
BOOK OVERVIEW

Joshua

Author: probably Joshua

Date: about 1370 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: the conquest and the division of the land of Canaan

Key words: possess/possession (22 times), inherit/inheritance (63 times)

Key verses: Joshua 1: 2–3

Notes:

The book covers about 30 years, from the death of Moses to the death of Joshua.

Not all of the tribes of Israel took their inheritance in the Promised Land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh settled on the east side of the Jordan River.

Instead of land, the Levites were given 48 cities, six of which were designated as “cities of refuge.” (Joshua 20:2, 7–8, 21:41)

The incident with Achan, reinforces the truth that God does not accept partial obedience. (Joshua 7)

Two miracles stand out in the book: 1) the parting of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14–17), and 2) the sun standing still. (Joshua 10:12–14)

As soon as the Israelites could eat of the produce of Canaan, God stopped providing manna. (Joshua 5:11–12)

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Judges

Author: possibly Samuel

Date: possibly about 1075 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: what happens to a nation that refuses to obey God

Key word: evil (14 times), judge/judged/judgment (22 times)

Key verses: Judges 2:14–19

Notes:

The book covers about 300 years, from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson.

The book describes a cycle that is repeated many times: 1) the Israelites turn away from God, 2) God lets their enemies oppress them, 3) the Israelites cry out to God for deliverance, 4) God provides a deliverer, 5) the Israelites enjoy a measure of peace; then, the cycle is repeated.

That “every man did that which was right in his own eyes,” explains the tragedies we witness in the book of Judges. (Judges 17:6)

Judges should be a warning concerning how easy it is to fall away from God.

The book describes thirteen judges and prepares the way for a king. Samuel, although a prophet, followed Samson, and was the last of the judges.

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Ruth

Author: probably Samuel

Date: about 1075 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: God's providence in preserving the line of the Messiah

Key word: kinsman (14 times), redeem (9 times)

Key verses: Ruth 1:16

Notes:

This is one of two books in the Bible that have a woman as the main character. The other is the book of Esther.

The story, which covers about ten years of time, takes place during the era of the Judges. (Ruth 1:1)

The kinsman-redeemer was a near relative who had the right to redeem a person or property from bondage by paying the debt that had been incurred.

Boaz could act on Ruth's behalf only after a relative closer to Ruth refused to accept his responsibility.

Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth, serves as a type of Christ who serves as our Kinsman-Redeemer.

In Israel, property should not be sold outside of the family. If it were, the property had to be returned to the family in the year of Jubilee.(Leviticus 25:10)

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Author: unknown (see note below)

Date: about 1110–1000 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: the history of Israel from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul

Key word: anoint (7 times), rejected (7 times)

Key verses: I Samuel 8:19–22

Notes:

In the Hebrew Bible I & II Samuel were considered one book.

A Jewish tradition indicates that Samuel was the author, but that seems improbable, since many of the things recorded happened after he died. Some Bible scholars believe that Gad or Nathan wrote the books of I & II Samuel.

The book covers about 110 years.

Eli knew what was right and instructed both his sons and Samuel. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, rejected God and Eli's instruction; but Samuel accepted Eli's instruction and followed after God.

The book is a good example of what happens when we run ahead of God. It is clear that God would have eventually given Israel a king. It was probably God's plan to have David as Israel's first king rather than Saul.

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II Samuel

Author: probably Gad or Nathan

Date: about 1000–960 B.C.

Recipients: not indicated

Summary: the reign of King David

Key word: David (280 times)

Key verses: II Samuel 7:8–16

Notes:

The book covers about forty years of in the life of the nation of Israel, from the death of Saul to the reign of Solomon. It reflects the highest point in Israel's political power.

God speaks of David as “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22); but David also had his problems: 1) he had an immoral relationship with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:2-14), 2) he had a poor relationship with his son Absalom (II Samuel 15:1-14), and 3) contrary to God's instruction, he took a census to count his fighting men (II Samuel 24:1-4).

The book tells of David's desire to built a temple to honor God, but also tells us why God did not allow him to do so. David gather's the materials, but it is Solomon who builds the temple. (II Samuel 7:1-13)

Absalom cut his hair, when it became too heavy, and the clippings weighed about five pounds. (II Samuel 14:26)

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I Kings

Author: unknown, possibly Jeremiah

Date: unknown (before the Babylonian captivity ended)

Recipients: possibly the Jews in exile.

Key word: King (250 times)

Summary: The reign of Solomon, the history of the divided kingdom beginning with Rehoboam in Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and Jeroboam I in Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

Key verses: I Kings 2:12, 11:9-11

Notes:

The book covers about 126 years, 960–834 B.C., from the death of David to the death of Jehoshaphat.

I Kings and II Kings were one book in the Hebrew scriptures. It was divided by the translators of the Greek Septuagint about 400 A.D.

The book ends with the reign of Judah's good King Jehoshaphat (their fourth king) and Israel's evil King Ahaziah (their eighth king).

Solomon's choice of wisdom from God is recorded in I Kings 3:5-14.

The book records the ministry of the prophet Elijah. (Chs. 17-19, 21) Elijah on Mt. Carmel. (18:16-46) The prophet Elisha becomes Elijah's protégé. (19:19-21)

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Date: unknown. (before the Babylonian captivity ended)

Recipients: possibly an historical record preserved for the Jews in exile.

