

Old Testament Overview



Free Methodist Church
AFRICA

Ordination Series

*Take care of yourselves
and of all the flock over which the Holy Spirit
has placed you as bishops to shepherd the church of God,
which he purchased with his own blood.*

Acts 20:28 NIV



Free Methodist Church
AFRICA

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Syllabus

Course Title: Overview of the Old Testament

Course description: This course examines the text of the Old Testament according to its parts: Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetic Books, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets. The historical background aspects and literature genres of the Old Testament are explored.

General objectives: Upon mastering the content of this course the student will:

- Understand the general themes and literary genres found in the Old Testament
- Develop a working knowledge of the history related to the Old Testament
- Develop and articulate an understanding of the relationship between the Christian faith and the Old Testament
- Discover a significant relationship between your personal worldview and the Old Testament

Reading Resources:

- **Complementary readings**
 - Fee, G., & Stuart, D. "The Old Testament Narratives." Pp. 65-80. In *The Effective Bible Reading*. Miami: Vida. 1985.
 - Pagán, Samuel. "The Historical Context of the Old Testament." Pp. 28-44. In *Discover the Bible II*. Miami: United Bible Societies. 2006.
 - Wright, Christopher. "Chapter 1: God Has Spoken." Pp. 11-20. In *Cómo predicar desde el Antiguo Testamento*. Lima: Puma. 2016.

Online Resources:

- **Old Testament Summary:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALsluAKBZ-c>
- **Overview of the Book of Genesis Part 1:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQI72THyO5I>
- **Overview of the Book of Genesis Part 2:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4isSyennFo>
- **Overview of the Book of Exodus Part 1:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH_aojNJM3E
- **Overview of the Book of Exodus Part 2:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNpTha80yyE>
- **Overview of the Book of Leviticus:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ-FekWUZzE>
- **Overview of the book of Numbers:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tp5MIrMZFqo>
- **Overview of the Book of Deuteronomy:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5QEH9bH8AU>
- **Overview of the Book of Joshua:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqOqJlFF_eU
- **Overview of the Book of Judges:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOYy8iCfIJ4>
- **Overview of the Book of Ruth:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h1eoBeR4Jk&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=35
- **Overview of the Book of 1 Samuel:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJOju5Dw0V0>
- **Overview of the Book of 2 Samuel:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvoWDXNDJgs&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=12
- **Overview of the Books of 1&2 Kings:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvoWDXNDJgs>
- **Overview of the Books of 1&2 Chronicles:** <https://www.youtube.com/>

[watch?v=HR7xaHv3Ias&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=41](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HR7xaHv3Ias&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=41)

- **Overview of the Books of Ezra & Nehemiah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkETkRv9tG8&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=40
- **Overview of the Book of Esther:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JydNSlufRIs&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=38
- **Overview of the Book of Job:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQwnH8thfs&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=33
- **Overview of the Book of Psalms:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9phNEaPrv8&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=31
- **Overview of the Book of Proverbs:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzmYV8GNAIM&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=32
- **Overview of the Book of Ecclesiastes:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrsQ1tc-2wk&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=37
- **Overview of the Book of Song of Songs:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KC7xE4fgOw&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=34
- **Overview of the Book of Isaiah Part 1:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0A6Uchb1F8&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=14
- **Overview of the Book of Isaiah Part 2:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzdEPuqgQg&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=15
- **Overview of the Book of Jeremiah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSK36cHbrk0&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=16
- **Overview of the Book of Ezekiel Part 1:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-CIPu1nko8&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=17
- **Overview of the Book of Ezekiel Part 2:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDeCWW_Bnyw&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=18
- **Overview of the Book of Daniel:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cSC9uobtPM&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=39
- **Overview of the Book of Hosea:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE6SZ1ogOVU&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=19
- **Overview of the Book of Joel:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQLazbgz90c&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=20
- **Overview of the Book of Amos:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGgWaPGpGz4&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=21
- **Overview of the Book of Obadiah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4ogCrEoG5s&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=22
- **Overview of the Book of Jonah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLIabZc0O4c&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=23
- **Overview of the Book of Micah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFEUEcylwLc&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=24
- **Overview of the Book of Nahum:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y30DanA5EhU&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=25
- **Overview of the Book of Habakkuk:** <https://www.youtube.com/>

[watch?v=OPMaRqGJPUU&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=26](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPMaRqGJPUU&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=26)

- **Overview of the Book of Zephaniah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFZknKPNvz8&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=27
- **Overview of the Book of Haggai:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juPvv_xcX-U&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=28
- **Overview of the Book of Zechariah:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_106IfO6Kc0&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=29
- **Overview of the Book of Malachi:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPGShWZ4Jvk&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkI9J_WEATHQCwRZ0u&index=30

Free Methodist Church Africa Resources and Leadership Training: <https://fmcafrica.org/>

Assessment Activities: The instructor will use the following activities to assess each student to determine their success in processing the information of this course:

1. Write a sermon or prepare a lesson or speech based on Deuteronomy 30:15-20 that reflects a knowledge of the Old Testament's history and its relationship with the Christian faith. Your teaching should answer the following questions:
 - a. What is the main theme of the passage?
 - b. What is the problem to which this text responds?
 - c. What is the answer to that problem?
 - d. Is this theme and the answer given somehow complemented, expanded or transformed by anything said in the New Testament (for example Luke 13:1-5)?
 - e. How does this problem and the answer, which the text and the whole Bible give, relate, and apply to the situations in which you, your church, and your community are currently living?
2. Review all of the Literary Genres and give an explanation and an example for each one. (LESSON 1)
3. Chose one of the kings from Israel and one from Judah and give a summary of their reign (LESSON 3)
4. Create a list of all the major and minor prophets (LESSON 5 & 6). Give a major image or lesson from two major prophets and three minor prophets.



Lesson One Introduction to the Old Testament

Purpose of the Lesson:

To present an overview of the Old Testament in chronological order of events and characters including theological issues and literary genres.

Lesson Objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will have knowledge of the key characters, the story, and the theological themes of the Old Testament.
 - Know and identify the main literary genres of the Old Testament.
- Will identify, honestly and seriously, with the content of these lessons and apply it to his or her ministry context and personal life.

Content:

Overview of the Old Testament

Literary Genres

Beginnings

Patriarchs

Exodus

Settlement

Judges

United Kingdom

Divided Kingdom

Exile and Return

Reflection Questions

Overview of the Old Testament

In later sections of this study, students will consider the structure and literary forms of the 39 books that make up the Old Testament. To begin, however, it will be helpful to understand an overview of Old Testament history.

The Old Testament can be divided into eight periods that tell the story from the origin of the world to the return of an exiled Jewish nation to the land of Israel: 1) Beginnings, 2) Patriarchs, 3) Exodus, 4) Settlement, 5) Judges, 6) United Kingdom, 7) Divided Kingdom, 8) Exile and Return. Understanding this story arc offers a complete picture of the Old Testament. In this overview, students will examine important events, key people and outstanding theological issues of each period. Students will also begin to get to know the literary genres throughout the Old Testament that will help them interpret these theological issues.

	HISTORY	POETRY	PROPHECY	
PENTATEUCH	Genesis	Job	Isaiah	MAJOR
	Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah	
	Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations	
	Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	
	Deuteronomy	Song of Solomon	Daniel	
OTHER HISTORICAL	Joshua		Hosea	MINOR
	Judges		Joel	
	Ruth		Amos	
	1 Samuel		Obadiah	
	2 Samuel		Jonah	
	1 Kings		Micah	
	2 Kings		Nahum	
	1 Chronicles		Habakkuk	
	2 Chronicles		Zephaniah	
	Ezra		Haggai	
	Nehemiah		Zechariah	
	Esther		Malachi	

Literary Genres (Type of Writing)

God is the best teacher. He finds many creative ways to share His message with people. In the Bible, He used different kinds of writing, sometimes he tells stories about people, other times the Bible records rules and laws. Sometimes God communicates through poems, or wise sayings. Other times his prophets will foretell future events, or give difficult messages to the people from God. The Bible even includes some funny parts.

Sometimes one book of the Bible has more than one kind of writing. That's why it's important to pay close attention when reading.

When reading a passage, ask yourself questions: What kind of writing is this? What clues can I find in the words? Knowing the kind of writing helps us understand what God is saying.

When we read the Bible, it's important to know what kind of writing we are reading. This helps us understand what the passage means. For example, you would not read a love poem the same way you read a story about a war. You also wouldn't read rules and laws the same way you read a vision about the end times.

A good Bible student asks, "What is this passage trying to teach or do for people?" Without paying attention to the type of writing, a reader could get wrong ideas. To understand the Bible well, it is important to notice the different kinds of writing God used.

The Bible has many kinds of writing, called literary genres. Sometimes a whole book has one main kind, and sometimes one book has several kinds mixed together. A mistake people make is to read the first five books of the Bible, called the Law or the Pentateuch, as if they were only rules. There are rules written down in the Pentateuch, but these books include many kinds of writing, for example: poems (Exodus 15), family lists (Genesis 5), speeches (Deuteronomy), and laws (Leviticus 19).

Narrative (Story-Telling) Genre

One of the main kinds of writing in the Old Testament is stories, called narratives. When reading these stories, the reader should think about the storyteller.

Sometimes the storyteller is not named, but knows everything. We can ask: Does the storyteller know what the characters are thinking and feeling? Does the storyteller tell things from God's view, like in Genesis

1:1? In other words, does the storyteller know it all?

The storyteller writes as if talking to a reader who can understand the lesson in the story. The storyteller talks about events that already happened. In these stories, there are main characters and side characters. Many times, people give speeches or have conversations as part of the plot.

Example: The story of David and Goliath is a narrative. We meet the main characters—David and Goliath—and also side characters like King Saul and the army. The storyteller helps us understand what happens and why it matters for God’s people.

When we read stories in the Bible, we should think about the first people who heard them. These people are called the original audience. They were the ones the writers wanted to speak to. The writers told these stories in ways that made sense for those people. In fact, God used different ways to reach different groups.

For example, the first audience of the first five books of the Old Testament was the Israelites who left Egypt. As they traveled to the land God promised them, they were given these stories.

Here are some things to think about:

- Who was the original audience?
- What if the original audience could not read?
- Were the stories told out loud before they were written down?
- How did these stories help the God’s people on their journey?
- How can we read narrative in a good way, even though we are not the first audience?

Poetry (Artistic Writing) Genre

Poetry in the Old Testament helps connect people’s feelings with God’s truth. It uses special words and ideas that make us stop and think. Old Testament poetry shows many emotions like joy, sadness, peace, trust, or even doubt.

Some poetry was made for worship. For example, the Psalms are songs that helped people praise God. The book of Proverbs gives short, wise sayings that are easy to remember and share.

Old Testament poetry often uses figurative language. This means it doesn’t just say things directly but uses pictures in words, like a metaphor (comparing two things) or personification (describing something as if it were a person).

Poetry also uses parallelism. This is when two lines are put side by side to show how they are alike or different. Sometimes it repeats words or ideas to make the meaning stronger.

Law (Written Rules) Genre

In the Old Testament, God gave His people, Israel, rules to live by. These rules are called laws. They covered many parts of life. Some laws were about worship, like feasts, sacrifices, and being clean before God. Some laws were about family and health, like marriage or caring for others. Other laws were about community life, like trading, making agreements, or owning land.

A very important part of the Law is the idea of a covenant. A covenant is a special promise or agreement. God made a covenant with His people, but there were also covenants between families, neighbors, and even whole tribes.

The Law helped Israel stand out from the nations around them. For example, Israel believed in only one God, while their neighbors believed in many gods. The Law showed that there is one true God who cares for His people. It also revealed God’s character by giving order, rituals, and clear ways to live.

Modern laws are mostly about civic life (like traffic or property). Old Testament Law was about daily life and a person’s relationship with God. It reminded the people of God’s covenant and guided them in how to live.

Prophecy (God's Message) Genre

Prophecy is a special type of writing in the Old Testament. It is God's message spoken or written through His chosen messengers, called prophets. Prophets were sent to tell God's people when they were sinning and needed to change. They also shared messages of hope, warning, and reminders that God was paying attention to His people.

Prophecy is not just about telling the future. It is God speaking to many people through one person. Sometimes the message was about what would happen later, but often it was about correction, warning, or encouragement for the people right then.

Prophets are like spokespersons for God. Their main job was to call people to turn away from sin and return to God's covenant promises. Prophets warned of judgment when people disobeyed, but they also gave hope about God's love, salvation, and restoration.

Sometimes prophecy used powerful pictures or visions. These images and symbols helped capture people's attention and made God's message easier to understand.

Genealogy (Family Line) Genre

A genealogy is a type of writing in the Bible that shows how people are connected through their families. It helps build identity and shows family lines for important roles, like priests or kings. Unlike stories, genealogies are more like records of history.

Most genealogies are lists of names. They tell us who people are, where they came from, and how they fit into God's big plan. They also help us know the time and place of events in the Bible.

Genealogies gave kings or priests authority by showing their family line. For example, King David's royal line is shown through a genealogy.

These lists are often found at the start or end of a book, or between stories, to connect different parts of the Bible. They also helped the people of Israel remember their history and their national identity.

There are two main kinds of genealogies:

- Linear genealogies – follow one family line through many generations.
- Segmented genealogies – show how a family splits into branches or clans.

Apocalyptic (Revealing) Genre

The apocalyptic genre in the Bible is a kind of writing that uses symbols, visions, and dreams to show how God is working in history and will bring justice in the end. The word "apocalyptic" comes from a Greek word that means "revelation" or "uncovering." This kind of writing often helps people understand God's plan when times are very hard. It reminds readers that even when evil seems strong, God is still active and will win in the end.

Books like Daniel in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament are examples of apocalyptic writing. In Daniel, we read about strange visions, like beasts and statues, that represent different kingdoms. In Revelation, John describes visions of heaven, angels, and the final victory of Jesus. These pictures are not meant to scare people but to give hope. They teach that God will use his power in the future and that His people will be safe with Him forever.

Apocalyptic writing often uses numbers, colors, and symbols to share its message. For example, the number seven in Revelation often stands for completeness or perfection, and white stands for purity or victory. Even though some parts may be difficult to understand, the main message is clear: God will defeat evil, and His kingdom will last forever. This truth encourages believers to stay faithful, trust God's plan, and look forward to the day when everything will be made new.

Beginnings[4.1]: Genesis 1-11

The first part of Bible history is in chapters 1 to 11 of Genesis. It is sometimes called the “primeval account,” because it tells how everything began. These chapters are foundational for understanding all of theology, because they use Hebrew poetry to describe God’s creation of the world, and of humanity. It uses narrative to describe how sin entered the world, and how evil grew worse until the great flood came. It uses genealogy lists to connect Adam and Eve to Noah. It also tells how different languages and nations began.

The Hebrew Patriarchs: Genesis 12-50

When sin came into the world, it looked like the story was finished. It seemed like sin had won and taken control of people. But the next part of the Bible shows how God began His plan to save people. It tells the stories of the first fathers of Israel, called the patriarchs. It explains how God chose Israel to be His people and how they came to live in Egypt.

God chose one man and his family. This man was Abram, later called Abraham. God told Abraham to leave his home and go to a new land. Abraham trusted God, and God promised to make his family into a great nation. Later, one of Abraham’s great-grandsons, Joseph, was taken to Egypt. God used Joseph to save many people during a famine. That is how Abraham’s family came to live in Egypt.

The Exodus From Egypt: Exodus 1 - Deuteronomy 34

At the end of Genesis, God’s chosen family had moved to Egypt. By the time the book of Exodus begins, almost 400 years had passed since the events recorded at the end of Genesis. Abraham’s descendants were no longer just a family—they had become a whole nation of people. But instead of being cared for by Pharaoh, they were now slaves in Egypt.

During this time in Exodus, God rescued His people from slavery and led them into the wilderness, toward the Promised Land. Because of their resistance to God’s plan, they lived in the wilderness for about 40 years. During the time in the wilderness God gave the law to Moses and the Israelites.

