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Book of Genesis - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Genesis"

Answer: Author: The author of the Book of Genesis is not identified. Traditionally, the author has always assumed to have been Moses. There is no conclusive reason to deny the Mosaic authorship of Genesis.

Date of Writing: The Book of Genesis does not state when it was written. The date of authorship is likely between 1440 and 1400 B.C., between the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and his death.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Genesis has sometimes been called the "seed-plot" of the entire Bible. Most of the major doctrines in the Bible are introduced in "seed" form in the Book of Genesis. Along with the fall of man, God's promise of salvation or redemption is recorded (Genesis 3:15). The doctrines of creation, imputation of sin, justification, atonement, depravity, wrath, grace, sovereignty, responsibility, and many more are all addressed in this book of origins called Genesis.

Many of the great questions of life are answered in Genesis. (1) Where did I come from? (God created us - Genesis 1:1) (2) Why am I here? (we are here to have a relationship with God - Genesis 15:6) (3) Where am I going? (we have a destination after death - Genesis 25:8). Genesis appeals to the scientist, the historian, the theologian, the housewife, the farmer, the traveler, and the man or woman of God. It is a fitting beginning for God's story of His plan for mankind, the Bible.

Key Verses: Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 12:2-3, "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."

Genesis 50:20, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Brief Summary: The Book of Genesis can be divided into two sections: Primitive History and Patriarchal History. Primitive history records (1) Creation (Genesis chapters 1-2); (2) the Fall of man (Genesis chapters 3-5); (3) the Flood (Genesis chapters 6-9); and (4) the dispersion (Genesis chapters 10-11).

Patriarchal history records the lives of four great men: (1) Abraham (Genesis 12:1-25:8); (2) Isaac (Genesis 21:1-35:29); (3) Jacob (Genesis 25:21-50:14); and (4) Joseph (Genesis 30:22-50:26).

God created a universe that was good and free from sin. God created humanity to have a personal relationship with Him. Adam and Eve sinned and thereby brought evil and death into the world. Evil increased steadily in the world until there was only one family in which God found anything good. God sent the Flood to wipe out evil, but delivered Noah and his family along with the animals in the Ark.

After the Flood, humanity began again to multiply and spread throughout the world.

God chose Abraham, through whom He would create a chosen people and eventually the promised Messiah. The chosen line was passed on to Abraham's son Isaac, and then to Isaac's son Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and his twelve sons became the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. In His sovereignty, God had Jacob's son Joseph sent to Egypt by the despicable actions of Joseph's brothers. This act, intended for evil by the brothers, was intended for good by God and eventually resulted in Jacob and his family being saved from a devastating famine by Joseph, who had risen to great power in Egypt.

Foreshadowings: Many New Testament themes have their roots in Genesis. Jesus Christ is the Seed of the woman who will destroy Satan's power (Gen. 3:15). As with Joseph, God's plan for the good of mankind through the sacrifice of His Son was intended for good, even though those who crucified Jesus intended it for evil. Noah and his family are the first of many remnants pictured in the Bible. Despite overwhelming odds and difficult circumstances, God always preserves a remnant of the faithful for Himself. The remnant of Israelites returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity; God preserved a remnant through all the persecutions described in Isaiah and Jeremiah; a remnant of 7000 priests were hidden from the wrath of Jezebel; God promises that a remnant of Jews will one day embrace their true Messiah (Romans 11). The faith displayed by Abraham would be the gift of God and the basis of salvation for both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11).

Practical Application: The overriding theme of Genesis is God's eternal existence and His creation of the world. There is no effort on the part of the author to defend the existence of God; he simply states that God is, always was, and always will be, almighty over all. In the same way, we have confidence in the truths of Genesis, despite the claims of those who would deny them. All people, regardless of culture, nationality or language, are accountable to the Creator. But because of sin, introduced into the world at the Fall, we are separated from Him. But through one small nation, Israel, God's redemptive plan for mankind was revealed and made available to all. We rejoice in that plan.

God created the universe, the earth, and every living being. We can trust Him to handle the concerns in our lives. God can take a hopeless situation, i.e. Abraham and Sarah being childless, and do amazing things if we will simply trust and obey. Terrible and unjust things may happen in our lives, as with Joseph, but God will always bring about a greater good if we have faith in Him and His sovereign plan. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Book of Exodus - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Exodus"

Answer: Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Exodus (Exodus 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27).

Date of Writing: The Book of Exodus was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The word "exodus" means departure. In God's timing, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt marked the end of a period of oppression for Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:13), and the beginning of the fulfillment of the covenant promise to Abraham that his descendants would not only live in the Promised Land, but would also multiply and become a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3, 7). The purpose of the book may be expressed as tracing the rapid growth of Jacob's descendants from Egypt to the establishment of the theocratic nation in their Promised Land.

Key Verses: Exodus 1:8, "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt."

Exodus 2:24-25, "God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them."

Exodus 12:27, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians." Then the people bowed down and worshiped."

Exodus 20:2-3, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

Brief Summary: Exodus begins where Genesis leaves off as God deals with His chosen people, the Jews. It traces the events from the time Israel entered Egypt as guests of Joseph, who was powerful in Egypt, until they were eventually delivered from the cruel bondage of slavery into which they had been brought by "...a new king...which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).

Chapters 1-14 describe the conditions of oppression of the Jews under Pharaoh, the rise of Moses as their deliverer, the plagues God brought upon Egypt for the refusal of their leader to submit to Him, and the departure from Egypt. God's sovereign and powerful hand is seen in the miracles of the plagues"ending with the plague of death of the firstborn and the institution of the first Passover"the deliverance of the Israelites, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian army.

The middle portion of Exodus is dedicated to the wandering in the wilderness and the miraculous provision by God for His people. But even though He gave them bread from heaven, sweet water from bitter, water from a rock, victory over those who would destroy them, His Law written on tablets of stone by His own

hand, and His presence in the form of pillars of fire and cloud, the people continually grumbled and rebelled against Him.

The last third of the book describes the construction of the Ark of the Covenant and the plan for the Tabernacle with its various sacrifices, altars, furniture, ceremonies, and forms of worship.

Foreshadowings: The numerous sacrifices required of the Israelites were a picture of the ultimate sacrifice, the Passover Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The night of the last plague on Egypt, an unblemished lamb was killed and its blood applied to the doorposts of the houses of God's people, protecting them from the angel of death. This foreshadowed Jesus, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19), whose blood applied to us ensures eternal life. Among the symbolic presentations of Christ in the book of Exodus is the story of the water from the rock in Exodus 17:6. Just as Moses struck the rock to provide life-giving water for the people to drink, so did God strike the

Rock of our salvation, crucifying Him for our sin, and from the Rock came the gift of living water (John 4:10). The provision of manna in the wilderness is a perfect picture of Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:48), provided by God to give us life.

Practical Application: The Mosaic Law was given in part to show mankind that they were incapable of keeping it. We are unable to please God by law-keeping; therefore, Paul exhorts us to "put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

God's provision for the Israelites, from deliverance from captivity to the manna and quail in the wilderness, are clear indications of His gracious provision for His people. God has promised to supply all our needs. "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

We are to trust in the Lord, for He can deliver us from anything. But God does not allow sin to go unpunished forever. As a result, we can trust Him in His retribution and justice. When God removes us from a bad situation, we should not seek to go back. When God makes demands of us, He expects us to comply, but at the same time He provides grace and mercy because He knows that, on our own, we will not be able to fully obey.

Book of Leviticus - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Leviticus"

Answer: Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Leviticus.

Date of Writing: The Book of Leviticus was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Because the Israelites had been held captive in Egypt for 400 years, the concept of God had been distorted by the polytheistic, pagan Egyptians. The purpose of Leviticus is to provide instruction and laws to guide a sinful, yet redeemed people in their relationship with a holy God. There is an emphasis in Leviticus on the need for personal holiness in response to a holy God. Sin must be atoned for through the offering of proper sacrifices (chapters 8-10). Other topics covered in the book are diets (clean and unclean foods), childbirth, and diseases which are carefully regulated (chapters 11-15). Chapter 16 describes the Day of Atonement when an annual sacrifice is made for cumulative sin of the people. Furthermore, the people of God are to be circumspect in their personal, moral, and social living, in contrast to the then current practices of the heathen roundabout them (chapters 17-22).

Key Verses: Leviticus 1:4, "He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

Leviticus 17:11, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Leviticus 19:18, "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

Brief Summary: Chapters 1–7 outline the offerings required of both the laity and the priesthood. Chapters 8–10 describe the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. Chapters 11–16 are the prescriptions for various types of uncleanness. The final 10 chapters are God's guidelines to His people for practical holiness. Various feasts were instituted in the people's worship of God, convened and practiced according to God's laws. Blessings or curses would accompany either the keeping or neglect of God's commandments (chapter 26). Vows to the Lord are covered in chapter 27.

Foreshadowings: Much of the ritualistic practices of worship picture in many ways the person and work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10 tells us that the Mosaic Law is "only a shadow of the good things that are coming" by which is meant that the daily sacrifices offered by the priests for the sin of the people were a representation of the ultimate Sacrifice Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice would be once for all time for those who would believe in Him. The holiness imparted temporarily by the Law would one day be replaced by the absolute attainment of holiness when Christians exchanged their sin for the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Practical Application: God takes His holiness very seriously and so should we. The trend in the postmodern church is to create God in our own image, giving Him the attributes we would like Him to have instead of the ones His Word describes. God's utter holiness, His transcendent splendor, and His "unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:16) are foreign concepts to many Christians. We are called to walk in the Light and to put away the darkness in our lives so that we may be pleasing in His sight. A holy God cannot tolerate blatant, unashamed sin in His people and His holiness requires Him to punish it. We dare not be flippant in our attitudes toward sin or God's loathing of it, nor should we make light of it in any way.

Praise the Lord that because of Jesus' death on our behalf, we no longer have to offer animal sacrifices. Leviticus is all about substitution. The death of the animals was a substitute penalty for those who have sinned. In the same way, but infinitely better, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was the substitute for our sins. Now we can stand before a God of utter holiness without fear because He sees in us the righteousness of Christ.

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Book of Numbers - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Numbers"

Answer: Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Numbers.

Date of Writing: The Book of Numbers was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The message of the Book of Numbers, is universal and timeless."It reminds believers of the spiritual warfare in which they are engaged, for Numbers is the book of the service and walk of God's people. The Book of Numbers essentially bridges the gap between the Israelites receiving the Law (Exodus and Leviticus) and preparing them to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy and Joshua).

Key Verses: Numbers 6:24-26, "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Numbers 12:6-8, "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Numbers 14:30-34, "Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But you " your bodies will fall in this desert. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years " one year for each of the forty days you explored the land " you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you."

Brief Summary: Most of the events of the Book of Numbers take place in the wilderness, primarily between the second and fortieth years of the wandering of the Israelites. The first 25 chapters of the book chronicle the experiences of the first generation of Israel in the wilderness, while the rest of the book describes the experiences of the second generation. The theme of obedience and rebellion followed by repentance and blessing runs through the entire book, as well as the entire Old Testament.

The theme of the holiness of God is continued from the book of Leviticus into the book of Numbers, which reveals God's instruction and preparation of His people to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. The importance of the Book of Numbers is indicated by its being referred to in the New Testament many times. The Holy Spirit called special attention to Numbers in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. The words "all these things happened to them for examples" refers to the sin of the Israelites and God's displeasure with them.

In Romans 11:22, Paul speaks about the "goodness and severity of God." That, in a nutshell, is the message of Numbers. The severity of God is seen in the death of the rebellious generation in the

wilderness, those who never entered the Promised Land. The goodness of God is realized in the new generation. God protected, preserved, and provided for these people until they possessed the land.

