylonians (v. 14). Joel predicted that their day would come and that the blessings of God's people would be restored.

31. Habakkuk and Zephaniah

a. Habakkuk

It is fairly apparent that Habakkuk focused on the Babylonian invasion; therefore his ministry can be dated around 598 to 588 BC.

i. Habakkuk's 1st complaint

The prophet begins with what is traditionally referred to as the 1st complaint. His question to God is "how can this be true? How can you let this happen?" God's response identifies the invading nation as his agent executing his judgment.

ii. Habakkuk's 2nd complaint

The prophet's 2nd complaint questions the success of such an evil nation. God's reply explains that this success is temporary. God will deal with the Babylonians in time.

iii. The core message

Sandwiched between the complaints is a message about how to live in the midst of strife and tragedy. Hab 2:2 says "*Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.*" (so that anyone passing will get it!) Then in verse 4- "*the righteous shall live by his faith.*"

Paul later quotes Habakkuk in his letter to the Romans. Today we may not have an invading army but we see immorality encroaching on society from all sides. We survive by placing our hope and trust in God.

iv. Conclusion

In chapter 3 there is a prayer in the form of a history hymn. God's ultimate solution is to provide a rescue which is portrayed as a new exodus. Isaiah and other prophets use this new exodus language to encourage trust in the Lord. We can experience real joy even in a fallen world by trusting in God's rescue.

b. Zephaniah

Zephaniah preaching was contemporaneous with Jeremiah. He was one of the "Day of the Lord" prophets and used hyperbole for effect. In his oracles against the nations, he attacked Assyria but subtly shifts the denunciation towards Jerusalem in chapter 3. Even though there is strong judgment language, the book ends with promises for future blessings.

32. Lamentations

a. Background

Most assume that the author is anonymous but others feel Jeremiah may have written it. Certainly, as an eye witness to the fall of Jerusalem, he could have written it. It contains stereotypical language common in laments but its long complex structure also contains many particulars.

b. List of particular miseries found in Lamentations

- i. The description of the siege of Jerusalem (588 – 586 BC)
- ii. The story of Zedekiah's failed attempt to escape
- iii. The looting of the temple by the Babylonians
- iv. The destruction of Jerusalem
- v. The exile
- vi. The desperate and false hope on foreign nations by God's people
- vii. Judah's betrayal by its allies

c. Theodicy

Why assemble such a list of tragedies? This book helps to educate people who question God by explaining the reason behind the tragic events. In essence, Lamentations is a "theodicy". A theodicy is a vindication of divine action. The events that were occurring is not only part of God's plan, they are justified actions on God's part.

It goes further by encouraging perseverance in faith. God will not desert his people forever. Many had come to see God as a national god. If Israel and Judah had fallen then perhaps their god was no longer effective or powerful.

Lamentations reminded them that Yahweh had not failed. He was executing his prerogative to punish sin.

d. Structure

i. Acrostic structure

1. Chapter 1 & 2 each have 22 verses with the first line of each verse corresponding to a letter in the Hebrew alphabet.
2. Chapter 3 has 66 verses, each with three lines starting with a corresponding letter.
3. Chapter 4 goes back to 22 verses with the beginning line starting with successive letters. Finally, chapter 5 has 22 verses corresponding to letters but not in alphabetical order.

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The acrostic structure is employed to heighten the lament and create a cathartic effect.

- ii. Chiastic structure
 1. Chapters 1 and 5 are summaries
 2. Chapter 2 and 4 contain explicit material
 3. Chapter 3 (the hinge chapter) is highly intense.

Centered in the book is the focus on the mercies of God.
"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases... great is your faithfulness." Lam 3:22-23
- e. Useful themes
 - i. Prayer for assurance
 - ii. Corporate lament
 - iii. Acceptance of God's will (different than fatalism)
 - iv. Reminder of the historical plan of God
 - v. Background for New Covenant
 - vi. God doesn't abandon his people
- f. 70 year countdown

Jeremiah predicted 3 times (see Jeremiah 25 and 29) that the exile would last 70 years. Some scholars have taken this to loosely refer to a lifetime. Most likely it has a literal meaning of exactly 70 years beginning with the destruction of the temple in 586 BC. This explains why many of the prophets before the exile did not get specific about the dates of their respective messages while prophets during the exile tended to be specific about dates. They were accepting the 70 year period and had begun a countdown. Examples of prophets given these dates include Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezekiel. During the exile, the people were "watching the clock" The period came to an end with the re-building of the temple.

