

## Old Testament History

*Series: The Bible*

May 8, 2022

Welcome again to worship. I want to invite you to turn to page 4 in your bulletin, or if you are online, grab your spiritual journal to take notes.

Today, we continue our series "The Bible" as we look at the entirety of the Canon, recognizing the overarching themes and message of Scripture.

On page 4 of your bulletin is a graphic representation of the Bible. Like a bookshelf, the Bible has many sections: Law, History, Poetry, the Prophets (both Major and Minor) are in the Old Testament. In the New Testament are the Gospels, a single book on Church History, then the Letters written by Paul, followed by General Letters, and concluding with the Book of Revelation.

Today, we are going to take a 30,000 foot look at the second section, the Old Testament History, and ask three questions: What are the mega themes of the section? What is the key verse of that section? And how does it point to Jesus, the Son of God? I am so glad you have joined us on this spectacular journey!

The Old Testament History section spans the time from the entry into the Promised Land with Joshua, through the judges to Saul, David, Solomon, to the split of the kingdom, the Assyrian and Babylonia conquests, and finally to the return to the land.

Let me give you a very brief summary of each book:

Joshua tells the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land. They immediately face the city of Jericho, and for 6 days, they marched around the city once a day without saying a word. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, they marched around the city 7 times, then, when the horn was blown, the people all shouted, and the walls of the city fell down. The rest of the book is about how they defeated the other cities to take possession of the land promised by God to Abraham.

The Book of Judges is after Joshua's death and outlines the recurring pattern of the people walking away from God, God punishing them by allowing a neighboring nation to subjugate them, and then a leader, called a judge, rose up who was faithful to the Lord, defeated the oppressors, and brought the people back to God. So, the story of the judges like Deborah and Gideon and Samson are in the book.

Ruth is the wonderful story of a Moabite girl who is faithful to her mother-in-law and to her God, and becomes an ancestor of King David and eventually Jesus.

1 and 2 Samuel contains the story of the last judge Samuel, then the people's cry to have a king like all the other nations, though their king was to be God. The Lord lets them have their king, and Saul is anointed. Soon, a man after God's heart, David, comes into the picture, and when Saul dies, David becomes king.

1 and 2 Kings is the story of the kings after David. The kingdom splits into two after Solomon. The northern kingdom of Israel immediately begins worship idols and has a succession of evil kings until the Assyrians defeat them and scatters them throughout the empire. The southern kingdom of Judah has several faithful kings, but they eventually abandoned God and were overthrown by the Babylonian Empire.

1 and 2 Chronicles is a repeat of the accounts of the reign of David and the kingdom of Judah.

The Book of Ezra is about the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land.

Nehemiah occurs at the same time and is about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Esther is during the Assyrian Empire days and the story of a Jewish girl who becomes queen.

There are 6 Mega themes in the Old Testament History section.

**First, Faith.**

Beginning with the entry into the Promised Land, then many periods in their history, the Israelites demonstrated their faith by trusting God daily to save and guide them. They remembered God had fulfilled His promises in the past, and therefore, they developed a strong confidence that He would be faithful in the future.

This is true for today. We, like the Israelites looking across the Jordan River, are venturing into an unknown land. We do not know what lies ahead. The rumors of giants and walled cities could cause some to doubt.

But our faith is based on the fact that what God has done in the past, He will do again. What God has done in the past, He will do again! Our strength to walk in faith and do God's work comes from trusting Him. His promises reassure us of His love and that He will be there to guide us in the decisions and struggles we face. Faith begins with believing He can be trusted.<sup>1</sup>

**The second mega theme is this: the tendency towards disobedience.**

We see in Old Testament History the repeating cycle of decline, decay, and defeat into the nation's life. They worshipped idols, even sacrificing their own children to false gods. As a result, they were defeated many times because of their disobedience. Because David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he experienced consequences of his sin that destroyed both his family and the nation. The beautiful Temple that Solomon built, the place that God said He would dwell, was leveled to the ground because of disobedience.

The mantra of the day could be described in Judges 17:6:

*In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*<sup>2</sup>

It sounds like what we have today, whether it be in society or in the church: everyone decides on their own what is right in their own rights, regardless of what God says.

Friends, temptation quite often comes when a person's life is aimless. We sometimes think that sinful pleasures and freedom from God's restraint will bring us a feeling of vitality; but sin creates a cycle of suffering that is not worth the fleeting pleasures it offers. There are consequences when we disobey God.

**The third mega theme is Judgment.**

After King Solomon's reign, the Kingdom of Israel lasted 209 years before the Assyrians destroyed it. The kingdom of Judah lasted 345 years before the Babylonians took Jerusalem. After repeated warnings to His people, God used these evil and pagan nations as instruments for His justice.

