

Understanding the Bible

OLD TESTAMENT



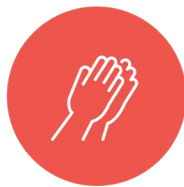
PENTATEUCH



HISTORICAL



WISDOM



PROPHETIC

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

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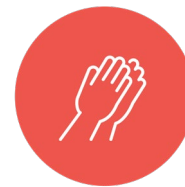
GOSPELS



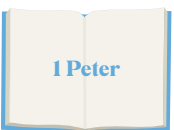
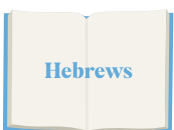
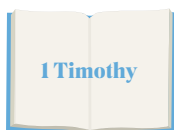
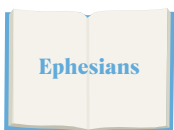
HISTORICAL



LETTERS



PROPHETIC



History and Wisdom

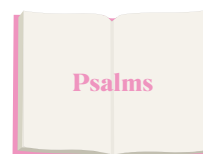
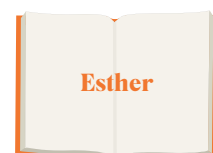
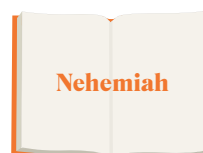
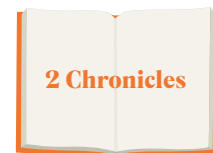
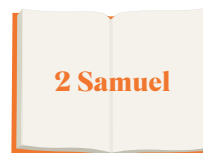
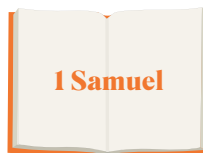
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



HISTORICAL



WISDOM



The Historical Books of the Old Testament

SCRIPTURE: JOSHUA 24:15

Bible Readings:

Ruth 4:13–22;

2 Samuel 7:8–17;

Esther 9:23–28

The historical books of the Old Testament cover the historical narrative from the time Israel enters Canaan, the Promised Land, to the time the Jews return from a seventy-year exile in Babylon.

JOSHUA

Joshua, whose name means “Yahweh saves,” led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. The book’s authorship is attributed to Joshua. The book of Joshua covers a period of nearly thirty years that the Israelites spent conquering their Promised Land.ⁱⁱⁱ

JUDGES AND RUTH

The author of Judges remains unknown. Although not chronological, the events of the book of Judges span a period of three hundred years.^{iv} Because of the nation’s disobedience, God allowed them to be conquered by their enemies. When the oppression became unbearable, the people would cry out to the Lord and he would send them a deliverer, or judge.

Ruth’s story takes place during the time of Judges. After the death of her husband, the young foreigner follows her mother-in-law, Naomi, to the matriarch’s hometown of Bethlehem.

She finds favor with a man named Boaz, whom she eventually marries, and she becomes a direct ancestor of King David.

1 AND 2 SAMUEL, 1 AND 2 KINGS, AND 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

These books narrated life in Israel during the time when Israel had kings. After the time of the judges, Israel desired a king, so they could be like the other nations. God chose Saul. When Saul became rebellious and disobedient, God appointed David as king through the prophet Samuel. Although David's life was not perfect, he was still considered a man after God's own heart due to his great faith. His son, Solomon, served as the last king of the united kingdom of Israel. Because of Solomon's disobedience, and his son Rehoboam's harsh rule, Israel was divided into two monarchies. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin comprised the Kingdom of Judah in the south and the other ten tribes comprised the Kingdom of Israel in the north. At the end of these stories, due to their disobedience, Israel was attacked and taken to exile in Assyria, their temple is destroyed, and Judah is exiled to the foreign land of Babylon.

EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER

Ezra covers the return of the Jews from Babylon following their seventy-year captivity. The nation struggles to restore their temple and renew their spiritual life. Nehemiah also covers the time after the Jews return from Babylon. The author of Nehemiah is attributed to Nehemiah, but scholars also think Ezra could have possibly written the book.^v Under Nehemiah's direction, the Jews were able to resist their enemies and complete their goals of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem.