33. Ezekiel

a. Background and general content

Ezekiel is a major prophet with dated messages (implying the 70 year period of exile). The writing is apocalyptic; often employing the funerary lament form. His ministry lasted from 597 to 571 BC and had a special emphasis on the fall of Jerusalem.

The first 24 chapters has a single theme- don't fool yourself, the exile will not be only for a brief time. Many false prophets were telling the people exactly what they wanted to hear- that this dilemma would be over very quickly. Therefore Ezekiel's message, as Jeremiah's, was not popular. The book also contains oracles against the nations and messages about the New Jerusalem. Note: In his oracles against nations he uses Magog as a composite representation of foreign nations (see Ezekiel 38 and 39). Magog is not an actual country.

Ezekiel was exiled in 598 at the same time Jehoiachin (last legitimate king of Judah) was exiled.

b. Specific issues addressed

- i. God's judgment
- ii. God's presence
- iii. Idolatry
- iv. God's omniscience and omnipotence
- v. Destruction of world powers and final victory of God
- vi. The coming new realities of the new covenant as different from the old covenant.

c. Major themes

- i. Give up on false hope
(e.g. the health and wealth theology of today)
- ii. Ezekiel as an advisor to the people
- iii. The significance of government leadership (the relationship between the leader and his people)
- iv. Universal divine sovereignty (Ezekiel begins with a mystical vision that is actually a picture of God's chariot that is meant to depict his authority and access over the entire world, not just Israel.)
- v. The need to have hope in hopeless situations
- vi. Both individual and national responsibility
- vii. Unification in the eschatological fulfillment
- viii. Corporate leadership by the Holy Spirit

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- ix. The certainty of fulfillment of God's Word
 - x. Transformation:
 - 1. Of people prior to the eschatological fulfillment
 - 2. Of the temple
 - 3. Of the Promise Land
 - xi. The presence of God among his people
- d. Bifid structure
- i. 1st half concerns the fall of Jerusalem
 - ii. 2nd half contain the oracles against foreign nations

34. Daniel, Esther and Isaiah

a. Daniel

i. Overview

Daniel has a bifid structure with the 1st 6 chapters relating to stories of Daniel and the last 6 chapters containing apocalyptic visions. Chapters 4-6 are each individual visions and chapters 7-9 deal with one long vision. The main theme of the entire book deals with the temporal nature of world empires and the eventual consummation of God's kingdom. Some scholars have taken the stories of Daniel to be folk stories rather than historical but it is a mistake to discount the historicity simply based on style. It was apparently written by one single author; traditionally assumed to be Daniel dated around 6th century BC.

ii. Characteristics of Apocalyptic

Apocalyptic refers to literature emphasizes a revelation that reveals how things will turn out. Prophets, other than Daniel, that use this form of literature include Ezekiel, Joel, Isaiah and Zechariah.

1. It is visionary.
2. It deals with a grand sweep of history.
3. It often uses numeric coding which is used to demonstrate that God has a predetermined plan. Other symbols such as statues, etc are also used for this purpose.
4. It often contains prophet/angel or prophet/God dialogue.
5. It reveals previously hidden truth.
6. It can be found in any sub-part of a prophetic book.

b. Esther

i. Overview

The book was probably written around 470 to 475 BC. It contains the story of how Jews under Persian control escaped an attempt at extermination. Esther is often misunderstood as an exemplar model. In reality she is typical of other biblical character that had both good and bad characteristics. She was less than ethical in her efforts to impress the king as one of a series of one night stands.

God is never mentioned in the book which is an indication of the secular backdrop of the book. This book tells the story of Jews that had chosen to remain in a pagan environment rather than return to Judah.

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- ii. Emphasis

The story describes how the Jewish identity survived a hostile environment and answers the question if God's punishment would continue after the exile. It shows God's fairness to people who had already endured his punishment. However, the balance of the biblical narrative focuses on the Jews that returned and demonstrated true faith.
- c. 2nd part of Isaiah
 - i. Overview

Some scholars see the 2nd part of Isaiah (chapter 34 and following) as being written by different author/authors than the 1st part. It is probably more accurate to see it as another example of a bifid book.