This reminds us of the justice and love of God, which are always in sovereign harmony.

Foreshadowings: God's demand for holiness in His people is completely and finally satisfied in Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill the law on our behalf (Matthew 5:17). The concept of the promised Messiah pervades the book. The story in chapter 19 of the sacrifice of the red heifer "without defect or blemish" prefigures Christ, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish who was sacrificed for our sins. The image of the bronze snake lifted up on the pole to provide physical healing (chapter 21) also prefigures the lifting up of Christ, either upon the cross, or in the ministry of the Word, that whoever looks to Him by faith may have spiritual healing.

In chapter 24, Balaam's fourth oracle speaks of the star and the scepter who is to rise out of Jacob. Here is a prophecy of Christ who is called the "morning star" in Revelation 22:16 for His glory, brightness, and splendor, and for the light that comes by Him. He may also be called a scepter, that is, a scepter bearer, because of his royalty. He not only has the name of a king, but has a kingdom, and rules with a scepter of grace, mercy, and righteousness.

Practical Application: A major theological theme developed in the New Testament from Numbers is that sin and unbelief, especially rebellion, reap the judgment of God. First Corinthians specifically says "and Hebrews 3:74:13 strongly implies"that these events were written as examples for believers to observe and avoid. We are not to "set our hearts on evil things" (v. 6), or be sexually immoral (v. 8), or put God to the test (v. 9) or gripe and complain (v. 10).

Just as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness 40 years because of their rebellion, so too does God sometimes allow us to wander away from Him and suffer loneliness and lack of blessings when we rebel against Him. But God is faithful and just, and just as He restored the Israelites to their rightful place in His heart, He will always restore Christians to the place of blessing and intimate fellowship with Him if we repent and return to Him (1 John 1:9).

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Book of Deuteronomy - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Deuteronomy"

Answer: Author: Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, which is in fact a collection of his sermons to Israel just before they crossed the Jordan. "These are the words which Moses spoke" (1:1). Someone else (Joshua, perhaps) may have written the last chapter.

Date of Writing: These sermons were given during the 40-day period prior to Israel's entering the Promised Land. The first sermon was delivered on the 1st day of the 11th month (1:3), and the Israelites crossed the Jordan 70 days later, on the 10th day of the 1st month (Joshua 4:19). Subtract 30 days of mourning after Moses' death (Deuteronomy 34:8), and we're left with 40 days. The year was 1406 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: A new generation of Israelites was about to enter the Promised Land. This multitude had not experienced the miracle at the Red Sea or heard the law given at Sinai, and they were about to enter a new land with many dangers and temptations. The book of Deuteronomy was given to remind them of God's law and God's power.

Key Verses: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you." (Deuteronomy 4:2)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

"He said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you"they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 32:46-47)

Brief Summary: The Israelites are commanded to remember four things: God's faithfulness, God's holiness, God's blessings, and God's warnings. The first three chapters recap the trip from Egypt to their current location, Moab. Chapter 4 is a call to obedience, to be faithful to the God Who was faithful to them.

Chapters 5 through 26 are a repetition of the law. The Ten Commandments, the laws concerning sacrifices and special days, and the rest of the law are given to the new generation. Blessings are promised to those who obey (5:29; 6:17-19; 11:13-15), and famine is promised to those who break the law (11:16-17).

The theme of blessing and cursing is continued in chapters 27-30. This portion of the book ends with a clear choice set before Israel: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." God's desire for His people is found in what He recommends: "choose life" (30:19).

In the final chapters, Moses encourages the people; commissions his replacement, Joshua; records a song; and gives a final blessing to each of the tribes of Israel. Chapter 34 relates the circumstances of Moses' death. He climbed Mt. Pisgah, where the Lord showed him the Promised Land that he could not enter. At 120 years old, but still with good eyesight and the strength of youth, Moses died in the presence of the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy ends with a short obituary on this great prophet.

Foreshadowings: Many New Testament themes are present in the Book of Deuteronomy. The foremost among them is the necessity of keeping perfectly the Mosaic Law and the impossibility of doing so. The endless sacrifices necessary to atone for the sins of the people "who continually transgressed the Law" would find their fulfillment in the final "once for all" sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:10). Because of His atoning work on the cross, we would need no further sacrifices for sin.

God's choosing of the Israelites as His special people foreshadows His choosing of those who would believe in Christ (1 Peter 2:9). In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Moses prophesies of another prophet "the ultimate Prophet to come who is the Messiah. Like Moses, He would receive and preach divine revelation and He would lead His people (John 6:14; 7:40).

Practical Application: The book of Deuteronomy underscores the importance of God's Word. It is a vital part of our lives. Although we are no longer under the Old Testament law, we are still responsible to submit to the will of God in our lives. Simple obedience brings blessing, and sin has its own consequences.

None of us is "above the law." Even Moses, the leader and prophet chosen by God, was required to obey. The reason that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land was that he disobeyed the Lord's clear command (Numbers 20:13).

During the time of His testing in the wilderness, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy three times (Matthew 4). In so doing, Jesus illustrated for us the necessity of hiding God's Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).

As Israel remembered God's faithfulness, so should we. The crossing of the Red Sea, the holy presence at Sinai, and the blessing of manna in the desert should be an encouragement to us as well. A great way to keep going forward is to take some time to look back and see what God has done.

We also have a beautiful picture in Deuteronomy of a loving God Who desires a relationship with His children. The Lord names love as the reason that He brought Israel out of Egypt "with a mighty hand" and redeemed them (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). What a wonderful thing to be free from the bondage of sin and loved by an all powerful God!

Book of Joshua - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Joshua"

Answer: Author: The Book of Joshua does not explicitly name its author. More than likely Joshua the son of Nun, the successor of Moses as leader over Israel, penned much of this book. The latter part of the book was written by at least one other person after the death of Joshua. It is also possible that several sections were edited / compiled following Joshua's death.

Date of Writing: The Book of Joshua was likely written between 1400 and 1370 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Joshua provides an overview of the military campaigns to conquer the land area that God had promised. Following the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent forty years of the wilderness wanderings, the newly-formed nation is now poised to enter the Promised Land, conquer the inhabitants, and occupy the territory. The overview that we have here gives abbreviated and selective details of many of the battles and the manner in which the land was not only conquered, but how it was divided into tribal areas.

Key Verses: Joshua 1:6-9, "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua 24:14-15, "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Brief Summary: The Book of Joshua continues the story of the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt. The book chronicles the approximately 20 years of Joshua's leadership of the people after Moses anointed him at the end of Deuteronomy. The twenty-four chapter divisions of the Book of Joshua can be summarized as follows:

Chapters 1-12: Entering and conquering the Promised Land.

Chapters 13-22: Instructions for distributing the portions of the Promised Land.

Chapters 23-24: Joshua's farewell address

Foreshadowings: The story of Rahab the harlot and her great faith in the God of the Israelites gives her a place with those honored for their faith in Hebrews 11:31. Hers is a story of God's grace to sinners and salvation by faith alone. Most importantly, by God's grace she was in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5).

One of the ceremonial rituals of Joshua 5 finds its perfect fulfillment in the New Testament. Verses 1-9 describe God's commandment that those who were born in the wilderness were to be circumcised when they came into the Promised Land. By so doing, God "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" from them, meaning that He cleansed them from the sins of their former life. Colossians 2:10-12 describes believers as having been circumcised in their hearts by Christ Himself, by whom we have put off the sinful nature of our former lives without Christ.

God established cities of refuge so that those who accidentally killed someone could live there without fear of retribution. Christ is our refuge to whom we "have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (Hebrews 6:18).

The Book of Joshua has an overriding theological theme of rest. The Israelites, after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, finally entered the rest God had prepared for them in the land of Canaan. The writer of Hebrews uses this incident as a warning to us not to let unbelief keep us from entering into God's rest in Christ (Hebrews 3:7-12).

Practical Application: One of the key verses of the Book of Joshua is 1:8 "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." The Old Testament is replete with stories of how the people "forgot" God and His Word and suffered terrible consequences. For the Christian, the Word of God is our lifeblood. If we neglect it, our lives will suffer accordingly. But if we take to heart the principle of verse 1:8, we will be complete and able to be of use in God's kingdom (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and we will find that God's promises in Joshua 1:8-9 will be ours as well.

Joshua is a prime example of the benefits of a worthy mentor. For years he remained close to Moses. He watched Moses as he followed God in an almost flawless manner. He learned to pray in a personal way from Moses. He learned how to obey through the example of Moses. Joshua apparently also learned from the negative example that cost Moses the joy of actually entering the Promised Land. If you are alive, you are a mentor. Someone, somewhere, is watching you. Some younger person or someone that you are influencing is seeing how you live and how you react. Someone is learning from you. Someone will follow your example. Mentoring is far more than the words that are spoken by the mentor. His or her entire life is on display.

Book of Judges - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Judges"

Answer: Author: The Book of Judges does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Samuel was the author of Judges. Internal evidence indicates that the author of Judges lived shortly after the period of the Judges. Samuel fits this qualification.

Date of Writing: The Book of Judges was likely written between 1045 and 1000 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Judges can be divided into two sections: 1) Chapters 1-16 which gives an account of the wars of deliverance beginning with the Israelites' defeat of the Canaanites and ending with the defeat of the Philistines and the death of Samson; 2) Chapters 17-21 which is referred to as an appendix and does not relate to the previous chapters. These chapters are noted as a time "when there was no king in Israel (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)." The Book of Ruth was originally a part of the Book of Judges, but in A.D. 450 it was removed to become a book of its own.

Key Verses: Judges 2:16-19: "Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways."

Judges 10:15: "But the Israelites said to the LORD, 'We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now.'"

Judges 21:25: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

Brief Summary: The Book of Judges is a tragic account of how Yahweh [God] was taken for granted by His children year after year, century after century. Judges is a sad contrast to the book of Joshua which chronicles the blessings God bestowed on the Israelites for their obedience in conquering the land. In Judges, they were disobedient and idolatrous, leading to their many defeats. Yet God has never failed to open His arms in love to His people whenever they repent from their wicked ways and call upon His name. (Judges 2:18) Through the 15 judges of Israel, God honored His promise to Abraham to protect and bless his offspring (Genesis 12:2-3).

After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, the Israelites returned to serving Baal and Ashtaroth. God allowed the Israelites to suffer the consequences of worshiping false gods. It was then that the people of God would cry out to Yahweh for help. God sent His children judges to lead them in

righteous living. But time after time they would turn their backs on God and return to their lives of wickedness. However, keeping His part of the covenant with Abraham, God would save His people from their oppressors throughout the 480-year span of the Book of Judges.

Probably the most notable judge was the 12th judge, Samson, who came to lead the Israelites after a 40-year captivity under the rule of the ruthless Philistines. Samson led God's people to victory over the Philistines where he lost his own life after 20 years as judge of Israel.

Foreshadowings: The announcement to Samson's mother that she would bear a son to lead Israel is a foreshadowing of the announcement to Mary of the birth of the Messiah. God sent His Angel to both women and told them they would "conceive and bear a son" (Judges 13:7; Luke 1:31) who would lead God's people.

God's compassionate delivery of His people despite their sin and rejection of Him presents a picture of Christ on the cross. Jesus died to deliver His people "all who would ever believe in Him" from their sin. Although most of those who followed Him during His ministry would eventually fall away and reject Him, still He remained faithful to His promise and went to the cross to die for us.