In the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy the history of Israel can be represented geographically:

- In Egypt (Exodus 1-12)
- From Egypt to Sinai (Exodus 13-Leviticus)



Important Events in the Book of Genesis 1-11

Creation: Genesis 1 and 2
The fall of humankind into sin: Genesis 3
Noah and the great flood: Genesis 6-8
The Tower of Babel is in Genesis 11

Main Characters: Adam, Eve, Cain,
Abel, Noah



Important Events in the Book of Genesis 12-50

The Call of Abram: Genesis 12
God’s covenant with Abram: Genesis 15
Birth of Isaac: Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7
Birth of Jacob and Esau: Genesis 25:19-26
Joseph is sold into slavery: Genesis 37:12-36
Jacob goes to Egypt with his family: Gen. 46-47

Main characters: Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah,
Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and
Joseph

- From Sinai to Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 1-13)
- Wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (Numbers 14-20)
- From Kadesh Barnea to Moab (Numbers 21-Deuteronomy)

Israel in The Promised Land/Settlement: Joshua 1-24



Important Events in Exodus 1 to Deuteronomy 34

Slavery of the Israelites: Exodus 1
Moses returns to Egypt: Exodus 4:18-31
Crossing the Red Sea: Exodus 13:17-31
Establishment of the Covenant: Exodus 19-20
Construction and Consecration of the Tabernacle:
 Exodus 35:4 - 40:38
God gives the law: Leviticus
Rebellion of the people: Numbers 14:39-45; Deut. 1:26-46
Joshua appointed as successor: Numbers 27:15-23; Deut. 31:1-18
Moses repeats the Law: Deuteronomy 4:44 - 28:68
Death of Moses: Deuteronomy 34

Main characters:

Moses, the people of Israel, Aaron, Pharaoh, Joshua, Caleb



The people finished their wandering in the desert and were ready to receive the land that God had promised them. At this point in the history, under Joshua's leadership, they entered the promised land. After they take control of the land, they divide it among the different tribes of Israel.

The Time When Judges Led Israel: Judges 1-21



Important Events in the Book of Joshua 1-24

Joshua becomes the leader of Israel: Joshua 1
Crossing the Jordan: Joshua 3
The fall of Jericho: Joshua 6
Victory over allied enemies: Joshua 10-12
Distribution of the land: Joshua 13-22
Joshua's farewell address: Joshua 23-24

Main characters: Joshua, Rahab, Achan, and Caleb



Important Events in Judges 1-21

The book of Judges is less about any particularly important event. *Rather, it describes the destructive cycle of sin and rebellion that Israel repeated.* This cycle first appears in Judges 2:11-23 and is detailed in chapter three of this coursebook.



Important Events about the 12 Tribes Uniting

The story of Samuel: 1 Samuel 1-3

Saul made king: 1 Samuel 9-10

Beginning of David's reign: 2 Samuel 2-5

David conquers Jerusalem and brings the ark: 2 Samuel 5-6

God's covenant with David: 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17:1-15

End of David's reign and death: 2 Samuel 17-24

Solomon builds the temple: 1 Kings 5-8

Main characters:

Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, David, Bathsheba, Absalom and Solomon

The Israelites began living in the promised land and divided the land among the tribes. The next generation did not know God and began worshiping idols (Judges 2:10). The time of the judges was marked by confusion and trouble in Israel. The Book of Judges shows how a people can slowly forget God and fall into moral, social, and spiritual problems.

The Twelve Tribes Unite as One Kingdom: 1st And 2nd Samuel; 1 Kings 1 - 11; 1st Chronicles And 2nd Chronicles 1 - 9

At the end of the time of the judges, Israel was struggling and starting to fall apart. The people asked God for a king, and He gave them one. As a United Kingdom, Israel had three main kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. Each king ruled for about forty years. This time is called the golden age of Israel because the kingdom was at its strongest and most successful.

The Kingdom Divides and is Destroyed: 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings



25; 1 Chronicles 10 – 36

While the twelve tribes of Israel were all together under King Solomon, the nation was rich and strong.



Important Events about the Divided Kingdom

Davidic dynasty continues (2 Kings 21)

Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16)

Reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17, 19:4 - 21:3)

Reign of Joash (2 Kings 11:21 - 12:21)

Reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-20)

Reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35)

Fall of Jerusalem; Destruction of Temple; Exile to Babylon (2 Kings 25; 2, 9, 2 Chronicles 36:17-21)

Construction of alternate altars (1 Kings 12:25-33)

Ahab becomes king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29-34)

Ministry of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:1 - 19:18)

But after Solomon died, the kingdom split into two parts. The northern part kept the name Israel, and the southern part was called Judah:

1. The northern kingdom was called Israel (sometimes Ephraim). It was made up of ten tribes. This kingdom lasted for about 200 years, but in 721 B.C. the Assyrians came and destroyed it. During that whole time, there were 19 kings, but not one of them followed God.
2. The southern kingdom was called Judah (sometimes joined with Benjamin). It was made up of two tribes. This kingdom lasted for about 335 years—which is 135 years longer than the northern kingdom—before the Babylonians invaded and destroyed it. In Judah there were 19 kings and also one queen. A few of these rulers were good and followed God, but most of them were bad.



Division of the Kingdom

(1 Kings 12:1-24, 2 Chronicles 10:1-11:4)

Southern Kingdom of Judah (Tribes of Judah and Benjamin)	Northern Kingdom of Israel (10 tribes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Davidic dynasty continues (2 Kings 21) • Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16) • Reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17, 19:4 - 21:3) • Reign of Joash (2 Kings 11:21 - 12:21) • Reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-20) • Reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35) • Fall of Jerusalem; Destruction of Temple; Exile to Babylon (2 Kings 25; 2, 9, 2 Chronicles 36:17-21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of alternate altars (1 Kings 12:25-33) • Ahab becomes king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29-34) • Ministry of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:1 - 19:18) • Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16-46) • Ministry of the prophet Elisha (1 Kings 19:9 - 2 Kings 8:15) • Naaman healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5) • Fall of Samaria; Assyrian desolation (2 Kings 17-18)

The Exile and Return of the Jews: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah And Malachi

The period of the divided kingdom ends with the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. After this, the people of Israel were taken into seventy years of exile in Babylon. During that time, the Persians rose to power and conquered Babylon. Their ruler, Cyrus, allowed some of God's people to return to Judah to rebuild the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the nation. From this time on, the returning exiles became known as the Jews (meaning "of Judah"), since the northern kingdom no longer existed and the main surviving tribe was Judah.

Important Events

Initial exiles deported: Daniel 2; 2 Kings 24:1-17

More exiles deported: 2 Kings 25:8-21

Fall of Jerusalem, destruction of temple: 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:17-20

70 years of exile: Daniel 9; Jeremiah; Ezekiel

Initial exiles return, Rebuilding the temple: Ezra 1-6

More exiles return, Restoring the Law: Ezra 7-10

More exiles return, Rebuilding Jerusalem: Nehemiah

Main characters: Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Xerxes, Esther, and Mordecai

The exile of the people from Israel to Babylon is described in the last part of Jeremiah, and also in Ezekiel and Daniel. The time of the return of the people from exile back to the land of Israel is described in Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Intertestamental Period

The Old Testament ends with the Jews returning from Babylon and the prophecies in Malachi. 400 years passed between Malachi and the birth of Jesus, when the New Testament begins. During these 400 years, the Jewish people lived under the rule of Persia, Greece, and Rome. The Jewish leaders tried to follow God while keeping their people safe from gentile influences.

Even though God seemed quiet during this time, He was still working, preparing for the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah. The New Testament starts with the birth of Jesus while Judah was under Roman rule.

Reflection Questions

1. How does knowing the literary genres of the Old Testament help you understand and teach them better?
2. How is God's faithfulness revealed throughout the Old Testament?
3. Which man or woman from the Old Testament do you most relate to?
4. How does the Old Testament help you see God's love for the nations?
5. How does God's love for the nations call for change in your life and ministry?



Lesson 2

The Pentateuch ("Five Books"/The Torah)

Purpose Of The Lesson

To give an overview of the people, historic events and their locations, literary style, and theological themes in each book of the Pentateuch.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will have knowledge of key characters, storylines, geographical context, and theological themes of each book of the Pentateuch.
- Will understand the Old Testament covenant between God and Abraham and how God faithfully fulfilled His covenant promises in His relationship with Abraham's family.
- Will identify, honestly and seriously, with the content of the lessons and apply it to his or her ministry context and personal life.

Contents

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Reflection Questions

Explanatory note: The first lesson gave an overview of events in the Old Testament. From now on, we will look at some of the important themes in each book in more detail, even if some elements are repeated.

Genesis

Overview Of The Book Of Genesis								
Divisions	Creation	Fall	Flood	Nations	Abraham	Isaac	Jacob	Joseph
	1:1 - 2:25	3:1 - 5:32	6:1 - 9:29	10:1 - 11:9	11:10 - 25:8	25:19-26:35	27:1 - 36:43	37:1 - 50:26
Topics	Beginning Of The Human Race				Beginning Of The Hebrew Race			
	History Of The World				History Of Abraham's Family			
Place	In And Near The Garden Of Eden (Fertile Crescent)				Canaan		Egypt	
Time	Approx. 2000+ Years (Approx. 4004 - 2090 B.c.)				193 Years ... (2090 - 1897 B.c.)		93 Years (1897 - 1804 Bc)	

Adapted from The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 5.

Summary Of The Book Of Genesis

The first five books of the Old Testament are called *the Pentateuch*. The first book, Genesis, means “beginnings.” It tells about the beginning of the world, sin, and the Hebrew people.

The first eleven chapters cover many years quickly, starting with creation. In chapter 3, Adam and Eve disobey God in the Garden of Eden. God sends them out of the Garden but promises a Redeemer who will defeat sin and death (Genesis 3:15).

The Fall brought sin and death into the world. We see this in how Adam and Eve respond to God and in how Cain treats Abel in chapter 4.

As the earth fills with people, wickedness grows, and God regrets making humans. He decides to send a great flood to destroy all life.

Noah is righteous and “finds favor in God’s eyes” (Genesis 6:8). God gives Noah a plan to save his family and the animals by building an ark (a big boat).

After the flood, when the waters go down, God puts a rainbow in the sky as a promise that He will never destroy all life with a flood again.

Even though God saved humanity, people’s hearts were still sinful. Genesis 11 shows this in the story of the Tower of Babel. People were proud, so God scattered them across the earth and gave them different languages. The word Babel means a mix of confusing sounds and voices.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis teach us important ideas: creation is good, sin came into the world, pain and suffering exist, God shows grace, and nations and languages began.

In Genesis 12, the story changes focus: from all of humanity in Genesis 1-11 to one man, Abram (later

called Abraham) in Genesis 12-50. God calls Abram to follow Him and trust His plan:

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gen. 12:1-3 (NIV)

This is the beginning of the history of the Hebrew people, who would later become the nation of Israel. The land God promised Abram is in the same area as today's Israel.

God promised Abram he would become a great nation, but he and his wife Sarai (later Sarah) were very old and had no children. Sarah did not think she could have a baby, so she gave her servant Hagar to Abram. Hagar had Abram's son, Ishmael, who was blessed by God to become the father of the Arab nations.

But God's special promise was for the child of Abram and Sarah (Genesis 17:20-21). To show this promise, God renamed them Abraham and Sarah, meaning "father" and "mother" of many. Even though they were very old, God gave them a son, Isaac, whose name means laughter. Through Isaac, God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled.

In the book of Genesis, God shows Himself as a promise maker. These promises are called "covenants." A covenant is like a very serious promise or agreement. In Bible times, covenants could be made between a ruler and someone under him, or between two people who were equals. Both sides had to keep the promise. Breaking a covenant was very serious, even as serious as death.

In the story of Abraham, God repeats His covenant many times with Abraham and his family. As a sign of this covenant, God told Abraham and all the men in his family to be circumcised. This was a reminder that they belonged to God and had a special promise with Him.

One way God showed that He keeps His promises to Abraham was through a very hard test. God told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, to a mountain called Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). Even though it was the hardest thing Abraham could imagine, he obeyed God. Abraham trusted that God would somehow provide another sacrifice.

When Abraham raised the knife to sacrifice Isaac, the angel of the Lord stopped him. Nearby, a ram was caught in a bush. The angel told Abraham to let Isaac go and to offer the ram instead.

God always keeps His promises. He promised to send a Savior, and He showed Abraham this by giving a sacrifice in place of Isaac. The same lesson was taught repeatedly to many generations. All through the Old Testament, God reminded His people of His covenant and promised to care for and protect Abraham and his family, even when they did not always follow Him.

Today, this blessing is for all people through Jesus Christ, the Savior. In the New Testament, Jesus made a new covenant and gave the Lord's Supper as a special sacrament to remember it (see Matthew 26:17-30). To enjoy God's gift of salvation, people must learn to trust, believe, and obey Him.

Genesis tells the story of four generations in Abraham's family.

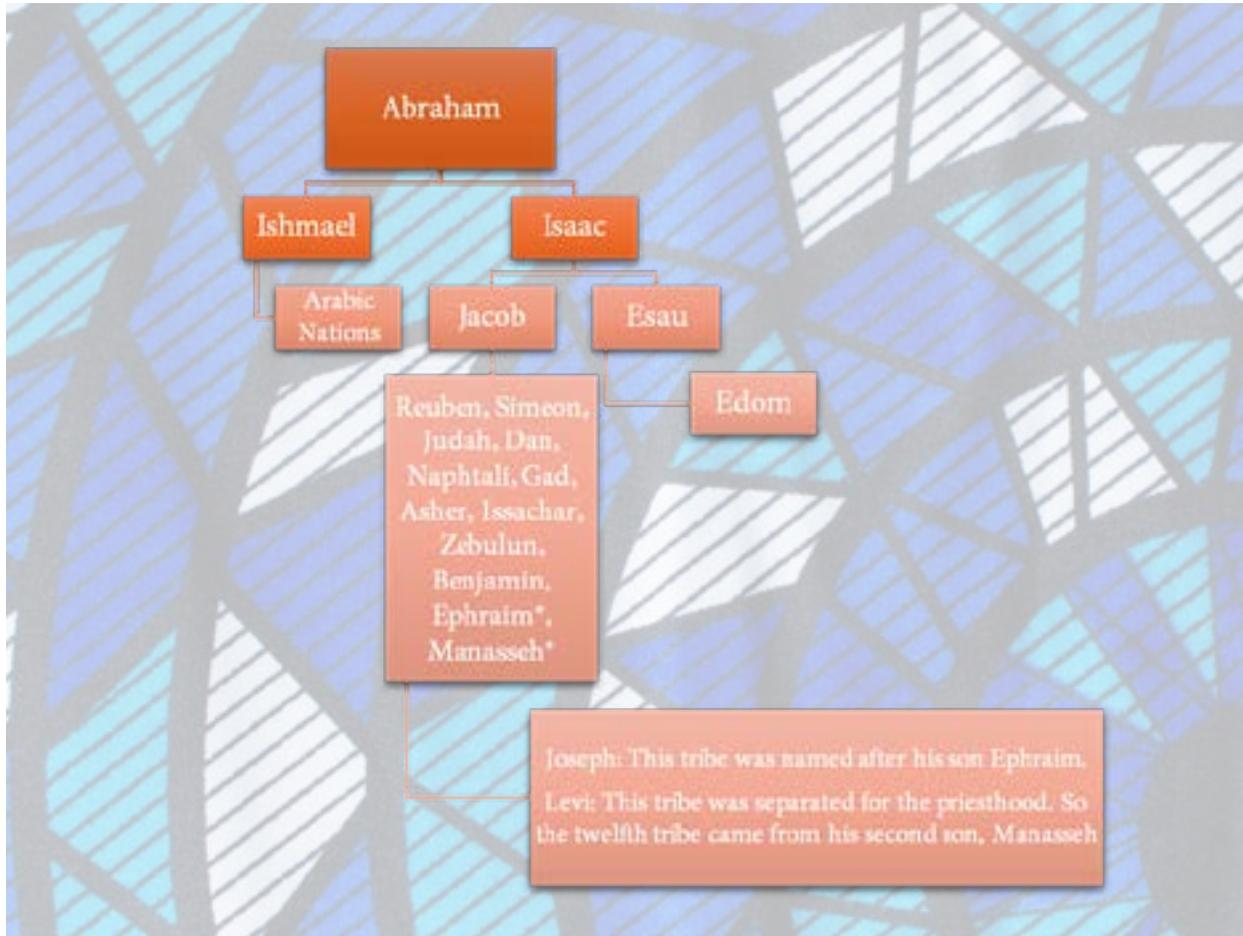
Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac.

Isaac and Rebekah had twins, Jacob and Esau.

Jacob, later called Israel (Genesis 32:28), carried on God's promise.

Jacob had twelve sons, and from them came the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49).

Descendants of Abraham



The book of Genesis ends with Abraham's family moving to Egypt. One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, faced slavery and prison, but God used these hardships to save his family during a severe famine.

The Israelites settled in the land of Goshen, near the Nile River. By the start of Exodus, the Bible says: «But the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them» (Ex. 1:7). (Exodus 1:7). God was beginning to fulfill His promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:2).

Theological Issues In The Book Of Genesis

1. God created everything out of nothing and considered it "good." (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Humankind is the crown of creation. God created humans in his own image. After completing all his work, "God saw all that he had made" and called it «very good» (Gen. 1:31). Creation is "good" because God does all things well. The material world is not inherently bad or something to escape from.
2. Humans, both men and women, were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 3:27). The image of God in the human being suggests: 1) Men and women have the capacity to reason. 2) Humanity represents God on earth, and is the administrator of all that is created. Humans are

responsible before God for the stewardship of the earth, which should reflect God's character. 3) As God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit exist in community with one another, persons are made to be in relationship with other persons. 4) God created people to live in relationship with Him, to have communion with Him, and to reflect His holy character. 5) God is love. Humans have the ability to love because they are created in God's image. In this same way, humans are capable of justice, mercy, and purity.