 1. Chapter 34 to 39 contain messages relate to issues during and after the exile. It is the "weal" that follows the "woe" of the first 33 chapters.
 2. Chapters 49-55 focus on God's redemption through his messiah.
 3. Chapters 56-66 have a theme of Zionism. Biblically, Zion is the home of God's redeemed people. Many of the Jews had become comfortable with life in the foreign country, particularly after the Persian rule began. They had no desire to return to a country in poor condition with a city in ruin. Isaiah reminds the people that a wonderful future awaits them if they will trust God.
 - ii. Themes introduced in the 2nd part of Isaiah.
 1. The expectation of a reverse of the exile
 2. The term "Israel" is introduced as those that respond in faith, not merely descendents of Abraham.
 3. The idea of a new creation
 4. Servant themes of the Messiah
Christ is presented as a new Moses.

35. Background

a. Return and Rebuild

1 Chronicles 9 marks the last time frame of the genealogies listed. At the time of the writing, in 530 BC, the temple had laid in ruin for 56 years (since 586 BC). The chronicler is deeply concerned with the return of the people and the rebuilding of the temple. Therefore he goes to lengths to describe priests, gatekeepers, Levites, musicians, etc that return. Once the rebuilding takes place, the genealogies are not as important.

b. Post-exilic writers

The temple was the primary focus of post-exilic writers. Haggai and Zechariah delivered messages prior to the reconstruction therefore they focused on inspiring the rebuilding process. Malachi, Ezra and Nehemiah came during and after the rebuilding took place. Their focus was on proper maintenance of the temple and proper worship practices. Their main concern was “Will we do right by God?”

c. Persian consideration

In 540 BC the Persians took over the Babylonian empire. The Persian Empire had already grown to enormous proportions, extending to modern day Turkey. The Persians brought with them a different attitude toward the people they conquered. Unlike the ruthlessness of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Persians did not believe in forced exile. They were open to the idea that people who had been previously displaced could return to their former land. With this in mind, the decree of King Cyrus found at the end of 2 Chronicles should not be surprising. According to his decree, he not only allowed the Jews to return; he specified the purpose of the return to be the rebuilding of their temple. This also fits with the syncretistic religious views of the Persians in that day. They saw no problem with everyone acknowledging each other’s gods. Additionally, it is likely that Daniel’s experience there added to the credibility of the God of Israel.

d. Chronological order of post-exilic books

- i. Chronicles (around 530 BC)
- ii. Haggai (around 520 BC)
- iii. Zechariah (around 520 to 500 BC)
- iv. Malachi (around 460 BC)
- v. Ezra (458 BC)
- vi. Nehemiah (444 BC)

Note: Esther was probably written around 440 BC but the events occurred prior to that.

36. Haggai and Zechariah

a. Haggai

i. Overview

This is a small 2 chapter book that contain prophecies all dated in a 3 month period in a one year period. Other prophets give specific dates of some of their prophecies (Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah) but only Haggai dates all of his prophecies. The temple had lain in ruins for 66 years and the focus of Haggai is on the importance of rebuilding but the messages are directed at encourages two specific people:

- Zerubbabel-The political leader appointed as governor of Judah and a descendent of David.
- Joshua- The religious leader as the high priest.

They are mentioned prominently throughout the book. Zechariah was a friend and contemporary of Haggai who also affirms these two leaders.

It is not common to find a book(s) that offer this level of encouragement to specific individuals but a reading of Ezra will help explain the reason. They had both been involved in the original start of reconstruction in 538 BC but when opposition came by way of enemies of Benjamin and Judah, they bowed out. It is not easy to get people to follow leaders who had previously failed; therefore it was necessary for God to use these two prophets to affirm that they were chosen by him to lead 18 years later.

ii. Truths from Haggai

1. God and his work must take priority in the lives of his people.
2. Putting self-interest above God is self-defeating.
3. God richly blesses those that do place God's interest above their own.
4. The value of someone's work is how well it conforms to God's will. This temple met that criteria even though it didn't compare in grandeur to the one built by Solomon.

iii. The effect Persian stabilization on the temple reconstruction

Many prophecies during this period were dated by the 2nd year of Darius King of Persia. This is significant because of the stabilization of the empire in just his 2nd year to reign. The Persian Empire had reached it pinnacle under Cyrus. However, after his death, there was a period of about 10 years of destabilization under a series of weak and ineffective kings. During this period, lawlessness prevailed in Palestine and enemies of the

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Jews prevented attempts to rebuild. Once Darius restored order, these enemies were no longer allowed to take the law into their own hands. This is another example of God's providence, even over pagan authorities.

b. Zechariah

i. Overview

Zechariah was not only a contemporary to Haggai but a friend. This is a clear example of prophets working together much like Elijah and Elisha. Like Haggai, his focus is on rebuilding but his message is apocalyptic. As such, it covers a broader sweep of history and includes messianic themes and even implicit references to the 2nd coming.

ii. The visions of Zechariah

It is important in the visions to see the simple message that God is revealing and not get caught up in the details.