Although the book of Esther appears after Nehemiah in the canon, most likely the events in Esther took place before those in Nehemiah and Ezra. Esther tells the story of God's faithfulness to his people during times when wickedness was threatening them. He uses the beauty of young Esther and the wisdom of her uncle Mordecai to bring deliverance to his people from the wicked Haman who wanted the Israelites killed.

How do you think studying the books that make up the Bible's history genre can help you grow in your relationship with God and others?

The _____ books of the Old Testament cover the historical narrative from the time Israel enters Canaan, the _____ to the time the Jews return from a seventy-year exile in Babylon.

What is the Old Testament?

“Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

PSALM 150:2

Did you know the Bible contains poetry and books full of wisdom? The latter may be easy to guess, but many do not realize that poetry is one of the literary styles found inside the Scriptures. Let's talk about those books.

J O B

The author of Job is unknown. Job is the key figure of the book of Job. While the book is classified with the poetics and appears toward the middle of the Bible, it is actually recognized as the earliest book written! Job is classified as poetry because most of the book is written in parallel lines, characteristic of poetry. The well-known story follows Job, the wealthy man from Uz. After a conversation between Satan and God, Job experienced extreme misfortune. Job cried out to God and continued to trust him, and God blessed Job by restoring his riches, his family, and his health.

Bible Readings:

Job 42:10–17;

Ecclesiastes 12:9–14;

Song of Songs 7:10

PSALMS

The Psalms is categorized into five collections: book 1 (Psalms 1–41); book 2 (Psalms 42–72); book 3 (Psalms 73–89); book 4 (Psalms 90–106); and book 5 (Psalms 107–150). Although David is popularly associated with the Psalms, he was not the only writer. Other writers included Solomon, Asaph, the sons of Korah, and even Moses (Psalm 90). Still other writers remained anonymous. We generally read Psalms today, but many of them were set to music when they were originally written. The book of Psalms span a period of over one thousand years and covers a range of emotions and situations: lament, praise, and thanksgiving, to name a few. Songs of ascent were generally sung on pilgrimages when the Israelites would travel to Jerusalem for one of the three annual feasts.^{vi}

PROVERBS AND ECCLESIASTES

Proverbs is a collection of short sayings that serve as principles for wise living. Multiple authors are thought to have penned the book, including Solomon, Agur, and Lemuel. Wisdom is the driving theme throughout Proverbs, and the authors advised their readers to apply the principles of these proverbs to their diverse life experiences. Although the author of Ecclesiastes refers only to himself as “The Preacher,” scholars often identify Solomon as the author.^{vii} Solomon reflected on the vanity of choosing one’s own life interests above pursuit of God. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon questioned the ultimate meaning of life. Throughout his ponderings, Solomon arrived at the conclusion that God’s presence and interaction make life significant.

SONG OF SONGS

In its original form, Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) stood as one long poem that celebrated married love.^{viii} In the poem, Solomon (widely accepted as the author) and his betrothed anticipated their wedding night, when they could physically express their affection for one another (Song of Songs 1–3). Once they were married, they were able to be together (Song of Songs 3–4). In the final section of the book, the bride finds comfort in her husband’s continued love for her. “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me” (Song of Songs 7:10).

What do you hope the books in the poetry genre will teach you about God and his attributes? What you think they will show you about yourself?

_____ is recognized as the earliest book of the Bible to be written.

What do these books tell us?

SCRIPTURE: 2 SAMUEL 7:16

Bible Readings:

2 Samuel 7:16;

Luke 1:31–33;

Hebrews 11:30–40

By the end of the Old Testament period, the people who had conquered the Promised Land were now displaced, returning from a foreign land as exiles. The nation that was supposed to bring God's light to the world had itself fallen into darkness. As you move further through Israel's history, you see some of the most depraved stories you'll ever read (Judges 19, for example). Through these stories, we see how far Israel had moved from God through disobedience and idolatry.

In these books, what also becomes glaringly clear is the need for God's salvation. He shone glimpses of light against the backdrop of such darkness. He made a covenant with David, promising a descendant that would reign as king forever (2 Samuel 7:16). The covenant would find its ultimate fulfillment in Christ (Luke 1:31–33).