3. Adam and Eve had freedom to eat or not eat from any tree in the garden (Gen. 2:16), but were commanded not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17). The command not to eat of the Tree further supports their free will, having the ability or to either obey or disobey.
4. Adam and Eve's sin was not only disobedience but can also be understood as a lack of faith and trust in God. Satan tempted Eve by questioning the goodness of God's character. God gave the command to "not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden". Satan invited her to believe that God was withholding good from her (Gen. 3:1-6).
5. At the fall four human relationships were broken: 1) Relationship with God - Adam and Eve hid themselves from God's presence (Gen. 3:8,10). 2) Relationship with oneself - Adam and Eve were afraid, ashamed, and introduced to the eventuality of physical death (Gen. 3:10). 3) Relationships with others - Adam blames God and the woman (Gen. 3:12). 4) Relationship to the earth and the earth's relationship to itself (Gen. 3:17). With the fall the image of God in humans was not lost, but it is distorted.
6. After the fall, God's grace becomes noticeable in several ways. First, although physical death becomes a new reality, it is postponed until the aging process is completed rather than being immediate. God does, however, expel the first couple from the Garden of Eden, preventing them from partaking of the tree of life and condemning them to live eternally in this condition. God graciously provides Adam and Eve with more suitable clothing to cover their nakedness. Finally, He promises them a deliverer who will tread on the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15).
7. After the fall, it is evident that sinfulness has spread from Adam and Eve to all of humankind. Cain is warned that sin is "crouching at the door" and that he must dominate it (Gen. 4:7), yet he still murders his brother Abel. By the time of Noah, sin had increased to the point that God brought judgment in the form of a flood (Gen. 6:13). Noah found favor in the eyes of God and he and his family were rescued. God's grace is seen in the rescue of Noah and his family, the covenant with them after the flood (Gen. 9:10-11) and the continuation of the promise of Genesis 3:15.
8. God makes an eternal covenant with Noah and his descendants, (Gen. 9:9, 15), with every living being (Gen. 9:10, 15) and with the earth (Gen. 9:11, 13), not to destroy the earth again with a flood. The flood was not intended to destroy all creation but to destroy the evil brought about through human action. God cares for all of his creation, not only humans. He makes a covenant with human beings, the animals and the earth.
9. By grace God chose a man named Abram. He told Abram to leave his family and his land and go to a new place that God would show him. God also promised to give him that land (Genesis 12:1). Abram trusted God and obeyed. Later, God gave him a new name—Abraham—which means "the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5).
10. Abraham is called the father of faith because he believed God and even became known as God's friend (Isaiah 41:8). He showed great faith when God asked him to give up his only son, Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18). Abraham trusted that God had the power to bring Isaac back to life (Hebrews 11:19).
11. In Genesis 25-35 we learn about Jacob. Jacob was not perfect—he tricked people (Genesis 27:36) and he deceived others (Genesis 31:20). Even though he made mistakes, God still chose him. Jacob

didn't earn it; it was God's grace. The story shows that God was with Jacob and promised to give him many descendants, as many as the dust on the ground (Genesis 28:14). In this way, God continued His promise to Abraham and Isaac through Jacob.

12. Jacob's life shows us how prayer can change a person. Jacob knew he did not deserve God's help, but when he was scared and desperate, he prayed to God. In his prayer in Genesis 32, Jacob asked for help—not because he was good, but because of God's promises to Abraham and Isaac.
13. Later that night, Jacob wrestled with God until morning. He said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Genesis 32:26). At daybreak, God gave Jacob a new name—Israel. This showed a new identity. Jacob was no longer just a deceiver; now he was someone who prayed and stood before God. God said he had "struggled with God and with humans and overcome" (Genesis 32:28). This moment was important not only for Jacob, but for all his children after him. The people of Israel would be like priests, interceding before God for the nations (Exodus 19:6). In this way, God began to keep His promise to Abraham—that through his family all nations on earth would be blessed.
14. God can take the plans of bad people and use them for good. The story of Joseph and his brothers shows this. Joseph's brothers wanted to hurt him, but God used it to save many people from a famine, including the Egyptians and other nations. At the same time, God was keeping His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 45:5; 50:20). This was also a small part of God's promise that Abraham's family would be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:1–2). We see this theme again in the Gospels. The Jewish leaders planned to kill Jesus, but God used the cross to bring salvation and new life to all creation .

Abraham did not live long enough to see God's full promise of making him a great nation, but God kept His promise. Abraham's family grew bigger and bigger. The Bible says that 70 men from his family went to Egypt, not counting the women and children (Genesis 46:27). Later, God multiplied Abraham's family so much that the land of Egypt was filled with Israelites (Exodus 1:7).

Exodus

Overview Of The Book Of Exodus						
Focus	Redemption From Egypt				Revelation From God	
Divisions	Need Of Redemption	Preparation For Redemption	Redemption Of Israel	Preservation Of Israel	Revelation Of The Covenant	Response Of Israel To The Covenant
		1:1 - 1:22	2:1 - 4:31	5:1 - 15:21	15:22 - 18:27	19:1 - 31:18
Topics	Narration				Legislation	
	Subjection		Redemption		Instruction	
Place	Egypt (1:1 - 13:16)		Desert (13:17 - 18:27)		Mount Sinai (19:1 - 40:38)	
Time	430 Years		2 Months		10 Months	

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 12.

Summary Of The Book Of Exodus

The Book of Exodus tells how God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt and gave them His covenant on Mount Sinai. 400 years had passed since Jacob's family moved to Egypt to escape a famine. At first, the Egyptian kings, called Pharaohs, were kind to them. But as the Israelites grew in number, new Pharaohs who didn't know Joseph became afraid and treated them badly.

To control the Israelites, the Egyptians made them slaves. The Israelites kept growing in number and becoming stronger. One Pharaoh ordered that all baby boys born to the Israelites must be killed. During this time, a baby named Moses was hidden by his family in a basket that floated on the river. Pharaoh's daughter found him. Moses' sister, Miriam, was watching and bravely offered to find someone to care for the baby. She brought their mother, who was then hired by Pharaoh's daughter to nurse him. Moses was saved and later adopted into Pharaoh's family. He grew up in the palace with great education and wealth.

When Moses grew up, he saw how badly the Egyptians treated the Israelites. One day, angry and upset, he killed an Egyptian. Afraid of being punished, Moses ran away to a place called Midian. There, he worked as a shepherd. One day, he saw a bush on fire, but it wasn't burning up. From the bush, God spoke to Moses and said He had heard the cries of His people in slavery and had chosen Moses to lead them to freedom. But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' 'This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. (Ex. 3:11-15)



God kept His promise to Abraham's family by sending them a leader to help free His people.

Moses went back to Egypt, and his brother Aaron helped him speak to Pharaoh. Moses told Pharaoh to let God's people go, but Pharaoh kept saying "no" because his heart was stubborn against God. God sent ten plagues to show His power and to prove He was greater than all the Egyptian gods. The first nine plagues were water turned to blood, frogs, gnats, flies, sickness on animals, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness. Each one brought great suffering to the Egyptians, but Pharaoh still refused to obey God.



Before the last plague, which was the death of every firstborn son, God gave the Israelites special instructions to keep them safe. They were to choose a perfect lamb, kill it, and put its blood on the doorframes of their houses. Then they were to roast the lamb and eat it with bread made without yeast, since it could be baked quickly and would not spoil. God also told them to pack their things and be ready to leave Egypt.

That night, God passed through Egypt. When He saw the blood on the doors, He "passed over" those houses, and the families inside were safe. God told the Israelites to remember this night every year with a celebration

called Passover. The lamb's blood was a sign that pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would one day come to take away the sins of the world.

Every Egyptian house was filled with sadness because someone had died. Even Pharaoh's own firstborn son died. Pharaoh sent for Moses and told him to take his people and leave Egypt.

So Moses led hundreds of thousands of Israelites out of Egypt. After many years of being slaves, they were finally free!

Not long after the Israelites left, Pharaoh changed his mind again. He took his army and chased after them. The people were trapped with the Red Sea in front of them and the soldiers behind them.

Moses prayed to God, and God told him to raise his staff over the water. Suddenly, the sea split apart, and a dry path opened up for the people to walk through! God also placed a cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptian army so they could not reach them. When the last Israelite had crossed safely, Pharaoh and his army rushed into the sea. But then the waters came crashing back, covering the soldiers. Not one of them survived.

God not only saved the Israelites from the Egyptians, but He also took care of them in the desert. Every day, He sent manna, bread from heaven, and quail for them to eat.

God gave special instructions for the Sabbath, a day of rest. The day before the Sabbath, the people were told to gather twice as much food so they would have enough to eat and could rest on that holy day.

Moses kept leading the people through the desert, following God's directions. Moses was their human leader, but God wanted them to know that He was their King and Lord. God told Moses to gather all the people at Mount Sinai. While Moses was alone on the mountain, God gave him the Ten Commandments and many other instructions. These included plans for the tabernacle, a special tent for worship, and rules for the priests, their clothing, and the sacrifices.

These laws and instructions, found in Exodus 20 to Numbers 10, were meant to teach the people about God's identity and character. God set up a system where He is King. He would talk to the people through Moses. His presence would be seen as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God's desire was to live among His people and be with them.

The people had a hard time staying faithful to God. While Moses was on Mount Sinai meeting with God, they melted their gold and made an idol shaped like a calf. They worshiped it with wild and sinful behavior. When Moses came back from his special time with God, he found the people turning away from God and worshiping wrongly.

In Exodus and the other books of the Pentateuch, Moses often had to face the people's rebellion. God showed mercy many times, but their sins were sometimes so serious that it brought death or other big consequences.

Theological Issues In Exodus

1. God makes promises: God promised to make a great nation of Abraham's descendents. In this time, God's promise to Abraham came true. God had told Abraham that his family would live in a foreign land as slaves, but that He would rescue them and judge Egypt and its gods (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:12). God always keeps his word.
2. God brings judgment: God is just. The plagues were God's judgment on Egypt and their false gods.



Through them, God showed Israel and all the nations that He is the one true Almighty God. For example, the first plague turned the Nile River into blood. The Egyptians treated the Nile like a god because it gave them water for their crops. But God showed that He—not the Nile—is the real provider.

3. God reveals himself: God called Moses and told him that He is the God of Abraham and the God of his ancestors (Exodus 3:6). God showed Moses that He is holy and gave His name as “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). This name means that God was not created, He never changes, and He will always be the same. Later, Jesus used this same name in John 6:35 and other places to show that He is truly God.
4. God gives salvation: Before the last plague in Egypt, God told His people to celebrate the Passover. Each family was to take a perfect lamb, sacrifice it, and put some of its blood on the doorframes of their homes. By doing this, the firstborn in each house would be saved from the plague of death (Exodus 12:1–13). The Israelites were saved because they trusted God and followed His instructions. The first Passover showed a picture of the greater salvation that would come through Jesus. By believing that Jesus is God’s Son and because of His blood, people can be saved from the power of sin.



Leviticus

Leviticus is a book of laws. It has rules about sacrifices, food, cleanliness, and how people should treat each other, including rules about sexual behavior. These laws show that God is holy and wants His people to live in ways that reflect His goodness. Unlike other nations, the Israelites were not allowed to do things like human sacrifice or prostitution because those actions were against God’s love and righteousness.

The purpose of the Law was to teach God’s people how to live holy lives and be set apart for Him. Some laws showed how and when to make sacrifices to worship God and repent for sin. These sacrifices pointed ahead to Jesus and the cross (see Lev. 17:11). Other laws were about food, how people treat each other, and many other things. God gave these rules to make His people different from the other nations around them.

Some laws were about marriage, sexuality, property, and arguments between people. God gave these rules to help His people live in peace and love one another: “Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:18). In the New Testament, Jesus said the most important commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40).



Levitical Law and Jesus

The Levitical law shows God’s holiness and guides right living, but Jesus fulfilled the law through His life, death, and resurrection. Christians are saved by faith, not by following all the old rules. The law now points us to Jesus and teaches us how to love God and others. The Apostle Paul wrote about the law in light of Jesus Christ.

“For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.”
Romans 10:4 NLT



Leviticus

Literary Genre: Law

(See Lesson 1 on Literary Genres)

Law is a type of writing in the Old Testament that gives God’s people rules for living. These rules are sometimes called *codes*.

The Law gives instructions for worship, like sacrifices and special feasts. It also gives rules for social life, like marriage, family, health, and how people should treat one another.

The Law connects the way people live to their relationship with God. It reminds them of the covenant, or special promise, God made with His people. By following the Law, the Israelites showed their love and respect for God.

Overview Of The Book Of Leviticus									
Focus	Sacrifice				Sanctification				
Divisions	Laws Of Acceptable Approach To God	Laws Of The Priests	Laws Of Israel Regarding Purity	Laws Of National Atonement	Laws Of Sanctification For The People	Laws Of Sanctification For The Priesthood	Laws Of Sanctification In Worship	Laws Of Sanctification In The Land Of Canaan	Laws Of Sanctification Through Vows
	1:1 - 7:38	8:1 - 10:20	11:1 - 15:33	16:1 - 17:16	18:1 - 20:27	21:1 - 22:33	23:1 - 24:23	25:1 - 26:46	27:1 - 27:34
Topics	Way To God				Walk With God				
	Laws Of Acceptable Approach To God				Laws Of Continued Fellowship With God				
Place	Mount Sinai								
Time	C. 1 Month								

From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 20.

Theological Issues In Leviticus

1. **God is holy:** The book of Leviticus shows that God wants His people to live holy lives. Holy means being set apart, or different, for God (Leviticus 20:26).
 - a. When people became unclean from sin or from contact with the broken world, they needed to be made clean again. This process was called purification. Being purified allowed them to come close to God.
2. **God and Sacrifices:** In Leviticus, ritual sacrifices are very important. Sacrifices were the way people could be forgiven for their sins and stay in a right relationship with God. Later, Jesus became the

ultimate sacrifice. Through Him, forgiveness is given to everyone who calls on His name.

3. **God Provides the Priesthood:** God chose the tribe of Levi to be the priests of Israel. The priests were like go-betweens, standing between God and the people. They offered sacrifices and led the rituals. But when Jesus gave His life, He became the perfect priest, and no other sacrifice was needed.
4. **God and Covenant:** Leviticus also shows the covenant, or special promise, God made with Israel. The law helped sinful people live with God and honor the covenant He made with them.
5. **The Law comes from God's holy character.** Its purpose is to protect the people. The Law shows God's kindness and teaches them how to come close to Him through sacrifices (Leviticus 4-7).
6. **To help people live well together.** The Law gives rules for how to treat others and care for the world around them (Leviticus 19-27).

Numbers

The Book of Numbers tells the story of the Israelites' journey from Mount Sinai to the border of the Promised Land. It starts and ends with a census of the twelve tribes. The book also shares many stories of trials and hardships in the desert. One sad story is about the people not trusting God. God sent twelve spies to look at the Promised Land. Ten spies said the land had giants and strong enemies. But two spies, Joshua and Caleb, reminded the people that God had promised they could take the land. The Israelites became afraid and complained to God. They forgot that He had led them out of Egypt to help them.

Because of their lack of faith, the people of Israel would wander in the wilderness for forty years. All that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, would die without stepping foot into the land they had been promised. Their children would enter the land forty years later, but without those who saw the parting of the waters of the Red Sea and yet did not have the faith to trust that God would also give them the Promised Land.

Overview of the Book Of Numbers									
Focus	Old Generation (1:1 - 10:10)		Tragic Transition (10:11 - 25:18)				New Generation (26:1 - 36:13)		
Divisions	Organization Of Israel	Sanctifi- cation Of Israel	To Kadesh- Barnea	At Ka- desh-Bar- nea	In Wil- derness	To Moab	Reorgani- zation Of Israel	Regulara- tions Of Offering And Vows	Conquest And Di- vision Of Israel
		1:1 - 4:49	5:1 - 10:10	10:11 - 12:16	13:1 - 14:45	15:1 - 19:22	20:1 - 25:18	26:1 - 27:23	28:1- 30:16
Topics	Order		Disorder				Reorder		
	Preparation		Postponement				Preparation		
Place	Mount Sinai		Wilderness				Plains Of Moab		
Time	20 Days		38 Years, 3 Months, 10 Days				C. 5 Months		

Adapted From The Wilkison & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 27.

Theological Issues In Numbers

God’s Faithfulness: Even when Israel sinned and turned away, God stayed true to His promises. He kept His covenant and cared for His people in the wilderness.

Sin and Judgment: The Israelites often showed rebellion and a lack of faith. This was sin, and it led to God’s judgment. They missed out on His blessings. Their story is a warning for all believers to trust and obey God.