Key word: King (340 times)

Summary: The history of the divided kingdom from the death of Ahab (Northern Kingdom) and Jehoshaphat (Southern Kingdom) into the Babylonian captivity. Israel (Northern Kingdom) went into captivity in 722 B.C. and Judah (Southern Kingdom) went into captivity in 586 B.C.

Theme: God's judgment upon His rebellious children.

Key verses: II Kings 17:7-8

Notes:

The book covers about 270 years, 856–586 B.C.

It describes the last days of Elijah and the ministry of Elisha. (II Kings 1–13)

Elijah taken to Heaven in a fiery chariot. (II Kings 2:11)

Judah had some kings that were good and some that were evil. All of Israel's kings were evil.

King Hezekiah had a tunnel bored through rock to provide water for besieged Jerusalem. (II Kings 20:20)

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I Chronicles

Author: possibly Ezra

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: David (180 times)

Summary: The history of David's family and his contributions to the temple.

Key verses: I Chr. 29:26-27

Theme: The sovereignty of God.

Notes:

The book covers about 40 years, 1000–960 B.C., from the death of Saul to the beginning of Solomon's reign.

The first nine chapters include genealogical records.

First and Second Chronicles were one book in the Hebrew scriptures.

Since the book focuses on the temple and priests, it is likely that a priest, like Ezra, wrote it.

The book addresses Judah with little mention of the Northern Kingdom.

The prayer of Jabez. (4:10)

David honors the men who risked their lives by passing through enemy lines to bring him water from the well in Bethlehem. (11:17–19)

David brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. (Ch 15)

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Author: possibly Ezra

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: house (referring to the temple, 148 times)

Summary: The history of Judah and Jerusalem from the reign of Solomon to the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem.

Key verses: I Chr. 29:26-27

Notes:

The book covers about 425 years, 960–535 B.C..

First and Second Chronicles were one book in the Hebrew Scripture.

The narrative of II Chronicles ends where the book of Ezra begins.

After Solomon's death, the kingdom is divided between King Rehoboam, Southern Kingdom, and King Jeroboam, Northern Kingdom. (Ch. 10)

Chapters 1-9 describe the reign of Solomon. Chapters 10-36 describe the sequence of Judah's good and bad kings.

God makes His presence known at the dedication of the temple. (5:13-14, 7:1-3)

Chapter 36 describes Judah's entering the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, but ends with Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

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Ezra

Author: Jewish tradition says Ezra.

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key word: Jerusalem (47 times)

Summary: The ups and downs of trying to rebuild Jerusalem after the 70 year Babylonian exile.

Key verses: Ezra 6:21-22

Theme: The restoration of the Temple and religious reform.

Notes:

The book covers about 80 years, 536–456 B.C., from the decree of Cyrus to shortly after Ezra arrives in Jerusalem.

Ezra was a priest and scribe (7:1-6)

About 57 years lapse between the end of chapter six and the beginning of chapter seven. During this time the events described in the book of Esther take place.

Chapters 1-6 describe the activities of the first group to return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel.

Chapters 7-10 describe the activities of the second group as they return under the leadership of Ezra.

Some believe that Ezra was the originator of the Jewish synagogue system.

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Chapters 7-10 describe the activities of the second group as they return under the leadership of Ezra.

Some believe that Ezra was the originator of the Jewish synagogue system.

BOOK OVERVIEW

Nehemiah

Author: Nehemiah

Date: about 450 B.C. (after the captivity)

Recipients: not noted

Key words: wall(s) (32 times) build (23 times)

Summary: The ups and downs of trying to rebuild Jerusalem after the 70 year Babylonian exile.

Key verses: Nehemiah 4:6, 6:15–16

Theme: The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and spiritual revival.

Notes:

The book covers about 12 years, 444–432 B.C.

In the Hebrew scriptures Ezra and Nehemiah were one book.

When first mentioned in the Bible, Nehemiah is the cupbearer for king Artaxerxes. He was appointed governor of Judah, a position he held for 12 years.

The book begins 12 years after what is described in the book of Ezra.

Almost 100 years have passed since the first Jews returned from exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The temple has been restored but the walls to defend the city have not yet been rebuilt when Nehemiah arrives.

Chapters 8-10 shows the impact God's Word has on those who chose to obey it.

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BOOK OVERVIEW

Esther

Author: possibly Mordecai

Date: 470–460 B.C.

Recipients: the Jews of the dispersion in various parts of the Persian Empire

Key word: the Jews (43 times)

Summary: The account of a Jewish girl who becomes queen of Persia and saves her people from destruction.

Theme: God’s providential care for His people.

Key verses: Esther 4:14

Notes:

The book covers about 11 years, 483–474 B.C. from the 3rd year to the 12th year of the reign of Ahasuerus.

This is the last of the Historical books in the Old Testament.

Unlike any other book in the Bible, the name of God is not mentioned and it makes no mention of prayer.

The book vividly contrasts the humility of Mordecai and the pride of Haman.

The book describes the origin of the annual Jewish feast of Purim. (Chs. 9-10)

Purim is still celebrated by the Jews today at which the book of Esther is read. During the reading, the Jews cheer at the name of Mordecai and hiss when Haman’s name is read.

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