Practical Application: Disobedience always brings judgment. The Israelites present a perfect example of what we are not to do. Instead of learning from experience that God will always punish rebellion against Him, they continued to disobey and suffer God's displeasure and discipline. If we continue in disobedience, we invite God's discipline, not because He enjoys our suffering, but "because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6).

The Book of Judges is a testament to God's faithfulness. Even "if we are faithless, He will remain faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). Though we may be unfaithful to Him, as the Israelites were, still He is faithful to save us and preserve us (1 Thessalonians 5:24) and to forgive us when we seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9). "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

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Book of Ruth - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Ruth"

Answer: Author: The Book of Ruth does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Book of Ruth was written by the Prophet Samuel.

Date of Writing: The exact date the Book of Ruth was written is uncertain. However, the prevalent view is a date between 1011 and 931 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Ruth was written to the Israelites. It teaches that genuine love at times may require uncompromising sacrifice. Regardless of our lot in life, we can live according to the precepts of God. Genuine love and kindness will be rewarded. God abundantly blesses those who seek to live obedient lives. Obedient living does not allow for "accidents" in God's plan. God extends mercy to the merciful.

Key Verses: Ruth 1:16, "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.'"

Ruth 3:9, "'Who are you?' he asked. 'I am your servant Ruth,' she said. 'Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.'"

Ruth 4:17, "The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son.' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

Brief Summary: The setting for the Book of Ruth begins in the heathen country of Moab, a region northeast of the Dead Sea, but then moves to Bethlehem. This true account takes place during the dismal days of failure and rebellion of the Israelites, called the period of the Judges. A famine forces Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, from their Israelite home to the country of Moab. Elimelech dies and Naomi is left with her 2 sons, who soon marry 2 Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. Later both of the sons die, and Naomi is left alone with Orpah and Ruth in a strange land. Orpah returns to her parents, but Ruth determines to stay with Naomi as they journey to Bethlehem. This story of love and devotion tells of Ruth's eventual marriage to a wealthy man named Boaz, by whom she bears a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus. Obedience brings Ruth into the privileged lineage of Christ.

Foreshadowings: A major theme of the Book of Ruth is that of the kinsman-redeemer. Boaz, a relative of Naomi on her husband's side, acted upon his duty as outlined in the Mosaic Law to redeem an impoverished relative from his or her circumstances (Lev. 25:47-49). This scenario is repeated by Christ, who redeems us, the spiritually impoverished, from the slavery of sin. Our heavenly Father sent His own Son to the cross so that we might become children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ. By being our Redeemer, He makes us His kinsmen.

Practical Application: The sovereignty of our great God is clearly seen in the story of Ruth. He guided her every step of the way to become His child and fulfill His plan for her to become an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). In the same way, we have assurance that God has a plan for each of us. Just as Naomi and Ruth trusted Him to provide for them, so should we.

We see in Ruth an example of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. In addition to being devoted to her family (Ruth 1:15-18; Proverbs 31:10-12) and faithfully dependent upon God (Ruth 2:12; Proverbs 31:30), we see in Ruth a woman of godly speech. Her words are loving, kind and respectful, both to Naomi and to Boaz. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 “opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness” (v. 26). We could search far and wide to find a woman today as worthy of being our role model as Ruth.

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Book of 1 Samuel - Printer Friendly

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Question: "Book of 1 Samuel"

Answer: Author: The author is anonymous. We know that Samuel wrote a book (1 Samuel 10:25), and it is very possible that he wrote part of this book as well. Other possible contributors to 1 Samuel are the prophets/historians Nathan and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date of Writing: Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were one book. The translators of the Septuagint separated them, and we have retained that separation ever since. The events of 1 Samuel span approximately 100 years, from c. 1100 B.C. to c. 1000 B.C. The events of 2 Samuel cover another 40 years. The date of writing, then, would be sometime after 960 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: First Samuel records the history of Israel in the land of Canaan as they move from the rule of judges to being a unified nation under kings. Samuel emerges as the last judge, and he anoints the first two kings, Saul and David.

Key Verses: "But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king"" (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command"" (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

"But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king"" (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Brief Summary: The book of 1 Samuel can be neatly divided into two sections: the life of Samuel (chapters 1-12) and the life of Saul (chapters 13-31).

The book starts with the miraculous birth of Samuel in answer to his mother's earnest prayer. As a child, Samuel lived and served in the temple. God singled him out as a prophet (3:19-21), and the child's first prophecy was one of judgment on the corrupt priests.

The Israelites go to war with their perennial enemies, the Philistines. The Philistines capture the ark of the covenant and are in temporary possession of it, but when the Lord sends judgment, the Philistines return the ark. Samuel calls Israel to repentance (7:3-6) and then to victory over the Philistines.

The people of Israel, wanting to be like other nations, desire a king. Samuel is displeased by their demands, but the Lord tells him that it is not Samuel's leadership they are rejecting, but His own. After warning the people of what having a king would mean, Samuel anoints a Benjamite named Saul, who is crowned in Mizpah (10:17-25).

Saul enjoys initial success, defeating the Ammonites in battle (chapter 11). But then he makes a series of missteps: he presumptuously offers a sacrifice (chapter 13), he makes a foolish vow at the expense of his son Jonathan (chapter 14), and he disobeys the Lord's direct command (chapter 15). As a result of Saul's rebellion, God chooses another to take Saul's place. Meanwhile, God removes His blessing from Saul, and an evil spirit begins goading Saul toward madness (16:14).

Samuel travels to Bethlehem to anoint a youth named David as the next king (chapter 16). Later, David has his famous confrontation with Goliath the Philistine and becomes a national hero (chapter 17). David serves in Saul's court, marries Saul's daughter, and is befriended by Saul's son. Saul himself grows jealous of David's success and popularity, and he attempts to kill David. David flees, and so begins an extraordinary period of adventure, intrigue, and romance. With supernatural aid, David narrowly but consistently eludes the bloodthirsty Saul (chapters 19-26). Through it all, David maintains his integrity and his friendship with Jonathan.

Near the end of the book, Samuel has died, and Saul is a lost man. On the eve of a battle with Philistia, Saul seeks for answers. Having rejected God, he finds no help from heaven, and he seeks counsel from a medium instead. During the seance, Samuel's spirit rises from the dead to give one last prophecy: Saul would die in battle the next day. The prophecy is fulfilled; Saul's three sons, including Jonathan, fall in battle, and Saul commits suicide.

Foreshadowings: The prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 makes several prophetic references to Christ. She extols God as her Rock (v. 2), and we know from the gospel accounts that Jesus is the Rock upon whom we should build our spiritual houses. Paul refers to Jesus as the "rock of offense" to the Jews (Romans 9:33). Christ is called the "spiritual Rock" who provided spiritual drink to the Israelites in the wilderness just as He provides "living water" to our souls (1 Corinthians 10:4; John 4:10). Hannah's prayer also makes reference to the Lord who will judge the ends of the earth (v. 2:10), while Matthew 25:31-32 refers to Jesus as the Son of Man who will come in glory to judge everyone.

Practical Application: The tragic story of Saul is a study in wasted opportunity. Here was a man who had it all—honor, authority, riches, good looks, and more. Yet he died in despair, terrified of his enemies and knowing he had failed his nation, his family, and his God.

Saul made the mistake of thinking he could please God through disobedience. Like many today, he believed that a sensible motive will compensate for bad behavior. Perhaps his power went to his head, and he began to think he was above the rules. Somehow he developed a low opinion of God's commands and a high opinion of himself. Even when confronted with his wrongdoing, he attempted to vindicate himself, and that's when God rejected him (15:16-28).

Saul's problem is one we all face—a problem of the heart. Obedience to God's will is necessary for success, and if we in pride rebel against Him, we set ourselves up for loss.

David, on the other hand, did not seem like much at first. Even Samuel was tempted to overlook him (16:6-7). But God sees the heart and saw in David a man after His own heart (13:14). The humility and integrity of David, coupled with his boldness for the Lord and his commitment to prayer, set a good example for all of us.

Book of 2 Samuel - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of 2 Samuel"

Answer: Author: The Book of 2 Samuel does not identify its author. It could not be the Prophet Samuel, since he died in 1 Samuel. Possible writers include Nathan and Gad (see 1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date of Writing: Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were one book. The translators of the Septuagint separated them, and we have retained that separation ever since. "The events of 1 Samuel span approximately 100 years, from c. 1100 B.C. to c. 1000 B.C." "The events of 2 Samuel cover another 40 years." "The date of writing, then, would be sometime after 960 B.C."

Purpose of Writing: 2 Samuel is the record of King David's reign. This book places the Davidic Covenant in its historical context.

Key Verses: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

"But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 19:4).

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior" "from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies" (2 Samuel 22:2-4).

Brief Summary: The book of 2 Samuel can be divided into two main sections "David's triumphs (chapters 1-10) and David's troubles (chapters 11-20). The last part of the book (chapters 21-24) is a non-chronological appendix which contains further details of David's reign.

The book begins with David receiving news of the death of Saul and his sons. He proclaims a time of mourning. Soon afterward, David is crowned king over Judah, while Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's surviving sons, is crowned king over Israel (chapter 2). A civil war follows, but Ish-bosheth is murdered, and the Israelites ask David to reign over them as well (chapters 4-5).

David moves the country's capital from Hebron to Jerusalem and later moves the Ark of the Covenant (chapters 5-6). David's plan to build a temple in Jerusalem is vetoed by God, who then promises David the following things: 1) David would have a son to rule after him; 2) David's son would build the temple; 3) the throne occupied by David's lineage would be established forever; and 4) God would never take His mercy from David's house (2 Samuel 7:4-16).

David leads Israel to victory over many of the enemy nations which surrounded them. He also shows kindness to the family of Jonathan by taking in Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son (chapters 8-10).

Then David falls. He lusts for a beautiful woman named Bathsheba, commits adultery with her, and then has her husband murdered (chapter 11). When Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin, David confesses, and God graciously forgives. However, the Lord tells David that trouble would arise from within his own household.

Trouble does come when David's firstborn son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister, Tamar. In retaliation, Tamar's brother Absalom kills Amnon. Absalom then flees Jerusalem rather than face his father's anger. Later, Absalom leads a revolt against David, and some of David's former associates join the rebellion (chapters 15-16). David is forced out of Jerusalem, and Absalom sets himself up as king for a short time. The usurper is overthrown, however, and "against David's wishes" is killed. David mourns his fallen son.

A general feeling of unrest plagues the remainder of David's reign. The men of Israel threaten to split from Judah, and David must suppress another uprising (chapter 20).

The book's appendix includes information concerning a three-year famine in the land (chapter 21), a song of David (chapter 22), a record of the exploits of David's bravest warriors (chapter 23), and David's sinful census and the ensuing plague (chapter 24).

Foreshadowings: The Lord Jesus Christ is seen primarily in two parts of 2 Samuel. First, the Davidic Covenant as outlined in 2 Samuel 7:16: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" and reiterated in Luke 1:31-33 in the words of the angel who appeared to Mary to announce Jesus' birth to her: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." Christ is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant; He is the Son of God in the line of David who will reign forever.

Second, Jesus is seen in the song of David at the end of his life (2 Samuel 22:2-51). He sings of his rock, fortress and deliverer, his refuge and savior. Jesus is our Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:79), the Deliverer of Israel (Romans 11:25-27), the fortress to whom we "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18 KJV), and our only Savior (Luke 2:11; 2 Timothy 1:10).