God’s Covenant Community: In the book of Numbers, Israel is shown as a covenant community. God gave them structure and order so they could live together as His people. He even lived among them.

God’s Power: God gave laws and guided His people. He led the Israelites through the wilderness with His presence, always staying close to them.

A Type for Christ: The book of Numbers also points ahead to Jesus. The New Testament helps us see these pictures: the pillar of cloud and fire, the high priest, and the bronze serpent. These all give clues about Christ.

Deuteronomy

Overview Of The Book Of Deuteronomy								
Focus	First Sermon	Second Sermon				Third Sermon		
Divisions	Review Of God’s Acts For Israel	The Exhibition Of The Decalogue	Ceremonial Laws	Civil Laws	Social Laws	Ratification Of Covenant	Palestinian Covenant	Transition Of Covenant Mediator
	1:1 - 4:43	4:44 - 11:32	12:1 - 16:17	16:18 - 20:20	21:1 - 26:19	27:1 - 26:68	29:1 - 30:20	31:1 - 34:12
Themes	What God Has Done		What God Expected Of Israel			What God Will Do.		
	Historic		Legal			Prophetic		
Place	Plains Of Moab							
Time	C. 1 Month							

From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 36.

The Book of Deuteronomy is Moses’ last message to the Israelites. The name “Deuteronomy” means “second law” because Moses reviews much of God’s law. He wanted the children of those who left Egypt to trust, believe, and obey God.

God called His people to remember Him and stay faithful to their covenant. He reminded them of His laws and His faithfulness. He also told them to teach their children and warned what would happen if they disobeyed.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Deut. 30:15-20 (NIV)

Deuteronomy ends with Moses' death. The people of Israel have reached the border of the Promised Land. God let Moses see the land from a distance, but He did not let him enter because of his sin. Moses' final words to the people end the Pentateuch. The five books of the Pentateuch are believed to have been written by Moses.

Joshua would now lead the people of Israel.

In geographical terms, these five books take the ancestors and people of Israel throughout the Fertile Crescent, from Ur to Egypt and back to Israel. During this time God's people were primarily nomadic, except during their 400 years of slavery in Egypt. In these five books, God is faithful to His promises, seeks a relationship with His people, and invites His people to follow and trust Him.



Map 2.1 The Fertile Crescent

Summary Of The Pentateuch						
Book	Key Idea	The Nation	The People	God's Character	God's Role	God's Command
Genesis	Beginnings	Chosen	Prepared	Powerful	Creator	"Let There Be!"
Exodus	Redemption	Delivered	Redeemed	Merciful	Deliverer	"Let My People Go!"
Leviticus	Worship	Set Apart	Taught	Holy	Sanctifier	"Be Holy!"
Numbers	Wandering	Directed	Tested	Just	Sustainer	"Go In!"
Deuteronomy	Renewed	Made Ready	Retought	Loving	Rewarder	"Obey!"

Adapted from The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 3.

Theological Issues in Deuteronomy

1. Blessings and Curses

God teaches His people about blessings and curses. Blessings are the good things God promises when His people obey Him. They show God's love, care, and faithfulness. When the Israelites followed God's ways, they enjoyed peace, food, safety, and strong families.

Curses are the bad results of turning away from God. They are warnings that disobedience brings trouble, sadness, or loss. The curses remind the people that walking away from God leads to brokenness and pain.

Together, blessings and curses show how serious the covenant is. God invites His people to choose life, joy, and His presence. Obedience leads to blessings, while disobedience brings separation. This teaches that God wants His people to stay close to Him and trust Him in every part of life.

2. Memory and Hope

God tells His people to remember what He has done. They are to think back on how God rescued them from Egypt, gave them food in the desert, and made them His chosen people. Memory is important because it helps them stay thankful and faithful. Remembering shows that God has always been with them.

Deuteronomy also teaches about hope. The people were about to enter the Promised Land. God gave them hope for a new home, blessings, and a good future if they trusted Him. Even when things were hard, they could look forward with hope because God's promises were sure.

Together, memory and hope show that God's past faithfulness is the reason His people can trust Him for the future. Remembering gives them strength, and hope gives them courage to move forward with God.

3. Social Justice

God cares not only about worship but also about how people treat each other. Social justice means living in a fair and loving way with others. God tells His people to care for the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. These were the people who had the least help or power.

The laws in Deuteronomy show that God's love is for everyone, not just the strong or the rich. He wants His people to share, to forgive debts, and to make sure everyone has food and land. By doing this, Israel shows the world what God's heart is like—kind, fair, and generous.

The theological meaning is clear: when God's people act with justice, they reflect His character. Justice is part of worship, because loving God also means loving our neighbor.

Reflection Questions

1. Review the acts of God mentioned in these five books. Select two of them and tell what they teach you about His character?
2. God called Abraham to leave his home and follow Him. How has God called you to follow Him? What does following God look like in your life?
3. The laws of Leviticus set the Israelites apart from the other peoples of the land. Christ fulfilled the Levitical law, so Christians are no longer bound to it. How does the law of Christ (law of love - Matt 22:37-39) set you and your church apart from people around you?
4. The laws of Leviticus emphasize the holiness expected of the people of God. What does it mean for Christians to be holy?

Lesson 3

Historical Books: Acquisition and Loss of the Promised Land

Purpose Of The Lesson

To give an overview of the characters, historic events and their geographical locations, literary style, and theological themes of the historical books.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will have knowledge of the key characters, storylines, geographical context, and theological themes of each of the historical books.
 - Will understand the cyclical pattern created by the people's disobedience and God's mercy.
 - Will consider Israel's transition from a theocracy to a monarchy, the division of Israel into two kingdoms, and the exile.
- Will identify, honestly and seriously, with the content of the lessons and apply it to his or her ministry context and personal life.

Contents

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1-2 Kings; 1-2 Chronicles
Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
Reflection Questions

These books tell the history of Israel as a nation. They begin with the people entering and conquering the Promised Land. The new nation had a hard time remembering they were God's people while living among nations that did not follow Him. At first, God was their only ruler, but later they wanted a human king like the other nations around them.

Over time, the people stopped being loyal to God and broke His Law. Just as Moses had warned in Deuteronomy, the people were taken away as captives to Babylon. Even then, God kept His promise. In the end, a small group of people, called a remnant, returned to their land to rebuild their cities and live there again.

Joshua	Judges	Ruth	1-2 Samuel	1 -2 Kings	1-2 Chro- nicles	Ezra	Nehemiah	Esther
Conquest	Cycle of Chaos	God's Family	Samuel Saul Promise to David	The Divided Kingdom Period of the Prophets		The Res- toration of the Temple	The Construc- tion of the City Wall	History of Courage and Faith
Conquest			Monarchy			Exile/Resettlement		
Constant Struggle to be Faithful to God						New Commitment to Maintain Eth- nic and Ritual Purity		

Joshua

Overview Of The Book Of Joshua						
Focus	Conquest Of Canaan		Land Division In Canaan			
Divisions	Preparation Of Is- rael For Conquest	Conquest Of Canaan By Israel	Settlement East Of The Jordan	Settlement West Of The Jordan	Settlement Of Religious Community	Conditions For Conti- nued Settle- ment
	1:1 - 5:15	6:1 - 13:7	13:8 - 13:33	14:1 - 19:51	20:1 - 21:45	22:1-24:33
Topics	Entering Canaan	Conquering Canaan	Dividing Canaan			
	Preparation	Subjection	Possession			
Place	Jordan River	Canaan	2 ½ Tribes - East Jordan 9 ½ Tribes - West Jordan			
Time	C. 1 Month	C. 7 Years	C. 18 Years			

Adapted From The Wilkison & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 51.

After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader of the Israelites. God promised Joshua that He would always be with him. Joshua led Israel's army, but God gave him the orders and showed him how to win the battles.

The book of Joshua has two main parts:

- How God helped His people take the land of Canaan (chapters 1–12).
- How the land was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel (chapters 13–22).
- At the end (chapters 23–24), Joshua reminded the people to keep their promise to follow God.

To enter the Promised Land, the Israelites had to cross the Jordan River. Just like at the Red Sea, God made the water stop so they could walk on dry ground. The priests went first, carrying the Ark of the Covenant (Joshua 3:15).

After this, the battles began. God told Joshua exactly what to do. At the city of Jericho, God said the whole city must be destroyed, except for Rahab and her family. Rahab's life was saved because she trusted God and helped the Israelite spies. She tied a red rope in her window so the soldiers would know not to harm her family.



Everything in Jericho was burned and destroyed, except silver, gold, bronze, and iron, which were given to God's treasury.

It may sound hard that so many people died, but Jericho and the other nations were judged by God for their sins.

As long as the Israelites trusted and obeyed God, they won their battles. By God's power, they defeated many kings and armies. Later, the land was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel.

Before Joshua died, he reminded the people to stay faithful to God. He told them to throw away idols and warned them not to worship the false gods of their neighbors.

He said that they had a choice to make:

“...Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15 (NIV)

“‘Now then,’ said Joshua, ‘throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.’” Joshua 24:23 (NIV)

The people promised Joshua that they would stay faithful and worship only God (Joshua 24:24). But as time passed, Israel started to accept the ways and religions of the people around them. They did not finish taking the whole land as God had told them, and they did not keep their promise to serve Him alone.

Theological Issues in the Book of Joshua

God is Faithful

The book of Joshua shows that God is always faithful. God promised Joshua that He would be with him, just like He was with Moses (Joshua 1:5; 23:1–24:33). God was also faithful to the people of Israel. He gave them the land He had promised long ago to their ancestor Abraham. Even though the people did not always

keep their promises, God kept His. They didn't earn it, but by His grace, God gave them the promised land (Joshua 24:13).

It was God—not Israel's own strength or army—who gave them the land (Joshua 2:9–11). All the battle plans came from God (Joshua 6:1, 16, 20), and God Himself fought as a warrior for Israel (Joshua 10:14).

At the end of the book, Joshua reminds the people that it was God—not their own power—who gave them the promised land (Joshua 23:15; 24:12–13).

God Includes Outsiders

God's people began to include outsiders—people who were not born Israelites. For example, Rahab (Joshua 2:9–11) and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:9–11) chose to follow God and trust Him. God is open and welcoming of others who choose to join with him.

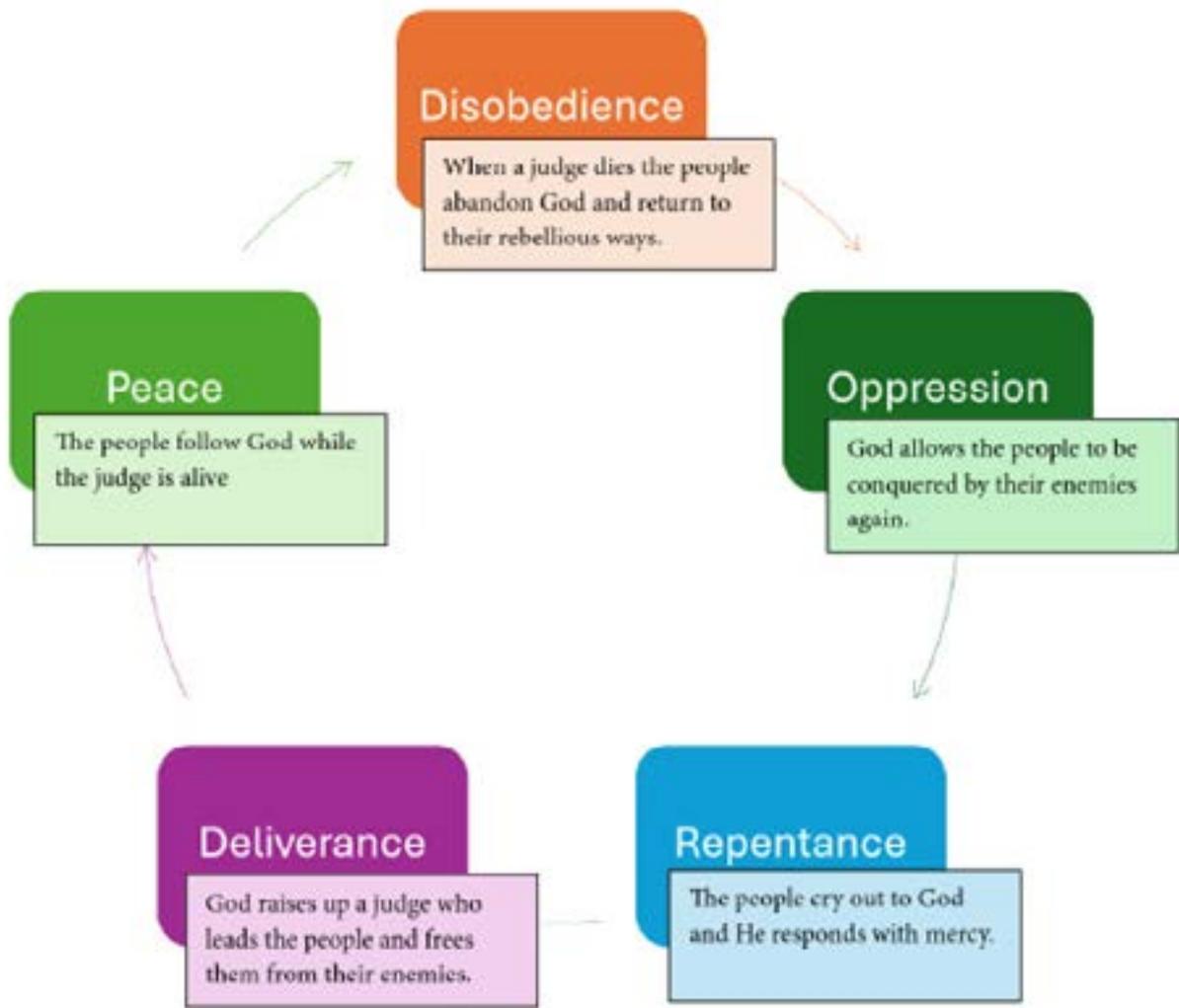
Judges

Overview Of The Book Of Judges											
Focus	Deterioration		Deliverance						Depravity		
Divisions	Failure To Complete The Conquest	Judgement For The Failure	Southern Campaign	Northern Campaign I	Central Campaign	Eastern Campaign	Northern Campaign II	Western Campaign	Sin Of Idolatry	Sin Of Immorality	Sin Of Civil War
	1:1 - 1:36	2:1 - 3:4	3:5 - 3:31	4:1 - 5:31	6:1 - 10:5	10:6 - 12:7	12:8 - 12:15	13:1 - 16:31	17:1 - 18:31	19:1 - 19:30	20:1 - 21:25
Topics	Cause Of The Cycles					Curse Of The Cycles			Conditions In The Cycles		
	Living With The Canaanites					War With The Canaanites			Living Like The Canaanites		
Place	Canaan										
Time	C. 350 Years										

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 58.

One of the most amazing characteristics of the Bible is its honesty. The book of Judges documents the tragic history of the Israelite people after the death of Joshua. They did not remain faithful to worship and obey God alone, but participated in the worship of their neighbors' gods. This did not please God. The people followed a repeated pattern, or cycle of disobedience, oppression by pagan nations, crying out to God in repentance, deliverance through the provision of a judge, a period of peace, and then disobedience again.

The Cycle of Disobedience



God used judges to rescue Israel, even though they had many weaknesses. The judges were not shown as perfect people to copy. In fact, in the book of Judges, each judge seems to have less faith and worse behavior than the ones before. Some people may think of them as heroes, but each judge should be compared to God's character and His promises from Mount Sinai.

Judges were people from different backgrounds. Even though they were not perfect, or even morally good, they were chosen and prepared by God as leaders of the people. God's Spirit gave them power for God's mission.

- Ehud used a double-edged sword with great skill.
- Deborah was a prophetess who listened to God.
- Gideon was a man of weak faith, but he trusted in God's direction during battle.
- Jephthah made a foolish promise that cost his daughter her life.
- Samson was full of the Spirit of God, but was undisciplined and careless with his great gift of strength.

The book of Judges ends with the statement: “in those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit” (17:6, 21:25).

Theological Issues In The Book Of Judges

Israel’s Unfaithfulness

1. The whole book of Judges shows that Israel failed to teach the next generations about God. The judges also did not teach the people to follow God’s covenant made at Sinai (Exodus 19–20; Deuteronomy 6; Joshua 24). The book shows how far people wander when they are not faithful to God (Deuteronomy 10:12).
2. During this time in Israel, everyone did what they thought was right for themselves. They acted like other nations that did not have a covenant with God and did not follow His commands (Deuteronomy 12:8; 17:16; 19:1; 21:25).

God’s Judgment and Mercy

1. God allows other nations to defeat Israel to punish Israel for disobeying. God also shows His justice and mercy by raising up a deliverer to save His people when they return to him and cry out to Him for help (Judges 3:15; 4:23).
2. The book of Judges shows God’s special grace toward His people. God is patient and full of mercy. Because He loves His people and is faithful to His promises to their ancestors, He does not destroy Israel. Even though the people had become very wicked—sometimes as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah—God still showed them mercy (see Judges 19:23–25 and compare with Genesis 19:7–8).