2 Kings 17:13,14 reads:

*Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: "Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and decrees—the entire*

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<sup>1</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Joshua

<sup>2</sup> Judges 17:6 (NLT)

*law that I commanded your ancestors to obey, and that I gave you through my servants the prophets.” But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors who had refused to believe in the Lord their God.<sup>3</sup>*

The results of rejecting God’s commands and purpose for our lives are severe. He will not ignore unbelief or rebellion. Our nation is in peril because of our unbelief in God and the violation of His commandments. We must believe in Him, accept Christ’s sacrificial death on our behalf, and obey, or we will be judged also.

**The fourth mega theme is God’s Faithfulness.**

God faithfully kept the promises He made to Israel. He responded to His people with tender mercy and swift justice. In showing mercy, He faithfully acted in the best interest of His people. In showing justice, He was faithful to His word and perfect moral nature.

Because God is faithful, He can be counted on to be merciful toward us. Yet God is also just, and He will not tolerate rebellion against Him. His faithfulness and unselfish love should inspire us to dedicate ourselves to Him completely. We must never take His mercy for granted.

**The fifth mega theme is Faith and Action.**

The urging of Israel’s leaders motivated the people to rebuilt the Temple in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Over the years, they had intermarried with idol worshipers and adopted their pagan practices. Their faith, tested and revived, also led them to remove these sins from their lives. Faith led them to complete the Temple and to remove sin from their society.

As we trust God with our hearts and minds, we must also act by completing our daily responsibilities. It is not enough to say we believe; we must make the changes God requires.

**The final mega theme of the Old Testament History is Prayer.**

Both Nehemiah and Ezra responded to problems, the opposition they faced, with prayer. When Nehemiah began his work, he recognized the problem, immediately prayed, and then acted on the problem.

Prayer is still God’s mighty force in solving problems today. Prayer and action go hand in hand. Through prayer, God guides our preparation, teamwork, and diligent efforts to carry out his will.

In our message series, we are identifying a key verse in each section. Well, I couldn’t only share 1 key verse here; we have 2.

The first one is God’s charge to Joshua as he is about to lead the people into the Promised Land. In Joshua 1:8-9, God said:

*Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”<sup>4</sup>*

Folks, as we face the uncertainties of the future, we need to take this advance from God: study the Word, obey it, and be strong and courageous.

While the first key verse comes from the first book in the Old Testament history section, the second key verse comes from the last one. From Esther 4, we read that the

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 17:13,14 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> Joshua 1:8-9 (NLT2)

king's highest advisor has plotted to commit genocide against the Jewish people. Esther's uncle Mordecai goes to his niece Esther, who is queen and says this to her:

*For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*<sup>5</sup>

"For such a time as this." That is God's word to us in 2022. Got has placed you here, me here, all of us here, to do what He wants for us. We may wonder why we have to go through these days of trial and transition, but God has placed us here. We are here for such a time as this.

The final question we ask of each section of Scripture in this series is "How the Old Testament History points to Christ?"

Well, this section of Scripture is the least focused on Jesus compared to the others. There is no prophecy in the Old Testament History that predicts Jesus except 1 time.

2 Samuel 7 is God speaking to David, and in it is **The promise of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Davidic kingdom.**

*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*<sup>6</sup>

Now, this was particularly fulfilled in Solomon. Solomon did become king after David. He did build the Temple.

But Solomon's throne was not forever. It was destroyed. But Jesus' is forever, and this verse ultimately points to Jesus.

There is something else we see of Jesus in this section, and it is a characteristic of His great, great, great, I don't know how many greats grandmother Ruth, and that was **Kindness.**

Ruth showed great kindness to Naomi. In turn, Boaz showed kindness to Ruth—a despised Moabite woman with no money. God showed his kindness to Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz by bringing them together for his purposes. Just as Boaz showed his kindness by buying back land to guarantee Ruth and Naomi's inheritance, so Christ showed His kindness by dying for us to guarantee our eternal life. God's kindness should motivate us to love and honor Him.<sup>7</sup>

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor, theologian, and an anti-Nazi dissident. His writings on Christianity's role in the secular world have become widely influential, and his book "The Cost of Discipleship" is described as a modern classic. He was known for his staunch resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, including vocal opposition to Hitler's euthanasia program and genocidal persecution of the Jews. He was arrested in April 1943 by the Gestapo and eventually hanged the ninth of April, 1945, a month before the Nazi regime collapsed.

He criticized the German church and German Christians for allowing a Hitler to come into power. He said this, "Lack of repentance is the root cause of powerlessness

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<sup>5</sup> Esther 4:14 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> 2 Samuel 7:12-14a (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Ruth

in the church, in this materialistic, self-indulgent age. There can be no spiritual power in a non-repentant church.”

I pray that we are a repentant people, who ask God for forgiveness when we have not followed His commands or His ways. I pray that we are a repentant people, who ask God for forgiveness when we have not spoken up against evil in our world. I pray that we are a repentant people, who ask God for forgiveness when we have self-indulgent instead of self-giving. I pray that we are a repentant people.