Practical Application: Anyone can fall. Even a man like David, who truly desired to follow God and who was richly blessed by God, was susceptible to temptation. David's sin with Bathsheba should be a warning to all of us to guard our hearts, our eyes and our minds. Pride over our spiritual maturity and our ability to withstand temptation in our own strength is the first step to a downfall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

God is gracious to forgive even the most heinous sins when we truly repent. However, healing the wound caused by sin does not always erase the scar. Sin has natural consequences, and even after he was forgiven, David reaped what he had sown. His son from the illicit union with another man's wife was taken from him (2 Samuel 12:14-24) and David suffered the misery of a break in his loving relationship with his heavenly Father (Psalms 32 and 51). How much better to avoid sin in the first place, rather than having to seek forgiveness later!

Book of 1 Kings - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of 1 Kings"

Answer: Author: The Book of 1 Kings does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that it was written by the Prophet Jeremiah.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Kings was likely written between 560 and 540 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: This book is the sequel to 1 and 2 Samuel and begins by tracing Solomon's rise to kingship after the death of David. "The story begins with a united kingdom, but ends in a nation divided into 2 kingdoms, known as Judah and Israel." 1 and 2 Kings are combined into one book in the Hebrew Bible.

Key Verses: 1 Kings 1:30, "I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place."

1 Kings 9:3, "The LORD said to him: 'I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.'"

1 Kings 12:16, "When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: 'What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!'"

1 Kings 12:28, "After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'"

1 Kings 17:1, "Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.'"

Brief Summary: The book of 1 Kings starts with Solomon and ends with Elijah. The difference between the two gives you an idea as to what lies between. Solomon was born after a palace scandal between David and Bathsheba. Like his father, he had a weakness for women that would bring him down. Solomon did well at first, praying for wisdom and building a temple to God that took seven years to construct. But then he spent thirteen years building a palace for himself. His accumulation of many wives led him to worship their idols and away from God. After Solomon's death, Israel was ruled by a series of kings, most of whom were evil and idolatrous.

The nation fell further away from God, and even the preaching of Elijah could not bring them back. Among the most evil kings were Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, who brought the worship of Baal to new heights in Israel. Elijah tried to turn the Israelites back to the worship of Yahweh, challenging the idolatrous priests of

Baal to a showdown with God on Mount Carmel. Of course, God won. This made Queen Jezebel angry (to say the least).

She ordered Elijah's death, so he ran away and hid in the wilderness. Depressed and exhausted, he said, "Let me die." But God sent food and encouragement to the prophet and whispered to him in a "quiet gentle sound" and in the process saved his life for further work.

Foreshadowings: The Temple in Jerusalem, where God's Spirit would dwell in the Holy of Holies, foreshadows believers in Christ in whom the Holy Spirit resides from the moment of our salvation. Just as the Israelites were to forsake idolatry, so are we to put away anything that separates us from God.

We are His people, the very temple of the living God. Second Corinthians 6:16 tells us, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Elijah the prophet was forerunner of Christ and the Apostles of the New Testament. God enabled Elijah to do miraculous things in order to prove that he was truly a man of God. He raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath, causing her to exclaim, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth." In the same way, men of God who spoke His words through His power are evident in the New Testament. Not only did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, but He also raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14-15) and Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:52-56). The Apostle Peter raised Dorcas (Acts 9:40) and Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).

Practical Application: The Book of 1 Kings has many lessons for believers. We see a warning about the company we keep, and especially in regard to close associations and marriage. The kings of Israel who, like Solomon, married foreign women exposed themselves and the people they ruled to evil. As believers in Christ, we must be very careful about whom we choose as friends, business associates, and spouses. "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Elijah's experience in the wilderness also teaches a valuable lesson. After his incredible victory over the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, his joy turned to sorrow when he was pursued by Jezebel and fled for his life. Such "mountaintop" experiences are often followed by a letdown and the depression and discouragement that can follow. We have to be on guard for this type of experience in the Christian life. But our God is faithful and will never leave or forsake us. The quiet, gentle sound that encouraged Elijah will encourage us.

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Book of 2 Kings - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of 2 Kings"

Answer: Author: The Book of 2 Kings does not name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Jeremiah was the author of both 1 and 2 Kings.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2 Kings, along with 1 Kings, was likely written between 560 and 540 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of 2 Kings is a sequel to the Book of 1 Kings. It continues the story of the kings over the divided kingdom (Israel and Judah.) The Book of 2 Kings concludes with the final overthrow and deportation of the people of Israel and Judah to Assyria and Babylon, respectively.

Key Verses: 2 Kings 17:7-8: "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced."

2 Kings 22:1a-2: "Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left."

2 Kings 24:2: "The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets."

2 Kings 8:19: "Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever."

Brief Summary: Second Kings depicts the downfall of the divided kingdom. Prophets continue to warn the people that the judgment of God is at hand, but they will not repent. The kingdom of Israel is repeatedly ruled by wicked kings, and, even though a few of Judah's kings are good, the majority of them lead the people away from worship of the Lord. These few good rulers, along with God's prophets, cannot stop the nation's decline. The Northern Kingdom of Israel is eventually destroyed by the Assyrians, and about 136 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah is destroyed by the Babylonians.

There are three prominent themes present in the Book of 2 Kings. First, the Lord will judge His people when they disobey and turn their backs on Him. The Israelites' unfaithfulness was reflected in the evil idolatry of the kings and resulted in God exercising His righteous wrath against their rebellion. Second, the word of the true prophets of God always comes to pass. Because the Lord always keeps His word, so too are the words of His prophets always true. Third, the Lord is faithful. He remembered His promise to David (2 Samuel 7:10-13), and, despite the disobedience of the people and the evil kings who ruled them, the Lord did not bring David's family to an end.

Foreshadowings: Jesus uses the stories of the widow of Zarephath from 1 Kings and Naaman in 2 Kings to illustrate the great truth of God's compassion toward those the Jews deemed unworthy of God's grace—the poor, the weak, the oppressed, tax collectors, Samaritans, Gentiles. By citing the examples of a poor widow and a leper, Jesus showed Himself to be the Great Physician who heals and ministers to those in the greatest need of divine sovereign grace. This same truth was the basis of the mystery of the body of Christ, His Church, which would be drawn from all levels of society, male Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 3:1-6).

Many of the miracles of Elisha foreshadowed those of Jesus Himself. Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:34-35), healed Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-19), and multiplied loaves of bread to feed a hundred people with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44).

Practical Application: God hates sin and He will not allow it to continue indefinitely. If we belong to Him, we can expect His discipline when we disobey Him. A loving Father corrects His children for their benefit and to prove that they indeed belong to Him. God may at times use unbelievers to bring correction to His people, and He gives us warning before delivering judgment. As Christians, we have His Word to guide us and warn us when we go astray from His path. Like the prophets of old, His Word is trustworthy and always speaks truth. God's faithfulness to His people will never fail, even when we do.

The stories of the widow and the leper are examples for us in regard to the Body of Christ. Just as Elisha had pity on these from the lowest levels of society, we are to welcome all who belong to Christ into our churches. God is no "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34), and neither should we be.

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Book of 1 Chronicles - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of 1 Chronicles"

Answer: Author: The Book of 1 Chronicles does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that 1 and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Chronicles was likely written between 450 and 425 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. 1 & 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of the time period. The Book of 1 Chronicles was written after the exile to help those returning to Israel understand how to worship God. The history focused on the Southern Kingdom, the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. These tribes tended to be more faithful to God.

Key Verses: 1 Chronicles 11:1-2, "All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, 'We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"" 1 Chronicles 21:13, "David said to Gad, 'I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.'"

1 Chronicles 29:11, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

Brief Summary: The first 9 chapters of 1 Chronicles are dedicated to lists and genealogies. Further lists and genealogies are scattered throughout the rest of 1 Chronicles. In between, the Book of 1 Chronicles records David's ascension to the throne and his actions thereafter. The book concludes with David's son Solomon becoming King of Israel. Briefly outlined, the Book of 1 Chronicles is as follows: Chapters 1:1-9:23 - Selective Genealogies; Chapters 9:24-12:40 - David's ascent; Chapters 13:1-20:30 - David's reign.

Foreshadowings: In David's song of thanksgiving to God in 1 Chronicles 16:33, he refers to the time when God will come "to judge the earth." This foreshadows Matthew 25, in which Jesus describes the time when He will come to judge the earth. Through the parables of the ten virgins and the talents, He warns that those who are found without the blood of Christ covering their sins will be cast into "outer darkness." He encourages His people to be ready because when He comes, He will separate the sheep from the goats in judgment. Part of the Davidic Covenant which God reiterates in chapter 17 refers to the future Messiah who would be a descendant of David. Verses 13-14 describe the Son who will be established in God's house and whose throne will be established forever. This can only refer to Jesus Christ.

Practical Application: Genealogies such as the ones in 1 Chronicles may seem dry to us, but they remind us that God knows each of His children personally, even down to the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew

10:30). We can take comfort in the fact that who we are and what we do is written forever in God's mind. If we belong to Christ, our names are written forever in the Lamb's book of Life (Revelation 13:8).

God is faithful to His people and keeps His promises. In the Book of 1 Chronicles, we see the fulfillment of God's promise to David when he is made king over all Israel (1 Chronicles 11:1-3). We can be sure that His promises to us will be fulfilled as well. He has promised blessings to those who follow Him, who come to Christ in repentance, and who obey His Word.

Obedience brings blessing; disobedience brings judgment. The Book of 1 Chronicles, as well as 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings, is a chronicle of the pattern of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of the nation of Israel. In the same way, God is patient with us and forgives our sin when we come to Him in true repentance (1 John 1:9). We can take comfort in the fact that He hears our prayer of sorrow, forgives our sin, restores us to fellowship with Him, and sets us on the path to joy.

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Book of 2 Chronicles - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of 2 Chronicles"

Answer: Author: The Book of 2 Chronicles does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that 1 and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2 Chronicles was likely written between 450 and 425 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of the time period. The Book of 2 Chronicles is essentially an evaluation of the nation's religious history.

Key Verses: 2 Chronicles 2:1, "Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the Name of the LORD and a royal palace for himself."

2 Chronicles 29:1-3, "Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them."

2 Chronicles 36:14, "Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem."

2 Chronicles 36:23, "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.'"

Brief Summary: The Book of 2 Chronicles records the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, from the reign of Solomon to the conclusion of the Babylonian exile. The decline of Judah is disappointing, but emphasis is given to the spiritual reformers who zealously seek to turn the people back to God. Little is said about the bad kings or of the failures of good kings; only goodness is stressed. Since 2 Chronicles takes a priestly perspective, the Northern Kingdom of Israel is rarely mentioned because of her false worship and refusal to acknowledge the Temple of Jerusalem. Second Chronicles concludes with the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Foreshadowings: As with all references to kings and temples in the Old Testament, we see in them a reflection of the true King of Kings—Jesus Christ—and of the temple of the Holy Spirit—His people. Even the best of the kings of Israel had the faults of all sinful men and led the people imperfectly. But when the King of Kings comes to live and reign on the earth in the millennium, he will establish Himself on the throne of all the earth as the rightful heir of David. Only then will we have a perfect King who will reign in righteousness and holiness, something the best of Israel's kings could only dream of. Similarly, the great temple built by Solomon was not designed to last forever. Just 150 years later, it was in need of repair from decay and defacing by future generations who turned

back to idolatry (2 Kings 12). But the temple of the Holy Spirit—those who belong to Christ—will live forever. We who belong to Jesus are that temple, made not by hands but by the will of God (John 1:12-13). The Spirit who lives within us will never depart from us and will deliver us safely into the hands of God one day (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). No earthly temple contains that promise.