Ruth

Overview Of The Book Of Ruth				
Focus	Ruth’s Love Demonstrated		Ruth’s Love Rewarded	
Divisions	Ruth’s Decision To Remain With Naomi	Ruth’s Devotion To Care For Naomi	Ruth’s Request For Redemption By Boaz	Ruth’s Reward Of Redemption By Boaz
	1:1 - 1:18	1:19 - 2:23	3:1 - 3:18	4:1 - 4:22
Topics	Death Of Family	Ruth Cares For Naomi	Boaz Cares For Ruth	Birth Of Family
Place	Moab	Fields Of Bethlehem	Threshing Floor In Bethlehem	Bethlehem
Time	C. 30 Years			

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 65.



The story of Ruth takes place during the time of the Judges and shows that God is always at work. During a famine, an Israelite family moved to the neighboring country of Moab. After some time, the father and his two sons died, leaving Naomi and her two Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, widowed.

When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem in Israel, Ruth chose to go with her and promised to follow the God of Israel. Back in Bethlehem, Ruth worked in the field of a kind and honest landowner named Boaz. Boaz took care of Ruth and Naomi and later became their kinsman redeemer, which means he helped them as a relative in need.

Both Boaz and Ruth stand out for their generosity, loyalty, and good character, especially during the hard times of the Judges. At the end of the book, we learn that Boaz and Ruth became the great-grandparents of King David, and part of the family line that leads to Jesus. The Book of Ruth shows how a foreigner was included into God's covenant with Israel by faith. It also connects the time of the Judges with the time of the Kings.

Theological Issues In The Book Of Ruth

God Provides

1. In the Book of Ruth there is tragic loss. Husbands die. Home is abandoned. Famine and starvation are real. In spite of these tragic losses, God provides ways, places, and people to protect and care for his people. God provides for Naomi with Ruth as a faithful companion. God provides food after the harvesters. God provides a safe place and family to Ruth and Naomi through Boaz.

God Includes Outsiders

1. Naomi is an outsider while living in Moab. Ruth is a Moabite who chooses to live with Naomi when she returns to Judah. Even though Ruth is not related by blood, she is given favor by Boaz. Eventually Boaz marries Ruth and she becomes the great-grandmother to King David.

God Uses A "Kinsman-Redeemer"

1. God uses his law about families to provide for and protect Ruth and Naomi. The law requires that a family member take care of their relatives. The relative needed to be a close relative who chose to help and had the means to provide. Boaz met these criteria. This law demonstrates the character of God to honor close relationships without any abuse or coercion.



Overview Of The Book Of 1st Samuel					
Focus	Samuel		Saul		
Divisions	Eli - Samuel	Judgeship Of Samuel	Samuel - Saul	Reign Of Saul	Saul - David
	1:1 - 3:21	4:1 - 7:17	8:1 - 12:25	13:1 - 15:9	15:10 - 31:13
Topics	Decline Of Judges		Rise Of Kings		
	Eli	Samuel	Saul		David
Place	Canaan				
Time	C. 94 Years				

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 70.

Samuel was the last judge of Israel. His mother, Hannah, cried out to the Lord to bless her with a son. She promised to dedicate him to the Lord and after he was weaned brought him to the tabernacle. As a child, Samuel lived in the tabernacle with the high priest Eli. Samuel knew and followed God. He became a judge, but also served as the first priest and prophet during the time of a king.

In his old age, Samuel had appointed his two sons as judges. Because these sons were dishonest, the people of Israel gathered and asked Samuel for a king like their neighboring nations. Samuel was very upset because he understood what this request implied. He explained how their lives would change when they had a human king, but they refused to listen to him. God then told Samuel whom he should anoint.

The first king of Israel was Saul. He was tall and handsome, but also insecure and impatient. In time, he stopped caring about the instructions Samuel gave him from God. He blamed others for his own mistakes and lied to hide his shortcomings. Finally, Samuel confronted him: “For rebellion is like the sin of division, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king” (1 Sam 15:23 NIV).



God then asked Samuel to anoint David, the youngest son of Jesse, as king. David was a shepherd and a songwriter. He is often described as a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). As a young man, David demonstrated his faith in God when he faced Goliath, the great Philistine giant. David defeated him with a single stone from his sling.

Saul realized that God’s anointing was now upon David and so Saul set out to murder him. David had to flee his own country and stay hidden. He waited patiently for God to remove Saul. David never took

advantage of the opportunities presented to him to kill Saul. Many of David’s psalms were written during the hard years he had to live as a fugitive.

Theological Issues In 1 Samuel

God is Active

1. God chooses the people he wants. God chose Samuel to be a priest. God chose Saul to be king. God chose David to succeed Saul. God is working to build and shape people to lead. God knows the limits of human leadership. Samuel warned the people that a king could take advantage of them. God chooses a new leader when Saul dishonors God.

Disobedience is Costly

1. Saul's failure to follow God's commands costs him everything. When Saul chose to do things his own way he disobeyed God. God rejected him as king. God took away His Spirit and blessing. Saul still acted as king until he died (1 Samuel 31), but God told Samuel to anoint David as the new king. From then on, Saul was jealous and afraid of David for the rest of his life.

God Sees What People Don't

1. When God chose David to be king, he chose someone who had faith. No one expected David to be king. They saw a younger brother who watched sheep while his brothers fought battles. God knew that David had faith to follow. People didn't see it. David is called a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). God made a special covenant with David, that he would always have a descendent on the throne of Israel. Unlike King Saul, David worshiped only God. Many of the psalms in the Bible were written by David or written under his direction.

2 Samuel

Overview Of The Book Of 2nd Samuel						
Focus	David's Triumphs			David's Transgressions	David's Troubles	
Divisions	Political Triumphs	Spiritual Triumphs	Military Triumphs	Sins Of Adultery And Murder	Troubles In David's Home	Troubles In David's Kingdom
	1:1 - 5:25	6:1 - 7:29	8:1 - 10:19	11:1 - 11:27	12:1 - 13:36	13:37 - 24:25
Topics	Success			Sin	Failure	
	Obedience			Disobedience	Judgement	
Place	David In Hebron	David In Jerusalem				
Time	7 ½ Years	33 Years				

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 77.

The book of 2 Samuel begins as David learns of Saul's death. After a time of mourning, David began to advance to the throne. There was a seven-year period of civil war in which one of Saul's sons claimed the throne, but eventually David won the loyalty of the people. He marched to Jerusalem to defeat the Jebusites and named the city as the capital of his kingdom. "And [David] became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him" (2 Sam. 5:10 NIV).



David sought to establish Jerusalem as a political and religious center. He had the ark of the covenant moved to Jerusalem. He wished to build a permanent temple for the worship of God. This temple would replace the tabernacle as well as local shrines which had been established over the years because of Israel's unfaithfulness. However, God told David that, because he had shed too much blood, he would not be the one to carry out these plans. God promised David that one of his sons would build the temple. In faith, David began to gather building materials for the future worship center (1 Chron. 22:2-5).

David was an excellent king, but even so, he fell into sin. David coveted and committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. Further, he had Uriah killed to cover up his sin. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David and the king was filled with remorse. After David's sin, the kingdom never again experienced the same level of peace and blessing. However, God showed David mercy. A son, named Solomon, was born to David and Bathsheba. He received God's anointing as David's successor.

God had made a covenant with David that included his blessing and protection. In this Davidic Covenant, God promised that one of David's descendants would build the temple and His Kingdom would be secure forever: «Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever» (2 Sam. 7:16 NIV). God continued to confirm to the people that He would send them the promised Redeemer.

The later history books tell us that Solomon became king after his father, David. Solomon built a beautiful temple for God and a great palace for himself. He became known as the wisest man in the world and had a kingdom filled with riches.

But later in life, Solomon's wisdom and faithfulness to God began to fade. He had many wives, and some of them worshiped other gods. Because of this, idol worship came back into the land. Sadly, by the end of his life, Solomon's heart had turned away from God.

Even so, God kept the promises He made to David. The Bible tells us that Jesus, the Son of David, now rules forever at the right hand of God as King of an eternal kingdom (Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 19:28; Acts 2:30-31).

Theological Issues In 2 Samuel

The Consequences of Sin

1. David sinned against God by committing adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11-12). Because of this, his family suffered with hurt and mistrust. Bathsheba lost her husband and Uriah lost his life. David's family were thrown into turmoil.

God forgives sin.

1. King David acknowledged his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah and repented. While there were consequences for his sin, God forgave David. Though consequences followed, God showed mercy, restored David's heart, renewed his calling, and revealed grace that overcomes failure, pointing to deeper redemption in Christ.

God keeps His promises.

1. "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established

forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). This promise came true in the New Testament. Jesus the Messiah was born into the family of David, from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1).

God is generous.

1. David’s son, Solomon, became the third king of Israel. Solomon asked God for wisdom, and this pleased the Lord. He became famous for being very wise and wrote many of the sayings in the book of Proverbs. Solomon ruled during a time of peace and wealth, but the people struggled because of the heavy taxes he demanded.

1-2 Kings And 1-2 Chronicles

The books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles tell the history of Israel under its human kings. The prophet Samuel’s warnings came true as the people faced money troubles and problems with their leaders. After King Solomon died around 922 B.C., the kingdom split in two. The northern kingdom, called Israel, was made up of ten tribes and followed a man named Jeroboam. The southern kingdom, called Judah, included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They stayed loyal to the family of David by following Solomon’s son, Rehoboam.

Most of the kings in both Israel and Judah “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” The people and their leaders often worshiped idols instead of God. Because of their unfaithfulness, God allowed them to be judged and ruled over by other nations. During this time, God sent prophets, both men and women. Filled with God’s Spirit, they spoke His words and called the people to turn back to Him.

Northern Kingdom

The northern kingdom of Israel was made up of the ten northern tribes. Although it did not have a capital city, notable high places for worship included Beth-el and Dan. Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom. He was disobedient to the Law of the Lord. This attitude characterized the northern kingdom until it was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The ten northern tribes were taken captive and practically disappeared. Some of the prophets who tried to warn the people of Israel to repent were Elijah and Elisha.

Southern Kingdom

The southern kingdom of Judah was made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Its capital remained the city of Jerusalem. Rehoboam was the first king of Judah. Many of the kings of the south were unfaithful to God. There were, however, several periods in which men who feared the Lord occupied the throne. Some of these good kings were Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The prophets who spoke to the southern kingdom were Isaiah and Jeremiah. The southern kingdom was conquered by Babylon which finally deported many of the people. Finally Babylon destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in 587 B.C. However, God had promised that a remnant could return to Israel. God remained faithful to His covenant with David.

Theological Issues In 1 Kings

1. **Idolatry**
2. **Prophetic Guidance**

Theological Issues In 2 Kings

Unfaithfulness

3. For many generations the kings of Israel and Judah were unfaithful to God. Idolatry and injustice spread throughout the land. God demonstrates his love and faithfulness by sending prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jeremiah to call the people back to His Law and to Himself. But the people

rejected God's messengers and fell even deeper into sin.

God working

1. Even in war, defeat, and exile, God is at work to bring the hearts of the people back to repentance. God doesn't give up on the people, but keeps working to get their attention. God uses suffering to draw the people back to himself.

Prophets

1. God uses people to spread his message. People like Elijah are used to warn and guide the people of Israel back to obedience. The prophets serve as messengers of God's heart for his people.

Theological Issues In Chronicles

1. **God's faithfulness and promises** – Chronicles show that God keeps His promises. He promised David that his family would always have kings, and God stayed faithful even when people made mistakes. This reminds us that we can always trust God.
2. **The importance of worship** – The books focus on the Temple, the priests, and the right way to worship God. Worship is how God's people show love, honor, and obedience to Him. When people worship God properly, it brings His blessing to their lives.
3. **God is in charge** – Even when kings make bad choices or the nation faces trouble, God is still in charge. He guides history so His plan for His people and the world is always carried out.
4. **Remembering the past** – Chronicles often reminds the people of their history—what God did for them and the mistakes of **past kings**. **Remembering God's faithfulness encourages people to follow Him today.**
5. **Leadership matters** – God chooses leaders like David and Solomon to guide His people. Good leaders help the people follow God, but even when leaders fail, God's plan continues.

Ezra, Nehemiah And Esther

The last three books in this part of the Bible were written during the time when God's people were held in Babylon. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell what happened when the people returned to Jerusalem and began living there again. Ezra and Nehemiah reminded the people to follow the Law of Moses. They warned them to stay faithful and pure so they would not face judgment and captivity again.

The book of Esther takes place in the city of Susa, the capital of Persia. It tells the story of the Jews who stayed in Persia even after many of their people had returned home.

Ezra:

The book of Ezra tells about the first group of Jewish captives who returned home. This happened when God changed the heart of Cyrus, the king of Persia. Cyrus not only let the people go back to Jerusalem, but he also helped them prepare to rebuild the temple, which had been destroyed.

The rebuilding was hard, and the people became discouraged. Almost one hundred years later, the temple was finished, but the city of Jerusalem was still in ruins. This showed that the people were not fully devoted to God.

King Artaxerxes then sent Ezra to Jerusalem to see what was happening. Even though this king did not worship God, he told Ezra to teach the people God's laws. Ezra was faithful to God, and God blessed his work. He became a strong spiritual leader and called the people to repent and live holy lives for God.

Nehemiah:

Nehemiah was a cupbearer for King Artaxerxes. Like Ezra, he was sent back to Jerusalem by this king, even though the king did not worship God. Nehemiah's job was to lead the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Because of his wise leadership, careful planning, and prayers, the people worked hard, day and night, to rebuild the walls and set up the city gates.

Nehemiah and Ezra were in Jerusalem at the same time. Nehemiah tells about a day when all the people gathered to listen as Ezra and the Levites read the Law of Moses. They explained the meaning so everyone could understand. The people felt deep sorrow because they had not been obeying God's Law. Nehemiah encouraged them and reminded them of God's love and mercy. He said, "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Esther:

The book of Esther tells about a young woman who showed great faith and courage when her people were in danger. Esther was a Jewish girl who was very beautiful. King Xerxes chose her to be his queen, but he did not know she was Jewish.

Esther's uncle, Mordecai, told her about the evil plan of Haman, the king's chief officer. Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews. Mordecai urged Esther to use her place as queen to help save her people. He asked her, "Who knows but that you have come to your position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Esther asked the Jews in the city of Susa to pray and fast for three days. Then she went bravely to the king, even though it was dangerous to go without an invitation. She told him she was Jewish and begged him to save her people. When the king learned of Haman's plan, he became very angry and had Haman killed on the very gallows Haman had built.

Because of Esther's courage, the Jewish people were saved. A special celebration called Purim was started to remember this victory

Reflection Questions

1. How does the conquering and dividing of Canaan fulfill God's promise to Abraham?
2. How is God's faithfulness different to human faithfulness? Give examples from the historical books.
3. Explain Israelite history from the time of the Judges into the time of exile. Talk about judges, united kingdom, divided kingdom, and destruction of Jerusalem and exile.
4. Describe the impact on the people of Israel when they disobeyed? How have you experienced the impact of disobedience to God in your life? Reflect on Jesus' words in Luke 13:1-9.
5. What can you do in your life to remain faithful to God?

Lesson 4

Poetic Books (Prayers, Songs, and Wisdom)

Purpose Of The Lesson

To give an overview of the literary genres, themes, and unique characteristics of each of the poetic books.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, the student:

- Will become familiar with several key literary devices used throughout the poetic books.
- Will be able to identify these literary devices in the text and apply their own understanding of these devices in their interpretation of the biblical text.
 - Will know some of the characteristics of wisdom literature.
- Will identify, honestly and seriously, with the content of the lessons and apply it to his or her ministry context and personal life.

Contents

Literary genres
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Reflection Questions

Job	Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	Song Of Solomon
Job Questions God For Allowing His Suffering	Prayers And Songs	Wise Sayings About Many Matters Of Daily Life	Solomon Analyzes The Meaning Of Life	A Love Poem
	Many Psalms Were Written By David.	Ecclesiastes, Song Of Solomon, And Many Proverbs Are Attributed To King Solomon, Famous For His Great Wisdom.		

Literary Genres & Devices

The literary genres or types of writing in this part of the Bible are poetry, prose, and wisdom books. Here, the writers share their thoughts and feelings with God through prayers and songs. They also think about big life questions that people have asked for thousands of years. These books can be used for learning, worship, prayer, and much more.

Poetry and prose are different in how they are written and what they do:

- **Prose:** Tells a story or gives information in a clear, simple way.
- **Poetry:** Uses creative language, like word pictures, to stir feelings and make a strong impact.