THOSE WHO FEAR HIM

The poetry books of the Old Testament communicated to Israel wisdom in how to fear God and live according to his ways. Through personification, stanzas, and other poetic devices, they encouraged them to praise God because of his mighty acts. They declare the benefits of serving the Lord and warn of the pitfalls of disobedience. And they promise the unrelenting mercy of God.

As we study these books, one thing becomes clear—the need for redemption. Not only for the children of Israel, but for our own selves. In our human condition, we are still broken. We too are in need of redemption, a displaced people longing for peace and restoration. The thread of hope that continues to run through the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Christ.

As followers of Jesus, we get to experience Christ in ways that our Old Testament family did not (Hebrews 11:13 – 16, 39 – 40). Because we are free from the shame of sin, we can praise God for his mighty acts in our lives, as the psalms declare. We continue to study his Word so that we may continue to learn his ways and please him with our lifestyle.

**How do you think studying these books can give you hope
and help you remember God's great love for you?**

What Do You Observe?

Today, let's look at two different passages from the historical and poetic books and put inductive study into practice again.

STUDYING HISTORY AND POETRY

When studying the history section of the Bible, we will find that names and numbers do more than just contribute to historical records. Oftentimes, they tie into the themes of a chapter or book. As we seek to interpret these books, it is important to note any of these recurring and significant facts

When studying the poetry books, we should remember that the genre has its own characteristics and rules. Knowing these can help us arrive at a richer and more accurate interpretation.

OBSERVE: NEHEMIAH 1:5-6; PSALM 107:8-9

We discover from the context of Nehemiah 1 that Nehemiah is addressing the Lord in prayer. In the previous verses of the chapter, Nehemiah has gotten distressing news that the Jews who had returned from exile were not doing well. Additionally, the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the city gates were destroyed by a fire. Upon hearing this distressing news, Nehemiah wept and mourned for days. He also fasted and prayed. Verses 5-11 give the content of what he prayed.

“

**Let them thank
the Lord for his
steadfast love, for his
wondrous works to
the children of man!
For he satisfies the
longing soul, and the
hungry soul he fills
with good things.**

”

PSALM 107:8-9

Bible Readings:

Nehemiah 1:5-6;

Psalms 107:8-9

From our text in verses 5 and 6, a portion of Nehemiah's prayer, we learn, through observation, that God is great, he is the God of the heavens, and he keeps his covenant with those who love him and keep his commandments. In verse 6, Nehemiah prays on behalf of the Israelites, himself, and his family. He confesses the sins of them all.

What other things can we observe in verses 5 and 6?

In Psalm 107, the psalmist is speaking to a group of people, the redeemed, and extolling them to give thanks unto the Lord. He gives them reasons to thank the Lord: because of his unwavering love, his wonderful works, and because he satisfies the longing and hungry person with good things.

What else do we observe in the passage? Are there any poetic forms that immediately jump out to us?

As we begin to interpret the passages, how do we understand these verses in light of their contexts? Once we have done our due diligence to arrive at an interpretation that is consistent with the context and agrees with the rest of Scripture, we are ready for application.

What Does It Mean For You?



Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

PSALM 107:8–9

Bible Readings: *Nehemiah 1:5–6; Psalm 107:8–9*

Paul wrote in Romans, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (15:4).

If we agree with this verse, then we believe that the content found in Nehemiah and Psalms is just as relevant for us today as it was for the original audience. As we actively respond to these Scriptures, we pray that the Holy Spirit will give us insight on how to apply these passages to our lives. Our desire is that he continues to cultivate our love for God and a longing to know his Word.

The distressing news that Nehemiah heard concerning Jerusalem caused him to weep and mourn for days. It also prompted him to fast and pray to the Lord, interceding for his fellow citizens and his own family and confessing their collective sins.

In Psalm 107, the psalmist instructs the people of God to give thanks to the one who has redeemed them. The specific reasons to give thanks to the Lord in verses 8 and 9 include his unfailing love, his wonderful deeds, and his filling up the thirsty and hungry soul with goodness.

How does Nehemiah 1:5–6 motivate you to respond to God? To love those in your life?

In what specific ways can you apply Nehemiah 1:5–6 to your life?

What does Psalm 107:8–9 teach you about God’s love and power?

How does it motivate you to love him? To love his people?

In what specific ways can you apply Psalm 107:8–9 to your life?