Practical Application: The reader of the Chronicles is invited to evaluate each generation from the past and discern why each was blessed for their obedience or punished for their wickedness. But we are also to compare the plight of these generations to our own, both corporately and individually. If we or our nation or our church is experiencing hardships, it is to our benefit to compare our beliefs and how we act upon those beliefs with the experiences of the Israelites under the various kings. God hates sin and will not tolerate it. But if the Chronicles teach us anything, it is that God desires to forgive and heal those who will humbly pray and repent (1 John 1:9).

If you could have anything you wished from God, what would you ask for? Fabulous wealth? Perfect health for you and your loved ones? The power over life and death? Amazing to think about it, isn't it? But more amazing is that God made such an offer to Solomon and he chose none of these things. What he asked for was wisdom and knowledge to complete the task God had assigned to him and to do it well. The lesson for us is that God has given each of us a commission to fulfill and the greatest blessing we can seek from God is the ability to carry out His will for our lives. For that, we need the "wisdom from above" (James 3:17) to discern His will, as well as the understanding and intimate knowledge of Him in order to motivate us to Christlikeness in both deed and attitude (James 3:13).

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Book of Ezra - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Ezra"

Answer: Author: The Book of Ezra does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Ezra wrote the Book of Ezra. It is interesting to note that once Ezra appears on the scene in chapter 7, the author of the Book of Ezra switches from writing in the third person to first person. This would also lend credibility to Ezra being the author.

Date of Writing: The Book of Ezra was likely written between 460 and 440 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Ezra is devoted to events occurring in the land of Israel at the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity and subsequent years, covering a period of approximately one century, beginning in 538 B.C. The emphasis in Ezra is on the rebuilding of the Temple. The book contains extensive genealogical records, principally for the purpose of establishing the claims to the priesthood on the part of the descendants of Aaron.

Key Verses: Ezra 3:11 "With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid."

Ezra 7:6, ""this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him."

Brief Summary: The book may be divided as follows: Chapters 1-6"The First Return under Zerubbabel, and the Building of the Second Temple. Chapters 7-10"The Ministry of Ezra. Since well over half a century elapsed between chapters 6 and 7, the characters of the first part of the book had died by the time Ezra began his ministry in Jerusalem. Ezra is the one person who is prominent in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Both books end with prayers of confession (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9) and a subsequent separation of the people from the sinful practices into which they had fallen. Some concept of the nature of the encouraging messages of Haggai and Zechariah, who are introduced in this narrative (Ezra 5:1), may be seen in the prophetic books that bear their names.

The Book of Ezra covers the return from captivity to rebuild the Temple up to the decree of Artaxerxes, the event covered at the beginning of the Book of Nehemiah. Haggai was the main prophet in the day of Ezra, and Zechariah was the prophet in the day of Nehemiah.

Foreshadowings: We see in the Book of Ezra a continuation of the biblical theme of the remnant. Whenever disaster or judgment falls, God always saves a tiny remnant for Himself" Noah and his family from the destruction of the flood; Lot's family from Sodom and Gomorrah; the 7000 prophets reserved in Israel despite the persecution of Ahab and Jezebel. When the Israelites were taken into captivity in Egypt, God delivered His remnant and took them to the Promised Land. Some fifty thousand people return to the land of Judea in Ezra 2:64-67, and yet, as

they compare themselves with the numbers in Israel during its prosperous days under King David, their comment is, "We are left this day as a remnant." The remnant theme is carried into the New Testament where Paul tells us that "at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (Romans 11:5). Although most people of Jesus' day rejected Him, there remained a set of people whom God had reserved and preserved in his Son, and in the covenant of His grace. Throughout all generations since Christ, there is the remnant of the faithful whose feet are on the narrow road that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14). This remnant will be preserved through the power of the Holy Spirit who has sealed them and who will deliver them safely at the last day (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30).

Practical Application: The Book of Ezra is a chronicle of hope and restoration. For the Christian whose life is scarred by sin and rebellion against God, there is great hope that ours is a God of forgiveness, a God who will not turn His back on us when we seek Him in repentance and brokenness (1 John 1:9). The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple are repeated in the life of every Christian who returns from the captivity of sin and rebellion against God and finds in Him a loving welcome home. No matter how long we have been away, He is ready to forgive us and receive us back into His family. He is willing to show us how to rebuild our lives and resurrect our hearts, wherein is the temple of the Holy Spirit. As with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, God superintends the work of renovating and rededicating our lives to His service.

The opposition of the adversaries of God to the rebuilding of the temple displays a pattern that is typical of that of the enemy of our souls. Satan uses those who would appear to be in sync with God's purposes to deceive us and attempt to thwart God's plans. Ezra 4:2 describes the deceptive speech of those who claim to worship Christ but whose real intent is to tear down, not to build up. We are to be on guard against such deceivers, respond to them as the Israelites did, and refuse to be fooled by their smooth words and false professions of faith.

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Book of Nehemiah - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Nehemiah"

Answer: Author: The Book of Nehemiah does not specifically name its author, but both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author. This is based on the fact that the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one.

Date of Writing: The Book of Nehemiah was likely written between 445 and 420 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Nehemiah, one of the history books of the Bible, continues the story of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Key Verses: Nehemiah 1:3, "They said to me, 'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.'"

Nehemiah 1:11, "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

Nehemiah 6:15-16, "So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God."

Brief Summary: Nehemiah was a Hebrew in Persia when the word reached him that the Temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed. He grew anxious knowing there was no wall to protect the city. Nehemiah invited God to use him to save the city. God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, who gave not only his blessing, but also supplies to be used in the project. Nehemiah is given permission by the king to return to Jerusalem, where he is made governor.

In spite of opposition and accusations the wall was built and the enemies silenced. The people, inspired by Nehemiah, give tithes of much money, supplies and manpower to complete the wall in a remarkable 52 days, despite much opposition. This united effort is short-lived, however, because Jerusalem falls back into apostasy when Nehemiah leaves for a while. After 12 years he returned to find the walls strong but the people weak. He set about the task of teaching the people morality and he didn't mince words. "I argued with those people, put curses on them, hit some of them and pulled out their hair" (13:25). He reestablishes true worship through prayer and by encouraging the people to revival by reading and adhering to the Word of God.

Foreshadowings: Nehemiah was a man of prayer and he prayed passionately for his people (Nehemiah 1). His zealous intercession for God's people foreshadows our great Intercessor, Jesus Christ, who prayed fervently for His people in His high-priestly prayer in John 17. Both Nehemiah and Jesus had a burning love for God's people which they poured out in prayer to God, interceding for them before the throne.

Practical Application: Nehemiah led the Israelites into a respect and love for the text of Scripture. Nehemiah, because of his love for God and his desire to see God honored and glorified, led the Israelites towards the faith and obedience God had desired for them for so long. In the same way, Christians are to love and revere the truths of Scripture, commit them to memory, meditate on them day and night, and turn to them for the fulfillment of every spiritual need. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If we expect to experience the spiritual revival of the Israelites (Nehemiah 8:1-8), we must begin with God's Word.

Each of us ought to have genuine compassion for others who have spiritual or physical hurts. To feel compassion, yet do nothing to help, is unfounded biblically. At times we may have to give up our own comfort in order to minister properly to others. We must totally believe in a cause before we will give our time or money to it with the right heart. When we allow God to minister through us, even unbelievers will know it is God's work.

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Book of Esther - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Esther"

Answer: Author: The Book of Esther does not specifically name its author. The most popular traditions are Mordecai (a major character in the Book of Esther), Ezra and Nehemiah (who would have been familiar with Persian customs).

Date of Writing: The Book of Esther was likely written between 460 and 350 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The purpose of the Book of Esther is to display the providence of God, especially in regard to His chosen people, Israel. The Book of Esther records the institution of the Feast of Purim and the obligation of its perpetual observation. The Book of Esther was read at the Feast of Purim to commemorate the great deliverance of the Jewish nation brought about by God through Esther. Jews today still read Esther during Purim.

Key Verses: Esther 2:15 - Now when the time came for Esther to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested.

Esther 4:14 - For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to the royal position for such a time as this.

Esther 6:13 - Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has begun, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him - you will surely come to ruin!

Esther 7:3 - If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life - this is my petition, and the life of my people - this is my request.

Brief Summary: The Book of Esther can be divided into three main sections. Chapters 1:1-2:18 " Esther replaces Vashti; 2:19-7:10 " Mordecai overcomes Haman; 8:1-10:3 " Israel survives Haman's attempt to destroy them. The noble Esther risked her own death as she realized what was at stake. She willingly did what could have been a deadly maneuver and took on the second-in-command of her husband's kingdom, Haman. She proved a wise and most worthy opponent, all the while remaining humble and respectful of the position of her husbandking.

Esther's story is much like the story of Joseph in Genesis 41. Both stories involve foreign monarchs who control the destiny of the Jews. Both accounts show the heroism of Israelite individuals who provide the means for the salvation of their people and nation. The hand of God is evident, in that what appears to be a bad situation is indeed very much under the control of the Almighty God, who ultimately has the good of the people at heart. At the center of this story is the ongoing division between the Jews and the Amalakites, which was recorded to have begun in the Book of Exodus. Haman's goal is the final effort recorded in the Old Testament period of the complete eradication of the Jews. His plans eventually end up with his own demise, and the elevation of his enemy Mordecai to his own position, as well as the salvation of the Jews.

Feasting is a major theme of this book: there are ten recorded banquets, and many of the events were planned, plotted, or exposed at these banquets. Although the name of God is never mentioned in this book, it is apparent that the Jews of Susa sought His intervention when they fasted and prayed for three days (Esther 4:16). In spite of the fact that the law allowing their destruction was written according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, rendering it unchangeable, the way was cleared for their prayers to be answered. Esther risked her life by going not once uninvited before the king but twice, (Esther 4:1-2; 8:3). She was not content with the destruction of Haman; she was intent on saving her people. The institution of the Feast of Purim is written and preserved for all to see and is still observed today. God's chosen people, without any direct mention of His name, were granted a stay of execution through the wisdom and humility of Esther.

Foreshadowings: In Esther, we are given a behind-the-scenes look at the ongoing struggle of Satan against the purposes of God and especially against His promised Messiah. The entrance of Christ into the human race was predicated upon the existence of the Jewish race. Just as Haman plotted against the Jews in order to destroy them, so has Satan set himself against Christ and God's people. Just as Haman is defeated on the gallows he built for Mordecai, so does Christ use the very weapon that his enemy devised to destroy Him and His spiritual seed. For the cross, by which Satan planned to destroy the Messiah, was the very means through which Christ "having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:14-15). Just as Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai, so the devil was crushed by the cross he erected to destroy Christ.

Practical Application: The Book of Esther shows the choice we make between seeing the hand of God in our circumstances in life and seeing things as merely coincidence. God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe and we can be assured that His plans will not be moved by the actions of mere evil men. Although His name is not mentioned in the book, His providential care for his people, both individuals and the nation, is evident throughout. For instance, we cannot fail to see the Almighty exerting influence over King Xerxes's timely insomnia. Through the example of Mordecai and Esther, the silent love language our Father often uses to communicate directly to our spirits is shown in this book.

Esther proved to have a godly and teachable spirit that also showed great strength and willing obedience. Esther's humility was markedly different from those around her, and this caused her to be elevated into the position of queen. She shows us that remaining respectful and humble, even in difficult if not humanly impossible circumstances, often sets us up to be the vessel of untold blessing for both ourselves and others. We would do well to emulate her godly attitudes in all areas of life, but especially in trials. Not once is there a complaint or bad attitude exposed in the writing. Many times we read she won the "favor" of those around her. Such favor is what ultimately saved her people. We can be granted such favor as we accept even unfair persecution and follow Esther's example of maintaining a positive attitude, coupled with humility and the determination to lean on God. Who knows but that God put us in such a position, for just such a time as this?