To really understand the Bible's poetry and prose, readers need to know about literary devices—special tools writers use to add meaning. Some of the most common ones are:

- **Similes:** A simile compares two things using words like “like” or “as.” *“But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God...”* (Psalm 52:8, NIV).
- **Metaphors:** A metaphor also compares two things, but without using “like” or “as.” *“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”* (Proverbs 16:24, NIV).
- **Personification:** This is when something that is not alive is described as if it were a person. For example, wisdom is described as a woman: *“Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.”* (Proverbs 9:1–2, NIV).
- **Symbolism:** A symbol is when one thing stands for something else. For example: *“Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?”* (Psalm 15:1, NIV). Here the “sacred tent” represents God’s presence and family. David is not talking about an actual tent.
- **Allegory:** An allegory is a story with two meanings. One is the everyday, or literal meaning, and the other is a deeper, spiritual meaning. *“I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me”* (Song of Songs 7:10). This can be read as words between two people in love. But it can also be understood as Jesus’ love for the church, his people.
- **Parallelism:** Parallelism is when phrases or sentences are placed side by side to show a connection. They can restate, expand, or contrast ideas.
- **Restating:** *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path”* (Psalm 119:105, NIV).
- **Contrasting:** *“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked... but whose delight is in the law of the LORD”* (Psalm 1:1–2, NIV).

- **Repetition:** Repetition is when words or ideas are said again, sometimes the same and sometimes a little different, to make them stronger. This is a kind of parallelism. In Psalm 150, the phrase “Praise the Lord” is repeated many times. The repetition adds power and excitement: *“Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens... Let everything that breathes praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.”* (Psalm 150:1, 6, NIV).

Job

Some scholars believe the book of Job is one of the oldest books in the Old Testament. It begins by introducing Job, a man who lived a good and faithful life. His life suddenly took a tragic turn. Satan was allowed to test Job, and he faced terrible suffering. Most of the book tells about Job’s long conversation with his three friends, who tried to understand why God would allow people to suffer.

Even though Job went through deep pain, he kept his faith in God. He continued to worship, even while asking hard questions about why God would let him suffer. Job believed he had done nothing wrong to deserve such pain. His friends, however, accused him of being proud and insisted that he must have sinned. They thought that suffering always meant punishment from God.



Job never cursed God, but he did cry out for answers. His suffering was so great that he wished he could die. His pain was physical, emotional, and spiritual: physical because he was sick, emotional because he had lost his family and work, and spiritual because he couldn’t understand why God allowed all this to happen.

At the end of the story, God spoke to Job: “Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me” (Job 38:3, 40:7 NIV). Through many questions, God showed Job His power and wisdom. Job realized he had spoken without understanding and said, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know” (Job 42:3 NIV). He admitted he had not fully trusted God. God also corrected Job’s three friends for being wrong about Him. In the end, God blessed Job again, giving him even more than he had before.

Theological Issues In Job

The Problem of Suffering - The book explores why good people suffer. It shows that suffering is not always a punishment for sin but can be part of God’s larger purpose that humans may not understand. God allows suffering, but uses the suffering to draw people closer, give better understanding, and build deeper faith. God does not cause suffering.

The Justice of God - Job’s story raises questions about whether God is fair. In the end, God shows that His wisdom and power are greater than human understanding, reminding us that He rules over all creation with perfect justice. God is not playing with people in painful ways. He is using the work of people and Satan to draw people closer to himself.

Faith and Perseverance - Job’s response to his suffering teaches that true faith remains even when life is painful and confusing. His trust in God, even without clear answers, is an example of faithful endurance. It can even be said that Job had greater faith after all he had experienced.



Psalms

The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 songs and prayers. Some psalms tell us who wrote them, like King David, but many do not. Some describe real events in history, such as moments from David's life or the time when God's people were taken to Babylon. The psalms show many different emotions of the human heart—joy, fear, anger, sadness, hope, and love.

The psalms are very honest. They express both good and bad feelings and often admit mistakes and failures. But through it all, the psalms remind us that God is good and present. He is always faithful, strong, and loving. Even when the world feels uncertain, God is full of power, mercy, holiness, justice, and goodness. He is a safe place for everyone who trusts in Him.

These songs and prayers were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, yet many are quoted in the New Testament. Jesus Himself quoted from the Psalms. After Pentecost, Jesus' followers realized that some psalms contained prophecies about Him. For example:

- Psalm 2 speaks of Jesus as the Son of God.
- Psalm 22 points to the cross.
- Psalm 41 refers to Judas's betrayal.
- Psalm 110 declares Jesus as Lord.

Both Jews and Christians have used the Psalms in worship—in groups and alone in prayer.

The Psalms also show the beauty of Hebrew poetry. They don't all follow the same pattern or length. For instance, Psalm 117 has only two verses, making it the shortest, while Psalm 119 has 176 verses, making it the longest. Even though they are different, the Psalms share many common themes about God's love, power, and faithfulness.

Common Expressions Of Prayer In Psalms

Petition: the psalmist makes a request to God.

In you, Lord I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me (Ps. 31:1-2 NIV).

Lament: the psalmist has serious problems and cries out to God.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest (Ps. 22:1-2 NIV).

Thanksgiving: the psalmist acknowledges God's gifts and goodness.

Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them (Ps. 111:1-2 NIV).

Praise: the psalmist expresses adoration for God.

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live (Ps. 146:1-2 NIV).

Wisdom: the psalmist describes the benefits of obeying God's law.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night (Ps. 1:1-2 NIV).

Confession/testimony: the psalmist confesses to sin or tells a story of God's help.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight... (Ps. 51:4 NIV).

The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters (Ps. 23:1-2 NIV).

Divisions Of The Book Of Psalms

The book of Psalms can be divided into five sections:

1. Psalm 1-41: The theme is God's presence and his blessing for those who obey and honor him.
2. Psalm 42-72: The theme is longing for God and his presence in the temple.
3. Psalm 73-89: The theme is worshipping God. It gives songs for public worship and struggles with the exile and desire to be close to God.
4. Psalm 90-106: The theme is God's role as king. Even when things are difficult, God is working.
5. Psalm 107-150: The theme is celebration. Many of these songs are about joy, praise, and faith in God.

Theological Issues In The Book Of Psalms

1. The Character of God – The Psalms teach that God is holy, powerful, loving, and just. He is the Creator, King, and Shepherd who cares for His people and deserves all worship. He listens to those who call to him. He brings relief to suffering. He delights in the praises of his people.
2. Human Response to God – The Psalms show how people should relate to God through worship, prayer, confession, and trust. They remind us to praise God in good times and cry out to Him in times of trouble. The Psalms are the words of people speaking with God and sharing the things in their heart.
3. God's Plan of Salvation – Many psalms point forward to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. They reveal God's promise to save His people and show His faithfulness to keep His covenant forever.

Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is made up mostly of short, wise sayings that are easy to remember. Each one teaches a truth about how to live wisely and make good choices. These sayings have several purposes, which are listed in Proverbs 1:

- To gain wisdom and instruction
- To understand words of insight
- To learn how to live wisely, fairly, and with good judgment
- To help the simple become wise and to teach young people knowledge
- To help the wise grow even wiser and receive good advice
- To understand proverbs, parables, and the sayings of wise people

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” — Proverbs 1:7

In the first nine chapters, a father encourages his children to listen and learn. He explains how following wisdom leads to blessings and how foolishness brings harm. Wisdom guides people toward what is right and protects them from evil. One of the best-known verses from this section says:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” — Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV)

Throughout the book, the fear of the Lord—meaning deep respect and trust in God—is the foundation of all true wisdom.

From chapters 10 to 29, most of the proverbs were written by King Solomon. They often appear as short, stand-alone sayings, each worth thinking about on its own. Sometimes several proverbs about the same topic are grouped together, but most are independent thoughts filled with practical life lessons.

The book ends in chapter 31 with a poem about the virtuous woman. She is admired for her hard work, kindness, and wisdom, but most of all for her love and respect for God:

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.” — Proverbs 31:30 (NIV)

Theological Issues In Proverbs

1. **The fear of the Lord** - The fear of the Lord is not about being afraid of God. It is about respecting God with reverence and obedience. It is knowing that God is wiser and more loving than any human.
2. **Principles, not promises** - Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings that describe what is generally true in life. They are not guarantees or promises of specific outcomes.
3. **Wisdom in every area of life** - God’s wisdom can be applied in every area of life in practical matters like work, finances, family and children, friendships, and community.

Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes is another type of wisdom book in the Bible. Like Proverbs, it includes short and meaningful sayings that teach important truths. While Proverbs focuses on the benefits of wise living, Ecclesiastes looks at the uncertainties of life and how fragile people are.

The author begins the book with a big question about the purpose of life—what does all our work and effort really mean? He spends the following chapters searching for the answer, thinking deeply about what truly matters and what gives life lasting value.

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

*What do people gain from all their labors
at which they toil under the sun?*

Eccl. 1:2-3 NIV

Throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, the author uses both poetry and prose to share his thoughts. One example of poetry is found in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, where he says there is a time for everything under heaven.

The overall tone of the book can feel sad or hopeless at times. The word “meaningless” appears more than 33 times in the New International Version (NIV). The author often reminds readers that everyone dies, no matter how rich, smart, hardworking, or happy they are. Life on earth can seem unfair, and no one knows when their life will end.

But even with this dark view of life, the author’s faith in God gives hope. He teaches that God sees all people’s work and efforts. Doing our daily jobs and caring for others can be a way of worshiping God. The house of God, or the church, is a special place where people can listen to God and find peace in the middle of life’s struggles (Ecclesiastes 5:1–7).

In the end, Ecclesiastes reminds readers that even though humans cannot control their future, God is always at work. He is powerful and active..

The author concludes:

*Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed into judgement,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.
Eccl. 12:13-14 NIV*

Theological Issues In Ecclesiastes

1. **Futility of life** - Humans live in a world that is damaged by sin. There is suffering, injustice, and death. Pursuing earthly pleasures is not satisfying and does not give lasting fulfillment and meaning.
2. **God's justice** - God operates with power even when he seems to be distant or beyond human understanding. God promises to bring justice which will correct the wrongs of sin. God is fair and active even when people cannot see Him.
3. **Enjoy life as a gift from God** - God gave humans good things. Food, drink, work, and relationships are gifts from God. Humans can be reverent and respectful of God while enjoying the good things he gives.

Song Of Solomon

The Book of Song of Solomon, also called Song of Songs, is a beautiful love poem. It is written like a conversation between two lovers, and sometimes their friends speak like a chorus. The book uses rich imagery and symbolism to describe their deep love, admiration, and physical attraction for each other.

There are two main ways people interpret this book:

1. Allegory – Christ and the Church

Some scholars believe the Song of Solomon is a picture of Christ's love for the Church. In the New Testament, Paul uses a marriage image to describe Jesus (the bridegroom) and the Church (the bride) (Ephesians 5:25–30). A fitting verse is Song of Solomon 2:4:

“Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.” This can be seen as a hint toward the final heavenly banquet we will share with Jesus (Revelation 19:7–8).

2. Marriage and Romantic Love

Other scholars see the book as a celebration of love and marriage. It shows that romantic and physical love are gifts from God. While the world often twists the meaning of love, Song of Solomon gives a pure and joyful picture of love within the covenant of marriage.

Theological Issues In The Song Of Solomon

1. **Divine Intimacy: God's Deep Love** - Even though the book is about love between a man and a woman, it also shows how God loves His people deeply. Just like two people are close in marriage, God wants a close and loving relationship with us. This helps us understand God's covenant love—a promise to always love and be faithful.
2. **The Ideal of Marriage** - The book shows a picture of true love in marriage—a man and woman

who are devoted only to each other. This kind of love is strong, loyal, and lasting. It is very different from love that is shallow or temporary. Holy marriage is shown as something beautiful, filled with respect and joy.

3. **God's Relentless Love** - Just like a lover pursues the one they love, God continues to pursue us. He desires a relationship with us, even when people sin or turn away. God's love never gives up—He always wants to bring us back to Him.

Reflection Questions

1. Where you live, what are some common proverbs or sayings? Do your proverbs use the literary devices of parallelism, allegory, metaphor, simile and personification? Give an example, from your own African sayings of each literary device.
2. How do we read proverbs differently than we read narrative or law?
3. What is the difference between wisdom and intelligence? According to the book of Proverbs, what is the principle of wisdom? How can you use Proverbs in your teaching ministry? Does the book talk about some of the needs of your community? Which ones?
4. What is the concept of marital fidelity in your community? Could spouses benefit from the example of the couple in Song of Songs? Would they feel comfortable studying that book or is that kind of expression not openly discussed where you live?
5. How does Job's story help us understand the role of suffering in the life of a believer? Jesus suffered. (Matthew 26; Mark 14) How does the experience of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane relate to Job? What do these stories teach you?

Personal evaluation

Review the description of different types of psalms.

Choose a type of psalm and write one of your own. Read it to your classmates. Try to include a simile or metaphor.

Are there symbols or images in your life that you can use to express your relationship with God or your understanding of who He is?

Lesson 5

The Major Prophets

Purpose Of The Lesson

To give an overview of the authors, central themes, warnings and promises of each of the major prophets.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, the student:

- Will learn about the major prophets, their context, and their lives.
- Will have an understanding of the call and prophetic ministry in the Old Testament.
- Will consider more deeply God's promises to send a redeemer for His people.
- Will identify, honestly and seriously, with the content of the lessons and apply it to his or her ministry context and personal life.

Contents

Introduction to Prophetic Writings

Isaiah

Jeremiah and Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Reflection Questions

Introduction To Prophetic Writings

Sixteen of the last seventeen books of the Old Testament are named after the prophets who spoke God's message. The only exception is Lamentations, which was also written by the prophet Jeremiah.

The prophets are divided into two groups:

1. **Major Prophets** – These books are longer.
2. **Minor Prophets** – These books are shorter.

The difference is length, not importance. The longer books filled whole scrolls, while the twelve shorter books could all fit on one scroll.

The Role Of The Prophets

All the prophets were chosen by God to deliver His message to the people. They lived during the time of the divided kingdom, the fall of Israel and Judah, the Exile, and the years after the Exile. Most of their messages were for God's people, but sometimes they spoke to other nations too.

Main Parts Of A Prophetic Message

Prophets usually shared three main ideas:

1. **Accusation** – The people had broken their covenant with God.
2. **Warning** – Judgment was coming if they did not repent.
3. **Hope** – God promised restoration if they returned to Him.

Prophecies About The Future

Some prophecies were about things that would happen soon, like Jeremiah's warning about the fall of Jerusalem. Others spoke of events many years later, like the return from captivity after 70 years. Some prophecies even pointed to centuries later, including the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. A few spoke of events still in the future, like the return of Christ and eternal life.

Life Of A Prophet

Being a prophet was not a job someone chose—it was a calling from God. False prophets, who lied about hearing from God, were punished. True prophets often suffered because people did not want to hear their hard messages. Yet they felt compelled to speak God's word (Jer. 20:9). Sometimes, God even told them to act out messages with their lives to show His truth.

Challenges In Understanding The Prophets

The prophets often used symbolic images and poetry, which can be hard to understand today. Many times, they quoted God directly, so readers must pay attention to who is speaking—God, the prophet, or someone else. Some books also include historical events, which makes it important to ask questions like:

- Has this prophecy already happened?
- Is it still in the future?
- When will it be fulfilled?

Prophetic messages are not always written in time order, so understanding them takes careful study.

Isaiah

Overview Of The Book Of Isaiah								
Focus	Prophecies Of Condemnation				Historical Information	Prophecies Of Comfort		
Divisions	Prophecies Against Judah	Prophecies Against The Nation			Hezekiah's Salvation, Sickness, And Sin	Israel's Deliverance	Israel's Deliverer	Israel's Glorious Future
		Prophecies Of The Day Of The Lord						
		Prophecies Of Judgement And Blessing						
	1:1 - 12:6	13:1 - 23:18	24:1 - 27:13	28:1 - 35:10	36:1 - 39:8	40:1 - 48:22	49:1 - 57:21	58:1 - 66:24
Topics	Prophetic				Historic	Messianic		
	Judgement				Transition	Hope		
Place	Israel & Judah							
Time	740 - 680 B.c.							

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 189.

The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isaiah 1:1 (NIV)

The Book of Isaiah is a very special book in the Bible. It contains clear prophecies about the Messiah, which were later fulfilled by Jesus. Throughout Isaiah, we see God's faithful love and covenant with Israel. Isaiah writes with strong images and emotions, showing both God's tenderness and His justice. Isaiah is one of the most quoted books in the New Testament because of its powerful message.

From the start, God makes it clear that He will not accept disobedience from His people. They can offer sacrifices or follow religious rituals, but it means nothing if their hearts are not true. God sees their actions and knows what is really inside their hearts.

Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord. "Though your sins are scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Isaiah 1:16-20 (NIV)

God spoke strongly to His people about their sins, but He also offered them forgiveness. He taught them how to live the right way and promised blessings if they obeyed. But if they refused His grace, destruction would follow.