1. 1st vision- Horsemen traverse the world and report that the world is stable signifying that God is ready to return his blessings to the people and the land.
2. 2nd vision- Four horns are symbols of power that represent the four empires that scattered Israel and Judah (Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt and Persia. This is followed by four craftsmen (better translated farmhands) that God uses to turn back the world powers and prevent the future exile of his people.
3. 3rd vision- A man wants to measure Jerusalem but it can't be measured because all of God's redeemed will be there.
4. 4th vision- The high priest Joshua gets re-clothed thus signifying his acceptance by God.
5. 5th vision- The olive branches of the temple lamp stand are seen as symbolizing Zerubbabel and Joshua; again affirming them as God's chosen leaders.
6. 6th vision- A flying scroll (or perhaps sickle) is used to symbolize the purification of religious strife.
7. 7th vision- A measuring basket contains a woman representing evil who is deported to Babylon; a representation of God's forgiveness.
8. Four horse drawn chariots representing the four winds of the earth is a symbol of God's omnipotence.

37. Malachi, Ezra and Nehemiah

a. "The latter days"

This is a term that is sometimes misconstrued to mean the very end times but it actually refers to a much broader sweep of history. Biblically, a number of factors are given as indicators of the last days:

- i. Judgment, oppression, persecution, false teaching and apostasy
- ii. The negative factors above are balanced with a theme of a returning to Lord
- iii. A messiah who brings victory; this is not necessarily a political victory
- iv. The saints are raised from the dead
- v. The presence of a new covenant
- vi. A new kingdom, ruled by a Davidic king
- vii. The inclusion of many Gentiles into this kingdom

All but number four have been underway since the resurrection.

b. The close of the prophetic cannon

The 1st prophet of the era was Amos who began his ministry in 760 BC. Malachi closes the prophetic cannon in 460 BC, representing a period of 300 years of prophecy. In Malachi's day the temple has been rebuilt but all is not right. The restoration is barely underway and corruption still exists. Hence, his messages still point to judgment and the need for reform. The power of Persia is still present therefore deliverance is not complete. We learn later that the promised deliverance of the Messiah is spiritual rather than political. Restoration depended on the Messiah. Full restoration depended on the anticipated Holy Spirit and eventual universal reign of Christ. In Malachi, the temple had been reconstructed but there is still much to come.

c. Orienting data on Malachi

- i. Content- His messages include judgment, warnings, and promise
- ii. Time- he preached just before Ezra's arrival in 558 BC
- iii. Emphasis- Obedience to the covenant law
- iv. The promise of the messiah is a key element

d. Malachi's disputation style

- i. Malachi's used a disputation style against the following subjects:
 1. Edom, the consistent enemy of Israel
 2. The corrupt priests in Jerusalem
 3. The people of Judah

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4. The general unfaithfulness of God's people
 5. The failure of the people to present tithes and acceptable offerings
 6. The failure to fear God
- ii. The form of his disputations
1. Assertion
 2. Objection
 3. Response
 4. Implication
- Note: the love-hate language is not used in the same way today. It was actually used in that day as a language of diplomacy referring to allies versus enemies. Esau/Jacob reference to love/hate is actually a reference to nations rather than individuals.
- e. Ezra and Nehemiah
- The 1st 6 chapters of Ezra describe the period between 538 and 458 BC in which there is an initial attempt to rebuild the temple which is stopped by opposition, followed by a long hiatus. Ezra arrives in 458 BC (chapter 7) to a city that is still in ruins, even after 130 years. Not only in physical ruin; Jerusalem was in a state of moral decrepitation.

Nehemiah returns about 14 years after Ezra. As governor, he works in conjunction with Ezra the priest; much like Zerubbabel and Joshua had worked together. Nehemiah's first concern is safety; therefore he focuses on the rebuilding of the wall. In the second half of the book, he turns the focus on spiritual ailments that include a corrupt priesthood accepting improper offerings. In chapter 8, Nehemiah and Ezra join in bringing about a covenant renewal. This is followed by the re-population of Jerusalem. By the close of the book of Nehemiah it is apparent that unrighteousness was still an issue including the persistent problem of divorce and remarriage to foreign wives. The heart of this problem was not ethnic but a religious inconsistency as foreign wives brought idolatry and other pagan religious practices into Israel.