Book of Job - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Job"

Answer: Author: The Book of Job does not specifically name its author. The most likely candidates are Job, Elihu, Moses and Solomon.

Date of Writing: The date of the authorship of the Book of Job would be determined by the author of the Book of Job. If Moses was the author, the date would be around 1440 B.C. If Solomon was the author, the date would be around 950 B.C. Because we don't know the author, we can't know the date of writing.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Job helps us to understand the following: Satan cannot bring financial and physical destruction upon us unless it is by God's permission. God has power over what Satan can and cannot do. It is beyond our human ability to understand the "why's" behind all the suffering in the world. The wicked will receive their just dues. We cannot always blame suffering and sin on our lifestyles. Suffering may sometimes be allowed in our lives to purify, test, teach or strengthen the soul. God remains enough, deserves and requests our love and praise in all circumstances of life.

Key Verses of the Book of Job: Job 1:1, "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."

Job 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

Job 38:1-2, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said, 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?'"

Job 42:5-6, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Brief Summary: The book of Job opens with a scene in heaven where Satan comes to accuse Job before God. He insists Job only serves God because God protects him and seeks God's permission to test Job's faith and loyalty. God grants His permission, only within certain boundaries. Why do the righteous suffer? This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health. Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, come to "comfort" him and to discuss his crushing series of tragedies. They insist his suffering is punishment for sin in his life. Job, though, remains devoted to God through all of this and contends that his life has not been one of sin. A fourth man, Elihu, tells Job he needs to humble himself and submit to God's use of trials to purify his life. Finally, Job questions God Himself and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God and his need to totally trust in the Lord. Job is then restored to health, happiness and prosperity beyond his earlier state.

Foreshadowings: As Job was pondering the cause of his misery, three questions came to his mind, all of which are answered only in our Lord Jesus Christ. These questions occur in chapter 14. First, in verse 4, Job asks, "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!?" Job's question comes from a heart that recognizes it

cannot possibly please God or become justified in His sight. God is holy; we are not. Therefore, a great gulf exists between man and God, caused by sin. But the answer to Job's anguished question is found in Jesus Christ. He has paid the penalty for our sin and has exchanged it for His righteousness, thereby making us acceptable in God's sight (Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Job's second question, "But man dies and lies prostrate; Man expires, and where is he?" (vs. 10), is another question about eternity and life and death that is answered only in Christ. With Christ, the answer to 'where is he?' is eternal life in heaven. Without Christ, the answer is an eternity in "outer darkness" where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Job's third question, found in verse 14, is "If a man dies, will he live again?" Once again, the answer is found in Christ. We do indeed live again if we are in Him. "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Practical Application: The Book of Job reminds us that there is a "cosmic conflict" going on behind the scenes that we usually know nothing about. Often we wonder why God allows something, and we question or doubt God's goodness, without seeing the full picture. The Book of Job teaches us to trust God under all circumstances. We must trust God, not only WHEN we do not understand, but BECAUSE we do not understand. The psalmist tells us, "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). If God's ways are "perfect," then we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. This may not seem possible to us, but our minds are not God's mind. It is true that we can't expect to understand His mind perfectly, as He reminds us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Nevertheless, our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

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<https://www.gotquestions.net/Printer/Book-of-Job-PF.html>

Book of Psalms - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Psalms"

Answer: Author: The brief descriptions that introduce the psalms have David listed as author in 73 instances. David's personality and identity are clearly stamped on many of these psalms. While it is clear that David wrote many of the individual psalms, he is definitely not the author of the entire collection. Two of the psalms (72) and (127) are attributed to Solomon, David's son and successor. Psalm 90 is a prayer assigned to Moses. Another group of 12 psalms (50) and (73-83) is ascribed to the family of Asaph. The sons of Korah wrote 11 psalms (42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88). Psalm 88 is attributed to Heman, while (89) is assigned to Ethan the Ezrahite. With the exception of Solomon and Moses, all these additional authors were priests or Levites who were responsible for providing music for sanctuary worship during David's reign. Fifty of the psalms designate no specific person as author.

Date of Writing: A careful examination of the authorship question, as well as the subject matter covered by the psalms themselves, reveals that they span a period of many centuries. The oldest psalm in the collection is probably the prayer of Moses (90), a reflection on the frailty of man as compared to the eternity of God. The latest psalm is probably (137), a song of lament clearly written during the days when the Hebrews were being held captive by the Babylonians, from about 586 to 538 B.C.

It is clear that the 150 individual psalms were written by many different people across a period of a thousand years in Israel's history. They must have been compiled and put together in their present form by some unknown editor shortly after the captivity ended about 537 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, with 150 individual psalms. It is also one of the most diverse, since the psalms deal with such subjects as God and His creation, war, worship, wisdom, sin and evil, judgment, justice, and the coming of the Messiah.

Key Verses: Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Psalm 22:16-19, "Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."

Psalm 29:1-2, "Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness."

Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalm 119:1-2, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart."

Brief Summary: The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Parts of this book were used as a hymnal in the worship services of ancient Israel. The musical heritage of the psalms is demonstrated by its title. It comes from a Greek word which means "a song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument."

Foreshadowings: God's provision of a Savior for His people is a recurring theme in the Psalms. Prophetic pictures of the Messiah are seen in numerous psalms. Psalm 2:1-12 portrays the Messiah's triumph and kingdom. Psalm 16:8-11 foreshadows His death and resurrection. Psalm 22 shows us the suffering Savior on the cross and presents detailed prophecies of the crucifixion, all of which were fulfilled perfectly. The glories of the Messiah and His bride are on exhibit in Psalm 45:6-7, while Psalms 72:6-17, 89:3-37, 110:1-7 and 132:12-18 present the glory and universality of His reign.

Practical Application: One of the results of being filled with the Spirit or the word of Christ is singing. The psalms are the "songbook" of the early church that reflected the new truth in Christ.

God is the same Lord in all the psalms. But we respond to Him in different ways, according to the specific circumstances of our lives. What a marvelous God we worship, the psalmist declares, One who is high and lifted up beyond our human experiences but also one who is close enough to touch and who walks beside us along life's way.

We can bring all our feelings to God "no matter how negative or complaining they may be" and we can rest assured that He will hear and understand. The psalmist teaches us that the most profound prayer of all is a cry for help as we find ourselves overwhelmed by the problems of life.

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Book of Proverbs - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Proverbs"

Answer: Author: King Solomon is the principal writer of Proverbs. Solomon's name appears in 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1. We may also presume Solomon collected and edited proverbs other than his own, for Ecclesiastes 12:9 says, "Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs." Indeed, the Hebrew title Mishle Shelomoh is translated "Proverbs of Solomon."

Date of Writing: Solomon's proverbs were penned around 900 B.C. During his reign as king, the nation of Israel reached its pinnacle spiritually, politically, culturally, and economically. As Israel's reputation soared, so did King Solomon's. Foreign dignitaries from the far reaches of the known world traveled great distances to hear the wise monarch speak (1 Kings 4:34).

Purpose of Writing: Knowledge is nothing more than an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them. In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon reveals the mind of God in matters high and lofty and in common, ordinary, everyday situations, too. It appears that no topic escaped King Solomon's attention. Matters pertaining to personal conduct, sexual relations, business, wealth, charity, ambition, discipline, debt, child-rearing, character, alcohol, politics, revenge, and godliness are among the many topics covered in this rich collection of wise sayings.

Key Verses: Proverbs 1:5, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance."

Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

Proverbs 4:5, "Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them."

Proverbs 8:13-14, "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power."

Brief Summary: Summarizing the Book of Proverbs is a bit difficult, for unlike many other books of Scripture, there is no particular plot or storyline found in its pages; likewise, there are no principal characters in the book. It is wisdom that takes center stage—a grand, divine wisdom that transcends the whole of history, peoples, and cultures. Even a perfunctory reading of this magnificent treasury reveals the pithy sayings of the wise King Solomon are as relevant today as they were some three thousand years ago.

Foreshadowings: The theme of wisdom and its necessity in our lives finds its fulfillment in Christ. We are continually exhorted in Proverbs to seek wisdom, get wisdom, and understand wisdom. Proverbs also tells us "and repeats it" that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (1:7; 9:10). Our fear of the Lord's wrath and justice is what drives us to Christ, who is the embodiment of God's wisdom as expressed in His glorious plan of redemption for mankind. In Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), we find the answer to our search for wisdom, the remedy for our fear of God, and the

"righteousness, holiness and redemption" that we so desperately need (1 Corinthians 1:30). The wisdom that is found only in Christ is in contrast to the foolishness of the world which encourages us to be wise in our own eyes. But Proverbs also tells us that the world's way is not God's way (Proverbs 3:7) and leads only to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Practical Application: There is an undeniable practicality found in this book, for sound and sensible answers to all manner of complex difficulties are found within its thirty-one chapters. Certainly, Proverbs is the greatest "how-to" book ever written, and those who have the good sense to take Solomon's lessons to heart will quickly discover godliness, prosperity, and contentment are theirs for the asking.

The recurring promise of the Book of Proverbs is that those who choose wisdom and follow God will be blessed in numerous ways: with long life (9:11); prosperity (2:20-22); joy (3:13-18); and the goodness of God (12:21). Those who reject Him, on the other hand, suffer shame and death (3:35; 10:21). To reject God is to choose folly over wisdom and is to separate ourselves from God, His Word, His wisdom and His blessings.

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Book of Ecclesiastes - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Ecclesiastes"

Answer: Author: The Book of Ecclesiastes does not directly identify its author. There are quite a few verses that imply Solomon wrote this book. There are some clues in the context that may suggest a different person wrote the book after Solomon's death, possibly several hundred years later. Still, the conventional belief is that the author is indeed Solomon.

Date of Writing: Solomon's reign as king of Israel lasted from around 970 B.C. to around 930 B.C. The Book of Ecclesiastes was likely written towards the end of his reign, approximately 935 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Ecclesiastes is a book of perspective. The narrative of "the Preacher" (KJV), or "the Teacher" (NIV) reveals the depression that inevitably results from seeking happiness in worldly things. This book gives Christians a chance to see the world through the eyes of a person who, though very wise, is trying to find meaning in temporary, human things. Most every form of worldly pleasure is explored by the Preacher, and none of it gives him a sense of meaning.

In the end, the Preacher comes to accept that faith in God is the only way to find personal meaning. He decides to accept the fact that life is brief and ultimately worthless without God. The Preacher advises the reader to focus on an eternal God instead of temporary pleasure.

Key Verses: Ecclesiastes 1:2, "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity'" (NKJV).

Ecclesiastes 1:18, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief."

Ecclesiastes 2:11, "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.'"

Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Brief Summary: Two phrases are repeated often in Ecclesiastes. The word translated as "vanity" in the KJV, and "meaningless" in the NIV appears often, and is used to emphasize the temporary nature of worldly things. In the end, even the most impressive human achievements will be left behind. The phrase "under the sun" occurs 28 times, and refers to the mortal world. When the Preacher refers to "all things under the sun," he is talking about earthly, temporary, human things.

The first seven chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes describe all of the worldly things "under the sun" that the Preacher tries to find fulfillment in. He tries scientific discovery (1:10-11), wisdom and philosophy (1:13-18),

mirth (2:1), alcohol (2:3), architecture (2:4), property (2:7-8), and luxury (2:8). The Preacher turned his mind towards different philosophies to find meaning, such as materialism (2:19-20), and even moral codes (including chapters 8-9). He found that everything was meaningless, a temporary diversion that, without God, had no purpose or longevity.