Isaiah himself was not excused from God’s call to live a pure and holy life. In Isaiah 6:1–8, he shares his powerful experience:

One day, while in the temple, Isaiah saw a vision of God seated on His throne. The train of God’s robe filled the whole temple. Seraphim (heavenly beings) were flying around, singing:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.”

Isaiah felt afraid because he knew he was a sinner. He said he was “a man of unclean lips” living among sinful people. Then one of the seraphim took a burning coal from the altar and touched Isaiah’s lips. The angel told him that his guilt was removed and his sin was forgiven.

After that, Isaiah heard God ask:

“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?”

Isaiah answered with courage:

“Here am I. Send me!”

Isaiah had to be purified and forgiven before he could answer God’s call.

Isaiah’s people were chosen to be a light to the nations, but first they needed to see God’s holiness and greatness. Like Isaiah, they had to go through a purifying fire to fulfill their mission.

In the end, God would finish His saving and cleansing work through the Messiah. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies about the Messiah are still read today during church celebrations of Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection.

Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah

Prophecy	Scripture in Isaiah	Description	Fulfillment in Jesus
Virgin Birth	Isaiah 7:14	A virgin will give birth to a son called Immanuel (God with us).	Matthew 1:23 – Jesus born of Mary, called Immanuel.
Divine Child and King	Isaiah 9:6–7	A child will be born with titles like Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.	Jesus as eternal King and Savior.
Suffering Servant	Isaiah 53	The Messiah will suffer, be pierced, carry our sins, and bring healing.	Jesus’ crucifixion and sacrifice on the cross.
Voice in the Wilderness	Isaiah 40:3	A messenger will prepare the way for the Lord.	John the Baptist preparing for Jesus.
Righteous Branch	Isaiah 11:1–9	The Messiah from Jesse’s line will bring justice and peace.	Jesus from David’s line, bringing God’s Kingdom.

Theological Issues In Isaiah

1. **God's Faithfulness** – God keeps His promises through the Messiah. Isaiah points to the coming of Jesus Christ to save the world. It is God's faithfulness to humanity that provides the promise of the Messiah and fulfilment of that promise.
2. **Salvation Through Suffering** – The Messiah would save through sacrifice. Jesus Christ is a physical demonstration of salvation through suffering. He becomes the sacrifice of the new covenant.
3. **Eternal Hope** – The Messiah brings peace, justice, and hope. The promise of Jesus Christ is the promise of a new covenant that lasts. It is the promise of the kingdom of God in the hearts of his followers.

Jeremiah and Lamentations

Overview Of The Book Of Jeremiah							
Focus	Call Of Jeremiah	Prophecies To Judah				Prophecies To Gen- tiles	Fall Of Jerusalem
Divisions	Prophetic Call	Condem- nation Of Judah	Conflicts Of Jeremiah	Future Res- toration Of Jerusalem	Present Fall Of Jerusa- lem	Condemnation Of Nine Nations	Historic Conclusion
	1:1 - 1:19	2:1 - 25:38	26:1 - 29:32	30:1 - 33:26	34:1 - 45:5	46:1 - 51:64	52:1 - 52:34
Topics	Before The Fall				The Fall	After The Fall	
	Call	Ministry				Retrospect	
Place	Judah				Surrounding Na- tions	Babylonia	
Time	C. 627 - 580 B.c.						

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 197.

Jeremiah is often called “the weeping prophet” because he cried with deep sadness for his people. God sent him to speak to the nation of Judah during its final years. At that time, the Babylonians were surrounding Jerusalem, preparing to destroy it.

Jeremiah warned the people that the Babylonians were being used by God to bring judgment. He told Judah to surrender, because God was tired of their disobedience and sin. The kings and the people refused to listen. They rejected Jeremiah’s message.

Jeremiah did not stop speaking God’s word even though they ignored him. Sometimes, God told Jeremiah to use dramatic actions to show what was coming. But instead of listening, the people tried to silence him:

They put him in prison

They destroyed the scroll with his prophecies

They even threatened to kill him

Jeremiah wept for his people, for the city of Jerusalem, and for himself. He expressed his pain and sorrow in the Book of Jeremiah, and even more personally in the Book of Lamentations.

While Jeremiah warned about the destruction of Jerusalem, he also shared a message of hope. He told the people they would go into 70 years of captivity, but one day, God would bring them back to their land.

This promise would be fulfilled 70 years later:

“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess,’ says the Lord.” Jeremiah 30:2-3 (NIV)

It was a promise that would also be fulfilled in Jesus:

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will know me, from the least to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NIV)

It is a promise that is fulfilled every day:

Because of the LORD’s great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)

Jeremiah was still a young man when God called him to be a prophet. God promised to give him the strength and courage he needed, even though the job would be very hard. God reminded Jeremiah that He would always be with him, and that he did not need to be afraid.

But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 1:7-8 (NIV)

Theological Issues In Jeremiah And Lamentations

1. **God’s Justice** - God is angry with the people of Judah. He allows the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people because of the broken promises of the people. The suffering in the book is allowed by God as he works to bring the hearts of the people back to himself.
2. **Human Disobedience** - Judah rejects God’s commands and chooses to worship false gods. Some worshiped these false gods while still going to the temple which was a clear violation. This disobedience brought tremendous suffering.
3. **God’s Love and Faithfulness** - God’s compassion endures even when people disobey him. There are consequences for sin, but there is always an offer of forgiveness and restoration. Jeremiah points to this future hope of restoration.

Ezekiel

Overview Of The Book Of Ezekiel						
Focus	Commission Of Ezekiel		Judgment On Judah	Judgment On Gentiles	Restoration Of Israel	
Divisions	Ezekiel Sees The Glory	Ezekiel Commissioned The Word	Signs, Messages, Visions, And Parables Of Judgment	Judgment On Surrounding Nations	Return Of Israel To The Lord	Restoration Of Israel In The Kingdom
	1:1 - 1:28	2:1 - 3:27	4:1 - 24:27	25:1 - 32:32	33:1 - 39:29	40:1 - 48:35
Topics	Before The Siege (592 - 587 B.c.)			During The Siege (586 B.c.)	After The Siege (585 - 570 B.c.)	
	Judah's Fall			Judah's Foes	Judah's Future	
Place	Babylon					
Time	C. 592 - 570 B.c.					

Adapted From The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 212.

Ezekiel became a prophet while the people of Judah were living in Babylonian captivity. Many Jews had been taken from their homes before Jerusalem fell, and through Ezekiel, they could still hear God's word.

The first 24 chapters of Ezekiel record God's messages before Jerusalem was destroyed. The people in Judah and Babylon refused to believe that the city could fall, but it did. God could no longer tolerate their idolatry and disobedience.

Chapters 33–48 come after the destruction. In these chapters, God speaks with compassion to His people. Ezekiel assured them that even though they had been unfaithful, God still wanted a relationship with them.

God told Ezekiel to use practical lessons and parables to explain His messages. Ezekiel had visions that were amazing and symbolic:

- Heavenly creatures with many eyes, wings, and wheels (1:15–21)
- God on His throne surrounded by a shining rainbow (1:28)
- Detailed plans for a new temple, where God's people could worship Him again (40:1–43:27)

Many of Ezekiel's images are hard to understand, and he does not always speak in order of time. He talked about the near future, the far future, and even eternity.

God showed that the human heart is where rebellion and sin begin. But He promised through Ezekiel that He would redeem His people by changing their hearts and helping them follow Him faithfully.

In the book of Ezekiel, God names the human heart as the source of human weakness and rebellion. God promised through Ezekiel that He would redeem His people through the transformation of their heart.

He promised:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)

One of the best-known passages in the book of Ezekiel is in chapter 37. God gave Ezekiel a vision of a valley full of dry bones, which represented how hopeless God's people seemed. God asked Ezekiel,

"Can these bones come back to life?"

Ezekiel answered that only God knows.

Then God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, saying that God could bring them back to life. Ezekiel obeyed and spoke God's words to the bones. Suddenly, there was a loud noise and shaking, and the bones began to come together. Flesh covered the bones, but the bodies were still not alive.

God then told Ezekiel to prophesy again, so that the breath of life would enter the bodies. When he did, the bodies came fully alive. Where there had been only a valley of dry bones, there now stood a complete army.

This vision shows that God can bring life and hope even to people or situations that seem completely dead.

Therefore prophesy and say to them: "This is what the sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD." Ezekiel 37:12-14 (NIV)

Ezekiel teaches that salvation is not just forgiveness. God's people must also be filled with His Holy Spirit to lead holy lives. Jesus came so that both would occur in the lives of those who believe in Him.

God's warnings and rebukes were severe, but He also desired to show mercy, to redeem and restore His people. He would again be their God and they would again be His people.

Theological Issues In Ezekiel

1. **God's Glory** - Ezekiel saw the fall of Jerusalem and the glory of God leaving the temple and the exile of his people. The book of Ezekiel ends with a vision of God's glory returning to the temple. It is a vision of God's holiness and victory over evil.
2. **Corporate Responsibility** - Ezekiel emphasizes the collective responsibility of the nation of Israel. God holds groups of people responsible for corporate sin. Ezekiel also emphasizes individual responsibility for sin. Each person must repent for their own sin.
3. **Judgment and Redemption** - Ezekiel demonstrates the judgment of God for evil and sin. God is holy and will bring correction. There is also a message of hope for redemption and restoration. God will rebuild and restore those who seek forgiveness.

Daniel

Overview Of The Book Of Daniel								
Focus	History Of Daniel	Prophetic Plan For The Gentiles				Prophetic Plan Of Israel		
Divisions	Personal Life Of Daniel	Vision Of Nebuchadnezzar	Vision Of Belshazzar	Decree Of Darius	*Four Beasts	Vision Of Ram & He-Goat	Vision Of Seventy Weeks	Vision Of Israel's Future
	1:1 - 1:21	2:1 - 4:37	5:1 - 5:31	6:1 - 6:28	7:1 - 7:28	8:1 - 8:27	9:1 - 9:27	10:1 - 12:13
Topics	Daniel's Background	God Communicates Through Dreams						
	Hebrew	Aramaic				Hebrew		
Place	Babylonia/Persia							
Time	C. 605 - 536 B.c.							

Adapted from The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 220.

The first half of the Book of Daniel tells the story of Daniel's life in Babylon. He was taken from Judah as part of the first group of captives, about 20 years before Jerusalem finally fell. Daniel was chosen to serve in the royal court. He was a faithful man of God, and God blessed him and his friends with wisdom, knowledge, and the ability to interpret dreams and visions (Daniel 1:17).

Daniel was respected by many kings because of his devotion to God. He was a man of faith, prayer, and obedience. Daniel and his friends refused to worship idols or eat food that had been offered to idols, even though they lived in a land full of false gods.

Because of their faith, Daniel's friends were thrown into a fiery furnace, and Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. Miraculously, they all survived! Their courage and God's power impressed King Nebuchadnezzar, who declared:

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. Daniel 4:37 (NIV)

One interesting feature of the Book of Daniel is that it was written in two languages. The beginning (1:1-2:3) and the end (7:1-12:13) were written in Hebrew, the language of Israel. The middle section was written in Aramaic, the common language for trade at that time. This part could be read by people from many nations. It's as if the book had one section for the Jewish people and another section for everyone else. Today, modern translations usually do not show this difference.

In chapters 7-12, Daniel records a series of visions he received while living in captivity. He arranged

them by the year each king ruled, including Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. Some of Daniel's visions, like those of Ezekiel, are apocalyptic.

Apocalyptic literature is a special type or literary genre of prophetic writing. The word apocalypse means "revelation" or "unveiling." These writings often use visions, dreams, symbols, numbers, strange creatures, and signs to show God's message. Apocalyptic writings can describe the past, present, or future.

Daniel's visions often speak of a future time when human kingdoms will be replaced by God's eternal Kingdom. This shows God's ultimate power, justice, and plan for the world.

For example, Daniel writes this of a future time:

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:1-3 (NIV)



Literary Genre: Apocalyptic Writing

The book of Daniel is one of the main examples of apocalyptic writing in the Old Testament. Daniel was a young man who was taken to Babylon when his people were captured. Even though he lived far from home, Daniel stayed faithful to God. God gave him special visions and dreams that showed what would happen in the future. These visions used symbols, like strange beasts and powerful kingdoms, to show how human rulers rise and fall. But through it all, God is in control and His kingdom will last forever.

In Daniel's visions, we see a world full of trouble and powerful nations fighting for control. Yet, every vision ends with God's victory. Daniel 7, for example, describes "one like a son of man" who comes with the clouds of heaven and receives a kingdom that will never end. This "Son of Man" points forward to Jesus Christ, who will one day return to rule forever. The message of Daniel's apocalyptic visions is one of hope: no matter how bad things look, God's people can trust that He will make everything right.

When Jesus talked about the end times, He used some of the same language and ideas found in Daniel. In Matthew 24, Jesus warned His followers that there would be wars, earthquakes, and false teachers before He returns. He called Himself the "Son of Man," just like in Daniel's vision. Both Daniel and Jesus teach that God's people should not be afraid but should stay faithful and ready. Daniel's visions and Jesus' warnings remind us that God has a plan, that He rules over all history, and that one day His perfect kingdom will come.

Many people try to guess when the world will end or when Jesus will come back. They want to predict how and when it will happen. As Free Methodists, we do not believe anyone should try to predict the end of the world or the return of Jesus. Jesus Himself said that no one knows the day or hour when He will return. People who make such predictions are almost always false teachers.

The Bible gives us only a little information about what will happen when Jesus comes back. It doesn't tell us the exact time or details. Instead, it tells us how to live while we wait. God wants us to live with faith, obey His Word, and trust His promises.

The best way to be ready for Jesus' return is to live with hope and peace every day. When we love God and others, pray, and serve faithfully, we show that we belong to Jesus. We don't need to worry about when He will come back—what matters most is that we are ready whenever He does.

Theological Issues In Daniel

1. **God's Influence over the Nations** - The book of Daniel shows that God is able to influence whole nations. He can help them rise and cause them to fall. He will use people who do not know or respect him. God speaks through his people to the nations. Daniel shared his wisdom and revelations with pagan kings.
2. **God's Deliverance** - God intervenes in circumstances to protect and save his people. He closed the mouths of the lions for Daniel. He protected the three men in the furnace. God watches over his people.
3. **God's Promise for the Future** - The book of Daniel includes visions of a future which includes the "Son of Man". Daniel introduces the term and provides a vision of the Messiah coming. Daniel's vision of the future is hopeful.

Reflection Questions

Reflection work

1. What is a prophet? How are the Old Testament prophets similar to a prophet, preacher, or evangelist today? How are they different?
2. The prophet Jeremiah refers to a coming new covenant in chapter 31. When did the new covenant come into effect (Look at Luke 22:14-23)?
3. Read the quote from Daniel 12:1-3. Some people consider this a prophecy that applies to the end of all time. How does it teach you about the end of the world? How might it apply to the time of the return of Jesus Christ?

Personal evaluation

- Isaiah had to confess his sin in order to answer God's call. Jeremiah needed the assurance of God's help. Write your own story of your call to ministry. Like the prophets, were there areas of sin, doubt, or fear that you had to surrender to God?
- Jeremiah was rejected by his own people. Ezekiel had to preach to dry bones. Daniel faced death for his faithfulness to God. What challenges do you face today in your ministry? What lessons can we learn from the prophets?
- What does it mean to have a heart of flesh? What does a heart of stone look like? What does a wholehearted commitment to God look like? Ask God to examine your heart.
- Now, how are the hearts of the people in your ministry and in your community? Are there attachments that people have trouble letting go of? What attachments keep them from loving God wholeheartedly?
- How is Ezekiel 37:1-14 (The Valley of Dry Bones) a preview of what the Holy Spirit would do (For example: Acts 2)?
- How does the devotion, courage, and obedience of Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1, 6) inspire and challenge you?

Lesson 6

The Minor Prophets

Purpose Of The Lesson

To give an overview of the authors, central themes, warnings, and promises of each of the minor prophets.

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the student:

- Will learn about the minor prophets, their context and their lives.
 - Will learn a central theme of each of the prophetic books.
- Will consider more deeply God's promise to send a Redeemer for His people.
- He will identify, honestly, and seriously, with the content of the lessons and apply it to his or her ministry context and personal life.

Contents

Hosea, Joel
Amos, Obadiah
Jonah, Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Overview of the Prophets of Israel and Judah
Reflection Questions

The Minor Prophets are a group of short books in the Old Testament. They include messages of hope and faith for people who are suffering, and warnings for those who disobey God.

Many of their prophecies were fulfilled at the time they were given, while others would be fulfilled later. Most of the messages were about specific situations or people, but the God who sent the prophets is the same today.

Even now, people can learn important lessons from the stories and prophecies in these books. They teach us about faith, obedience, and God's love.