Chapters 8-12 of Ecclesiastes describe the Preacher's suggestions and comments on how a life should be lived. He comes to the conclusion that without God, there is no truth or meaning to life. He has seen many evils and realized that even the best of man's achievements are worth nothing in the long run. So he advises the reader to acknowledge God from youth (12:1) and to follow His will (12:13-14).

Foreshadowings: For all of the vanities described in the Book of Ecclesiastes, the answer is Christ. According to Ecclesiastes 3:17, God judges the righteous and the wicked, and the righteous are only those who are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). God has placed the desire for eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and has provided the Way to eternal life through Christ (John 3:16). We are reminded that striving after the world's wealth is not only vanity because it does not satisfy (Ecclesiastes 5:10), but even if we could attain it, without Christ we would lose our souls and what profit is there in that (Mark 8:36)? Ultimately, every disappointment and vanity described in

Ecclesiastes has its remedy in Christ, the wisdom of God and the only true meaning to be found in life.

Practical Application: Ecclesiastes offers the Christian an opportunity to understand the emptiness and despair that those who do not know God grapple with. Those who do not have a saving faith in Christ are faced with a life that will ultimately end and become irrelevant. If there is no salvation, and no God, then not only is there no point to life, but no purpose or direction to it, either. The world "under the sun," apart from God, is frustrating, cruel, unfair, brief, and "utterly meaningless." But with Christ, life is but a shadow of the glories to come in a heaven that is only accessible through Him.

Book of Song of Solomon - Printer Friendly



Question: "Song of Solomon"

Answer: Author: Solomon wrote Song of Solomon, according to the first verse. This song is one of 1,005 that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32). The title "Song of Songs" is a superlative, meaning this is the best one.

Date of Writing: Solomon most likely wrote this song during the early part of his reign. This would place the date of composition around 965 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Song of Solomon is a lyric poem written to extol the virtues of love between a husband and his wife. The poem clearly presents marriage as God's design. A man and woman are to live together within the context of marriage, loving each other spiritually, emotionally, and physically. This book combats two extremes: asceticism (the denial of all pleasure) and hedonism (the pursuit of only pleasure). The marriage profiled in Song of Solomon is a model of care, commitment, and delight.

Key Verses: Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4 - "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." Song of Solomon 5:1 - "Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers." Song of Solomon 8:6-7 - "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."

Brief Summary: The poetry takes the form of a dialogue between a husband (the king) and his wife (the Shulamite). We can divide the book into three sections: the courtship (1:1 - 3:5); the wedding (3:6 - 5:1); and the maturing marriage (5:2 - 8:14).

The song begins before the wedding, as the bride-to-be longs to be with her betrothed, and she looks forward to his intimate caresses. However, she advises letting love develop naturally, in its own time. The king praises the Shulamite's beauty, overcoming her feelings of insecurity about her appearance. The Shulamite has a dream in which she loses Solomon and searches throughout the city for him. With the help of the city guards, she finds her beloved and clings to him, taking him to a safe place. Upon waking, she repeats her injunction not to force love.

On the wedding night, the husband again praises the beauty of his wife, and in highly symbolic language, the wife invites her spouse to partake of all she has to offer. They make love, and God blesses their union.

As the marriage matures, the husband and wife go through a difficult time, symbolized in another dream. In this second dream, the Shulamite rebuffs her husband, and he leaves. Overcome with guilt, she searches the city for him; but this time, instead of helping her, the guards beat her symbolic of her pained conscience. Things end happily as the lovers reunite and are reconciled.

As the song ends, both the husband and wife are confident and secure in their love, they sing of the lasting nature of true love, and they yearn to be in each other's presence.

Foreshadowings: Some Bible interpreters see in Song of Solomon an exact symbolic representation of Christ and His church. Christ is seen as the king, while the church is represented by the Shulamite. While we believe the book should be understood literally as a depiction of marriage, there are some elements that foreshadow the Church and her relationship with her king, the Lord Jesus. Song of Solomon 2:4 describes the experience of every believer who is sought and bought by the Lord Jesus. We are in a place of great spiritual wealth and are covered by His love. Verse 16 of chapter 2 says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies" (NKJV). Here is a picture of not only the security of the believer in Christ (John 10:28-29), but of the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep "believers" and lays down His life for us (John 10:11). Because of Him, we are no longer stained by sin, having had our "spots" removed by His blood (Song of Solomon 4:7; Ephesians 5:27).

Practical Application: Our world is confused about marriage. The prevalence of divorce and modern attempts to redefine marriage stand in glaring contrast to Solomon's Song. Marriage, says the biblical poet, is to be celebrated, enjoyed, and revered. This book provides some practical guidelines for strengthening our marriages:

- 1) Give your spouse the attention he or she needs. Take the time to truly know your spouse.
- 2) Encouragement and praise, not criticism, are vital to a successful relationship.
- 3) Enjoy each other. Plan some getaways. Be creative, even playful, with each other. Delight in God's gift of married love.
- 4) Do whatever is necessary to reassure your commitment to your spouse. Renew your vows; work through problems and do not consider divorce as a solution. God intends for you both to live in a deeply peaceful, secure love.

Book of Isaiah- Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Isaiah"

Answer: Author: Isaiah 1:1 identifies the author of the book of Isaiah as the Prophet Isaiah.

Date of Writing: The book of Isaiah was written between 739 and 681 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Prophet Isaiah was primarily called to prophesy to the Kingdom of Judah. Judah was going through times of revival and times of rebellion. Judah was threatened with destruction by Assyria and Egypt, but was spared because of God's mercy. Isaiah proclaimed a message of repentance from sin and hopeful expectation of God's deliverance in the future.

Key Verses: Isaiah 6:8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Isaiah 9:6, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 14:12-13, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.'"

Isaiah 53:5-6, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Isaiah 65:25, “The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.”

Brief Summary: The book of Isaiah reveals God’s judgment and salvation. God is “holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3), and therefore He cannot allow sin to go unpunished (Isaiah 1:2; 2:11-20; 5:30; 34:1-2; 42:25). Isaiah portrays God’s oncoming judgment as a “consuming fire” (Isaiah 1:31; 30:33).

At the same time, Isaiah understands that God is a God of mercy, grace, and compassion (Isaiah 5:25; 11:16; 14:1-2; 32:2; 40:3; 41:14-16). The nation of Israel (both Judah and Israel) is blind and deaf to God’s commands (Isaiah 6:9-10; 42:7). Judah is compared to a vineyard that should be, and will be, trampled on (Isaiah 5:1-7). Only because of His mercy and His promises to Israel, will God not allow Israel or Judah to be completely destroyed. He will bring restoration, forgiveness, and healing (43:2; 43:16-19; 52:10-12).

More than any other book in the Old Testament, Isaiah focuses on the salvation that will come through the Messiah. The Messiah will one day rule in justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:7; 32:1). The reign of the Messiah will bring peace and safety to Israel (Isaiah 11:6-9). Through the Messiah, Israel will be a light to all the nations (Isaiah 42:6; 55:4-5). The Messiah’s kingdom on earth (Isaiah chapters 65-66) is the goal toward which all of the book of Isaiah points. It is during the reign of the Messiah that God’s righteousness will be fully revealed to the world.

In a seeming paradox, the book of Isaiah also presents the Messiah as one who will suffer. Isaiah chapter 53 vividly describes the Messiah suffering for sin. It is through His wounds that healing is achieved. It is through His suffering that our iniquities are taken away. This apparent contradiction is solved in the Person of Jesus Christ. In His first advent, Jesus was the suffering servant of Isaiah chapter 53. In His second advent, Jesus will be the conquering and ruling King, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Foreshadowings: As stated above, chapter 53 of Isaiah describes the coming Messiah and the suffering He would endure in order to pay for our sins. In His sovereignty, God orchestrated every detail of the crucifixion to fulfill every prophecy of this chapter, as well as all other messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The imagery of chapter 53 is poignant and prophetic and contains a complete picture of the Gospel. Jesus was despised and rejected (v. 3; Luke 13:34; John 1:10-11), stricken by God (v.4; Matthew

27:46), and pierced for our transgressions (v. 5; John 19:34; 1 Peter 2:24). By His suffering, He paid the punishment we deserved and became for us the ultimate and perfect sacrifice (v. 5; Hebrews 10:10). Although He was sinless, God laid on Him our sin, and we became God's righteousness in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Practical Application: The book of Isaiah presents our Savior to us in undeniable detail. He is the only way to heaven, the only means of obtaining the grace of God, the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Knowing the price Christ paid for us, how can we neglect or reject "so great a salvation"? (Hebrews 2:3). We have only a few, short years on earth to come to Christ and embrace the salvation only He offers. There is no second chance after death, and eternity in hell is a very long time.

Do you know people who claim to be believers in Christ who are two-faced, who are hypocrites? That is perhaps the best summary of how Isaiah viewed the nation of Israel. Israel had an appearance of righteousness, but it was a facade. In the Book of Isaiah, the Prophet Isaiah challenges Israel to obey God with all of their heart, not just on the outside. Isaiah's desire was that those who heard and read his words would be convicted to turn from wickedness and turn to God for forgiveness and healing.



Question: "Book of Jeremiah"

Answer: Author: Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 1 identifies the Prophet Jeremiah as the author of the Book of Jeremiah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Jeremiah was written between 630 and 580 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Jeremiah records the final prophecies to Judah, warning of oncoming destruction if the nation does not repent. Jeremiah calls out for the nation to turn back to God. At the same time, Jeremiah recognizes the inevitability of Judah's destruction due to its unrepentant idolatry and immorality.

Key Verses: Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

Jeremiah 29:10-11, "This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.""

Jeremiah 52:12-13, "On the tenth day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down."

Brief Summary: The Book of Jeremiah is primarily a message of judgment on Judah for rampant idolatry (Jeremiah 7:30-34; 16:10-13; 22:9; 32:29; 44:2-3). After the death of King Josiah, the last righteous king, the nation of Judah had almost completely abandoned God and His commandments. Jeremiah compares Judah to a prostitute (Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1-3). God had promised that He would judge idolatry most severely

(Leviticus 26:31-33; Deuteronomy 28:49-68), and Jeremiah was warning Judah that God's judgment was at hand. God had delivered Judah from destruction on countless occasions, but His mercy was at its end. Jeremiah records King Nebuchadnezzar conquering Judah and making it subject to him (Jeremiah 24:1). After further rebellion, God brought Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies back to destroy and desolate Judah and Jerusalem (Jeremiah chapter 52). Even in this most severe judgment, God promises the restoration of Judah back into the land God has given them (Jeremiah 29:10).

Foreshadowings: Jeremiah 23:5-6 presents a prophecy of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. The prophet describes Him as a Branch from the house of David (v. 5; Matthew 1), the King who would reign in wisdom and righteousness (v. 5, Revelation 11:15). It is Christ who will finally be recognized by Israel as her true Messiah as He provides salvation for His chosen ones (v. 6; Romans 11:26).

Practical Application: The Prophet Jeremiah had a most difficult message to deliver. Jeremiah loved Judah, but he loved God much more. As painful as it was for Jeremiah to deliver a consistent message of judgment to his own people, Jeremiah was obedient to what God told him to do and say. Jeremiah hoped and prayed for mercy from God for Judah, but also trusted that God was good, just, and righteous. We too must obey God, even when it is difficult, recognize God's will as more important than our own desires, and trust that God, in His infinite wisdom and perfect plan, will bring about the best for His children (Romans 8:28).