Hosea

Hosea was a prophet sent by God to the northern kingdom of Israel during a time when the people were turning away from God. They were worshipping false gods and idols and doing many sinful things. God chose Hosea to speak His message and to show His love in a very personal way. God told Hosea to marry a woman who would be unfaithful, so that Hosea's life could be a living example of how God loves His people, even when they are disobedient. Hosea's story teaches that God is faithful and merciful, always calling His people to return to Him.

God told Hosea not only to speak to Israel, but also to show God's love through his own life.

God said to Hosea:

“Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an unfaithful wife, this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.” — Hosea 1:2-3a (NIV)

Hosea married Gomer, who was unfaithful to him. She left Hosea to be with other men, but God told Hosea to bring her back and restore their family. Hosea had to buy back his wife from a life of sin. He promised to be faithful to her and asked that she be faithful to him.

In the book of Hosea, God's relationship with Israel is compared to a marriage. Israel's unfaithfulness to God is like Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea. The people worshipped idols and false gods and sometimes practiced sinful acts.

Even so, God loves His people. He waits for them and keeps calling them to return to Him, just like a faithful husband waiting for his wife.

“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.” — Hosea 2:19-20 (NIV)

This shows that God's love is patient, faithful, and full of mercy, even when His people turn away.

Joel

The prophet Joel spoke to the people of Judah during a time of trouble. Locusts had destroyed their crops, and the land suffered from famine and hardship. Joel used these events to warn the people about the coming Day of the Lord, when God would bring judgment on sin. At the same time, he offered hope for those who would turn back to God. Joel's message reminds people that God is merciful and loving, and that He promises restoration, blessing, and the gift of His Spirit to all who faithfully seek Him.

The book of Joel warns that a Day of the Lord will come. On that day, God will bring judgment and punishment. Joel compares it to a huge army of locusts that destroy everything in their path. The land will be full of darkness, fear, and death. Some scholars think Joel might be talking about the fall of Judah, a day in the past, or a future day of God's judgment that is still coming.

Even though this day sounds frightening, God's people do not need to be afraid. God calls them to return to Him with all their hearts:

“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.”
— Joel 2:12-13 (NIV)

Joel reminds people of the good things God has done and the blessings He promises. God says He will restore what the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25) and that everyone who calls on Him will be saved (Joel 2:32).

He also promises that one day He will pour out His Spirit on all people:

“Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”
— Joel 2:28-29 (NIV)

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1), God's Spirit came on His followers, fulfilling Joel's prophecy. But Joel's promise goes even further, pointing to the new Jerusalem and a future of peace, blessing, and God's redeeming grace. Sadly, those who do not turn to God will not share in these promises.

Amos

Amos was a prophet sent by God to the northern kingdom of Israel during a time of wealth and prosperity, but also sin and injustice. He was a simple shepherd and farmer, not a professional prophet, yet God chose him to speak His message. Amos warned the people that God was angry with their idolatry, greed, and mistreatment of the poor. He called them to repent and live justly, reminding them that God values righteousness and mercy more than sacrifices or outward religious rituals. Even though Amos spoke of judgment, he also shared God's promise of hope and restoration for those who returned to Him.

Amos also spoke of the Day of the Lord as a day of judgment and destruction, but he spoke primarily to the kingdom of Israel. The prophecies of Amos make clear the certainty of God's judgment and the intensity of His wrath.

This is what the Lord says: “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of god they drink wine taken as fines.” - Amos 2:6-8 (NIV)

Israel was proud and content with their sin. God's judgment came through Assyrian armies that invaded and emptied the land of God's people. However, God had mercy. The final prophecy of Amos speaks about the days when the land will produce again. The cities would be rebuilt and God's people would return to dwell there. Unfortunately, His mercy was rejected, and Israel suffered for their rebellion against God.

Obadiah

The prophet Obadiah received a vision from God about the kingdom of Edom, which was located east and south of Israel. Long ago, Esau, the brother of Jacob, had settled there. The Edomites did not help Israel or Judah when they were in trouble. In fact, they worked with the Babylonians to conquer Jerusalem. God promised that the Edomites would be punished for their pride and cruelty, while He would restore the people of Jacob. The land of Esau would be left in ruins (Obadiah 1:18).

Jonah

The book of Jonah tells the story of the prophet Jonah and his mission to the city of Nineveh, which was in the Fertile Crescent, northeast of Israel. Nineveh was the most important city of the Assyrian Empire, which would later conquer Jonah's home in Israel. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the people that He would destroy the city in forty days if they did not repent.

Jonah did not want to obey. He tried to run away. He boarded a ship going in the opposite direction. God sent a fierce storm that put everyone on the ship in danger. Jonah realized the storm was God's way of pursuing him and asked to be thrown into the sea. God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and he spent three days and three nights in its stomach, praying and crying out to God.

The fish spit Jonah out onto dry land, and God told him again to go to Nineveh. This time, Jonah obeyed. The people of Nineveh repented, including the king, and God showed them mercy.

Jonah became angry, because he thought the Ninevites did not deserve forgiveness. God corrected Jonah for not showing compassion. Even prophets can sometimes struggle to fully understand God's love and mercy for all people.

Micah

Micah was a prophet around the time of Isaiah. The prophet Micah spoke to the people of Judah and Israel during a time of corruption, injustice, and idolatry, warning them to repent while also promising hope and the coming of the Messiah. He pleaded God's case to His rebellious people.

In particular, Micah addressed the corrupt prophets and religious leaders who had led the people astray and stirred up their rebellion. Micah prophesied what would happen to them.

The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them.

The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God.

Micah 3:6b-7 (NIV)

Micah mostly warned the people about God's judgment, but he also told them what God wanted them to do. God said:

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8 (NIV)

God wanted His people to show His character in their daily lives by living with honesty, kindness, and humility.

Micah also promised that God would send a faithful leader—a prophet, priest, and king—who would redeem His people. Micah spoke about the coming Messiah.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah 5:2 (NIV)

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be our peace... Micah 5:4-5 (NIV)

Nahum

Like Jonah, the prophet Nahum warned the city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, about God's judgment. This was about 100 years after Jonah. Nahum spoke of God's coming punishment for the city because of its wickedness. This time, however, the people of Nineveh did not repent. God would not let their oppressive empire continue. Nahum ended his message with a strong warning to the people of Nineveh:

Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal. All who hear the news about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty. Nahum 3:19 (NIV)

Unlike God's warnings to Judah and Israel, there was no promise of redemption for Nineveh. The whole book of Nahum speaks of danger and destruction for the city. Only one verse gives a different note, but the main message is that Nineveh's wickedness would not go unpunished.

The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him (Nah. 1:7).

Even though Nahum's message warns of hard judgment, his own words show his faith and trust in God, standing out as a reminder of God's power and goodness.

Habakkuk

Habakkuk was a prophet during the time of Jeremiah. The prophet Habakkuk lived at a time when Judah was full of sin and injustice, and he questioned God about why He allowed evil people to prosper while the righteous suffered.

Habakkuk, like Job, understood that God deserves worship even if He does not explain His ways.

Habakkuk brought two complaints to God. First, he asked why God allowed wicked people to hurt good people. The leaders of Judah were corrupt, and the people suffered in an unfair society. God told Habakkuk that He had chosen the Babylonians to punish Judah. The Babylonians would invade the land and bring judgment.

Habakkuk's second complaint was: how could God use the Babylonians, who were even more wicked than Judah, to punish them? God reminded Habakkuk that He is sovereign and in control of all things:

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:14 (NIV)*

The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him. Habakkuk 2:20 (NIV)

Habakkuk ends his prophecy with a prayer to God. He knew that God's judgment would come on Judah and that His people would face great suffering. Even so, Habakkuk trusted God's promises. He closed his prayer with God's words:

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes in the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights....

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NIV)

Zephaniah

Zephaniah was a prophet at the same time as Jeremiah. He spoke during the reign of King Josiah, the last king of Judah who truly loved God. Josiah led a short but powerful revival among the people after God's Law was rediscovered and taught. This revival helped prepare the faithful remnant to remain strong and study God's Word during later captivity.

Because the land had been full of rebellion and sin, God warned the people through Zephaniah that the Day of the Lord would bring judgment and suffering. But the prophet also shared God's mercy and love for those who would turn back to Him:

Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands.

Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger. Zephaniah 2:3 (NIV)

Zephaniah also gave warnings to other nations, including Judah, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria. Even so, his prophecy ends with God's promise to restore Jerusalem and bless His people.

The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

Haggai

There was a gap of about 100 years between the books of Zephaniah and Haggai. The book of Haggai takes place in post-exilic Jerusalem, after the people of Judah had returned from captivity. The temple had been in ruins for more than 70 years. The Persian kings allowed the people to return and even gave them permission and resources to rebuild the temple, but after starting, they stopped and left it unfinished. The foundation had been abandoned for about 15 years when God sent Haggai to speak to the leaders and the people.

God's message came four times through Haggai:

1. God rebuked the people for focusing on their own homes while the temple remained in ruins. He called them to take care of His house and promised blessings if they obeyed.
2. God encouraged the people, reminding them that even though they had returned, they were still broken and vulnerable to enemies.
3. God called them to live in purity.
4. God gave special encouragement to Zerubbabel, promising His presence and blessing over the government of Judah.

A phrase repeated several times in Haggai's message reminds the people to reflect on their choices:

"Give careful thought to your ways." — Haggai 1:5, 7; 2:15, 18

Zechariah

Zechariah was a prophet who spoke to post-exilic Judah, just like Haggai. He began his ministry only a few weeks after Haggai started his. Zechariah had many visions about God's blessings for Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest, as well as visions about the restoration of Jerusalem and its people.

His visions and messages were meant to encourage discouraged people. God promised that a Messiah would come to judge and save the world. He wanted to use His people, but He also called them to remain faithful, righteous, and obedient to their covenant with Him.

Zechariah also shared prophecies about the coming Messiah:

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9 (NIV)

The prophecies of Zechariah go beyond the time of the Messiah, for they also announce the day when "The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name" (Zech. 14:9).

Malachi

The prophet Malachi may have lived during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Many of the problems he spoke about were similar to the ones Nehemiah faced. The temple work had finally been finished, thanks to Haggai and Zechariah, but about 75 years later, the city of Jerusalem had still not been rebuilt. This showed that the people were not fully committed to God. Through Malachi, God called His people to be faithful to their covenant with Him.

Malachi also spoke about corruption among the priests, who were supposed to lead the people in worship. Some priests gave unworthy sacrifices, ignored God's Law, and were stingy with their offerings. God expected His priests to be examples of obedience and to faithfully share His messages with the people:

"For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth." Malachi 2:7 (NIV)

Malachi speaks about the unfaithfulness of Judah, unfaithfulness of the priests, and unfaithfulness of husbands to their wives throughout the land. God cannot be deceived. Through Malachi, God assured them that He would come to bring justice.

The last two verses of Malachi, the final book of the Old Testament, prepare God's people for what is coming next in His plan of salvation:

"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction." Mal. 4:5-6

John the Baptist would fulfill this prophecy (Matt. 11:14). God's promised Messiah was coming soon.

Prophets of Israel and Judah						
Name	Date	Audience	World Power	Biblical Context	Old Testament References to the Prophet	Theme
Isaiah	c. 740-680	Pre-Exile: Judah	Assyria	2 Kin. 15:1 - 20:21 2 Chr. 26:16-32:33	2 Kin. 19-20; 2 Chr. 26:22; 32:20, 32; Isaiah	Salvation is of the Lord
Jeremiah	c. 627-580	Pre-Exile: Judah	Assyria & Babylonia	2 Kin. 22:3 - 25:30 2 Chr. 34:1 - 36:21	2 Chr. 35:25; 36:12, 21ff.; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 9:2; Jeremiah	Warning of the Coming Judgment
Ezekiel	c. 493-571	Exile: Exiles in Babylonia	Babylonia	2 Kin. 24:8 - 25:30 2 Chr. 36:9-21	Ezek. 1:3, 24:24	Glory of the Lord
Daniel	c. 605-535	Exile: Exiles in Babylonia	Babylonia & Medo-Persia	2 King. 23:34 - 25:30; 2 Chr. 36:4-23	Ezek. 14, 20; 28:3; Daniel	Sovereignty of God over men and nations
Hosea	c. 755-715	Pre-Exile: Israel	Assyria	2 Kin. 14:23 - 18:12	Hos. 1:1-2	Loyal Love of God
Joel	c. 835	Pre-Exile: Judah	Assyria	2 Kin. 12:1-21 2 Chr. 24:1-27	Joel 1:1	Day of the Lord
Amos	c. 760-753	Pre-Exile: Israel	Assyria	2 Kin. 14:23 - 15:7	Amos 1:1; 7:8-14; 8:2	Judgment on Israel
Obadiah	c. 848-841	Pre-Exile: Edom	Assyria	2 Kin. 8:16-24 2 Chr. 21:1-20	Obad. 1	Doom on Edom
Jonah	c. 782-753	Pre-Exile: Assyria	Assyria	2 Kin. 13:10-25; 14:23-29	2 Kin. 14:25; Jonah	Salvation to the Gentiles
Micah	c. 735-700	Pre-Exile: Judah	Assyria	2 Kin. 15:32-19:37 2 Chr. 27:1 - 32:23	Mic. 1:1; Jer. 26:18	Injustice of Judah and Justice of God
Nahum	c. 664-654	Pre-Exile: Assyria	Assyria	2 Kin. 21:1-18 2 Chr. 33:1-20	Nah. 1:1	The Destruction of Nineveh
Habakkuk	c. 609-605	Pre-Exile: Judah	Babylonia	2 Kin. 23:31 - 24:7 2 Chr. 36:1-8	Hab. 1:1; 3:1	The Just Shall Live by Faith
Zephaniah	c. 632-628	Pre-Exile: Judah	Assyria	2 Kin. 22:1-2 2 Chr. 34:1-7	Zeph. 1:1	Judgment and Blessing in the Day of the Lord
Haggai	c. 520	Post-Exile: Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylonia	Medo-Persia	Ezra 5:1 - 6:15	Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Hag.	Rebuilding the Temple
Zechariah	c. 520-480	Post Exile: Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylonia	Medo-Persia	Ezra 5:1 - 6:15	Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:16; Zech. 1:1, 7; 7:1, 8	Future Blessing of Israel
Malachi	c. 432-424	Post-Exile: Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylonia	Medo-Persia	Neh. 13:1-31	Mal. 1:1	Appeal to Backsliders

Adapted from The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Wilkinson B. and Boa K. The Wilkinson & Boa Bible Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983, page 227-228.

Theological Issues In The Minor Prophets

1. **The Day of the Lord** - A central theme in the minor prophets is a future event when God intervenes to make corrections and bring righteousness. The prophets consistently warned that God was going to punish sin and bring justice.
2. **Idolatry and Adopting Religion of Neighbors** - The prophets consistently warned the people about adopting the idols or religious practices of their neighbors. This unfaithfulness was a sign of not trusting God. They remind the people that worship of God is essential and worshipping other things is a sin.
3. **Social Injustice and Corruption** - The prophets warn the people about corruption, dishonesty, and

mistreatment of people. They call the people to repent and stop hurting others. God doesn't only want loyalty to himself, he wants his people to live in ways that lift others up.

4. **God's Faithful Mercy** - Books like Hosea and Jonah show that God is compassionate and will show mercy to those who repent. Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah show that following God includes choosing righteousness. God invites people back to righteous living.

Reflection Questions

1. The minor prophets call for repentance. Joel especially mentions the need for full sincerity. (Joel 2:12-14) What is repentance? Have you experienced this kind of full repentance in your life? In your church? If not, what could be hindering your obedience to that call?
2. Haggai's message is for us to pause and meditate on our ways, both in our personal lives and in the life of the church. Does everything you do bring glory to God? What about in your church?
3. Review Amos and Hosea. What patterns of sin do you see in your community that God may be asking you to confront? What form does idolatry take in your place of ministry?
4. Remember Malachi. What things keep the hearts of your people from full obedience to God? How do these things divide the heart's loyalty?
5. God promised to write His new covenant on our hearts (Jer. 31:31). The Bible covenant involves giving God exclusive control over our life and behavior. How does this apply to your life? Do you live as a Christian in every area of your life: finances, family, sexuality, etc.?
6. What lesson can you learn about God from the prophet Jonah? What lesson can we learn about ourselves as ministers of God's Word? Has God sent you to a people who are hard to love? Take a moment to pray and ask others to intercede for you.
7. Although the minor prophets primarily announced words of judgment and destruction, God's promise of redemption was always present. He is the Redeemer. What promises of God in the minor prophets give you hope for today and tomorrow? What promises from the prophets can you communicate to the people you minister to? Have you learned some lessons that you should share in this Old Testament study?

Action plan

Read the closing prayer from Habakkuk 3. Apply it to your life. In your context, what losses would have the most profound effect on you and your community? Could you maintain your hope in the Lord in spite of what is happening around you? Make a list of the social, political and religious situation in your country and based on this passage give a hopeful response to each of these issues.

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