Book of Lamentations - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Lamentations"

Answer: Author: The Book of Lamentations does not explicitly identify its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Jeremiah wrote Lamentations. This view is highly likely considering the author was a witness of the Babylonians destroying Jerusalem. Jeremiah fits this qualification (2 Chronicles 35:25; 36:21-22).

Date of Writing: The Book of Lamentations was likely written between 586 and 575 B.C., during or soon after Jerusalem's fall.

Purpose of Writing: As a result of Judah's continued and unrepentant idolatry, God allowed the Babylonians to besiege, plunder, burn, and destroy the city of Jerusalem. Solomon's Temple, which had stood for approximately 400 years, was burned to the ground. The Prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to these events, wrote the Book of Lamentations as a lament for what occurred to Judah and Jerusalem.

Key Verses: Lamentations 2:17, "The LORD has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago. He has overthrown you without pity, he has let the enemy gloat over you, he has exalted the horn of your foes."

Lamentations 3:22-23, "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 5:19-22, "You, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation. Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long? Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure."

Brief Summary: The Book of Lamentations is divided into five chapters. Each chapter represents a separate poem. In the original Hebrew, the verses are acrostic, each verse starting with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Book of Lamentations, the Prophet Jeremiah understands that the Babylonians were God's tool for bringing judgment on Jerusalem (Lamentations 1:12-15; 2:1-8; 4:11). Lamentations makes it clear that sin and rebellion were the causes of God's wrath being poured out (1:8-9; 4:13; 5:16). Lamenting is appropriate in a time of distress, but it should quickly give way to contrition and repentance (Lamentations 3:40-42; 5:21-22).

Foreshadowings: Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet" for his deep and abiding passion for his people and their city (Lamentations 3:48-49). This same sorrow over the sins of the people and their rejection of God was expressed by Jesus as He approached Jerusalem and looked ahead to her destruction at the hands of the Romans (Luke 19:41-44). Because of the Jews' rejection of their Messiah, God used the Roman siege to punish His people. But God takes no joy in having to punish His children and His offer of Jesus Christ as a

provision for sin shows His great compassion on His people. One day, because of Christ, God will wipe away all tears (Revelation 7:17).

Practical Application: Even in terrible judgment, God is a God of hope (Lamentations 3:24-25). No matter how far we have gone from Him, we have the hope that we can return to Him and find Him compassionate and forgiving (1 John 1:9). Our God is a loving God (Lamentations 3:22), and because of His great love and compassion, He sent His Son so that we would not perish in our sins, but can live eternally with Him (John 3:16). God's faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23) and deliverance

(Lamentations 3:26) are attributes that give us great hope and comfort. He is not a disinterested, capricious god, but a God who will deliver all those who turn to Him, admit they can do nothing to earn His favor, and call upon the Lord's mercy so that we will not be consumed (Lamentations 3:22).

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Book-of-Ezekiel - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Ezekiel"

Answer: Author: The Prophet Ezekiel is the author of the Book (Ezekiel 1:3). He was a contemporary of both Jeremiah and Daniel.

Date of Writing: The Book of Ezekiel was likely written between 593 and 565 B.C. during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

Purpose of Writing: Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both exceedingly sinful and thoroughly hopeless. By means of his prophetic ministry he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance and to confidence in the distant future. He taught that: (1) God works through human messengers; (2) Even in defeat and despair God's people need to affirm God's sovereignty; (3) God's Word never fails; (4) God is present and can be worshiped anywhere; (5) People must obey God if they expect to receive blessings; and (6) God's Kingdom will come.

Key Verses: Ezekiel 2:3-6, "He said: 'Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says." And whether they listen or fail to listen - for they are a rebellious house - they will know that a prophet has been among them.'"

Ezekiel 18:4, "For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son - both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die."

Ezekiel 28:12-14, "'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones."

Ezekiel 33:11, "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'"

Ezekiel 48:35, "And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE."

Brief Summary: How can you cope with a world gone astray? Ezekiel, destined to begin his life's ministry as a priest at age thirty, was uprooted from his homeland and marched off to Babylon at age of twenty-five. For five years he languished in despair. At age thirty a majestic vision of Yahweh's glory captivated his being in Babylon. The priest/prophet discovered God was not confined to the narrow strictures of Ezekiel's native land. Instead, He is a universal God who commands and controls persons and nations. In Babylon, God imparted to Ezekiel His

Word for the people. His call experience transformed Ezekiel. He became avidly devoted to God's Word. He realized he had nothing personally to assist the captives in their bitter situation, but he was convinced God's Word spoke to their condition and could give them victory in it. Ezekiel used various methods to convey God's Word to his people. He used art in drawing a depiction of Jerusalem, symbolic actions and unusual conduct to secure attention. He cut his hair and beard to demonstrate what God would do to Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

Ezekiel's book can be divided into four sections:

Chapters 1-24: prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem

Chapters 25-32: prophecies of God's judgment on nearby nations

Chapter 33: a last call for repentance to Israel

Chapters 34-48: prophecies concerning the future restoration of Israel

Foreshadowings: Ezekiel 34 is the chapter wherein God denounces the leaders of Israel as false shepherds for their poor care of His people. Instead of caring for the sheep of Israel, they cared for themselves. They ate well, were well-clothed and well-cared for by the very people they had been placed over (Ezekiel 34:1-3). By contrast, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and who protects them from the wolves who would destroy the flock (John 10:11-12). Verse 4 of chapter 34 describes people whom the shepherds failed to minister to as weak, sick, injured and lost. Jesus is the Great Physician who heals our spiritual wounds (Isaiah 53:5) by His death on the cross. He is the one who seeks and saves that which is lost (Luke 19:10).

Practical Application: The Book of Ezekiel calls us to join in a fresh and living encounter with the God of Abraham, Moses and the prophets. We must be overcomers or we will be overcome. Ezekiel challenged us to experience a life changing vision of God's power, knowledge, eternal presence and holiness; to let God direct us; to comprehend the depth of and commitment to evil that lodges in each human heart; to recognize that God holds His servants responsible for warning wicked men of their peril; to experience a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who said that the new covenant is to be found in His blood.

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Book of Daniel - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Daniel"

Answer: Author: The Book of Daniel identifies the Prophet Daniel as its author (Daniel 9:2; 10:2). Jesus mentions Daniel as the author as well (Matthew 24:15).

Date of Writing: The Book of Daniel was likely written between 540 and 530 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had conquered Judah and deported many of its inhabitants to Babylon – Daniel included. Daniel served in the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar and several rulers who followed Nebuchadnezzar. The Book of Daniel records the actions, prophecies, and visions of the Prophet Daniel.

Key Verses: Daniel 1:19-20, "The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom."

Daniel 2:31, "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue - an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance."

Daniel 3:17-18, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Daniel 4:34-35, "His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'"

Daniel 9:25-27, "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Brief Summary: Chapter 1 describes the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Along with many others, Daniel and his three friends were deported to Babylon and because of their courage and the obvious blessings of God upon them, they were "promoted" in the king's service (Daniel 1:17-20).

Chapters 2-4 record Nebuchadnezzar having a dream that only Daniel could correctly interpret. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue represented the kingdoms that would arise in the future. Nebuchadnezzar made a great statue of himself and forced everyone to worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were miraculously spared by God despite being thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is judged by God for his pride, but later restored once he recognized and admitted God's sovereignty.

Daniel chapter 5 records Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar misusing the items taken from the Temple in Jerusalem and receiving a message from God, written into the wall, in response. Only Daniel could interpret the writing, a message of coming judgment from God. Daniel is thrown into the lions' den for refusing to pray to the emperor, but was miraculously spared. In chapter 7, God gave Daniel a vision of four beasts. The four beasts represented the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Chapters 8-12 contain a vision involving a ram, a goat, and several horns – also referring to future kingdoms and their rulers. Daniel chapter 9 records Daniel's "seventy weeks" prophecy. God gave Daniel the precise timeline of when the Messiah would come and be cut off. The prophecy also mentions a future ruler who will make a seven-year covenant with Israel and break it after three and a half years, followed shortly thereafter by the great judgment and consummation of all things. Daniel is visited and strengthened by an angel after this great vision, and the angel explains the vision to Daniel in great detail.

Foreshadowings: We see in the stories of the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lions' den a foreshadowing of the salvation provided by Christ. The three men declare that God is a saving God who can provide a way of escape from the fire (Daniel 3:17). In the same way, by sending Jesus to die for our sins, God has provided an escape from the fires of hell (1 Peter 3:18). In Daniel's case, God provided an angel to shut the lions' mouths and saved Daniel from death. Jesus Christ is our provision from the dangers of the sin that threatens to consume us.

Daniel's vision of the end times depicts Israel's Messiah by whom many will be made pure and holy (Daniel 12:10). He is our righteousness (1 Peter 5:21) by whom our sins, though blood-red, will be washed away and we will be as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

Practical Application: Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we should always stand for what we know is right. God is greater than any punishment that could come upon us. Whether God chooses to deliver us or not, He is always worthy of our trust. God knows what is best, and He honors those who trust and obey Him.

God has a plan, and His plan is down to the intricate detail. God knows and is in control of the future. Everything that God has predicted has come true exactly as He predicted. Therefore, we should believe and trust that the things He has predicted for the future will one day occur exactly as God has declared.

Book-of-Hosea - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Hosea"

Answer: Author: Hosea 1:1 identifies the author of the book as the Prophet Hosea. It is Hosea's personal account of his prophetic messages to the children of God and to the world. Hosea is the only prophet of Israel who left any written prophecies which were recorded during the later years of his life.

Date of Writing: Hosea, the son of Beeri, prophesied for quite some time, from 785 to 725 B.C. The Book of Hosea was likely written between 755 and 725 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Hosea wrote this book to remind the Israelites—and us—that ours is a loving God whose loyalty to His covenant people is unwavering. In spite of Israel's continual turning to false gods, God's steadfast love is portrayed in the long-suffering husband of the unfaithful wife. Hosea's message is also one of warning to those who would turn their backs on God's love. Through the symbolic presentation of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer, God's love for the idolatrous nation of Israel is displayed in a rich metaphor in the themes of sin, judgment, and forgiving love.

Key Verses: Hosea 1:2, "When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, 'Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD.'"

Hosea 2:23, "I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

Hosea 6:6, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

Hosea 14:2-4, "Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: 'Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say "Our gods" to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion.' "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.'"

Brief Summary: The Book of Hosea can be divided into two parts: (1) Hosea 1:1-3:5 is a description of an adulterous wife and a faithful husband, symbolic of the unfaithfulness of Israel to God through idolatry, and (2) Hosea 4:1-14:9 contains the condemnation of Israel, especially Samaria, for the worship of idols and her eventual restoration.

The first section of the book contains three distinctive poems illustrating how God's children returned time after time to idolatry. God commands Hosea to marry Gomer, but after bearing him three children, she walks away from Hosea to her lovers. The symbolic emphasis can be seen clearly in the first chapter as Hosea compares Israel's actions to turning from a marriage to life as a prostitute. The second section contains Hosea's denunciation of the Israelites but followed by the promises and the mercies of God.

The Book of Hosea is a prophetic accounting of God's relentless love for His children. Since the beginning of time God's ungrateful and undeserving creation has been accepting God's love, grace, and mercy while still unable to refrain from its wickedness.

The last part of Hosea shows how God's love once again restores His children as He forgets their misdeeds when they turn back to Him with a repentant heart. The prophetic message of Hosea foretells the coming of Israel's Messiah 700 years in the future. Hosea is quoted often in the New Testament.

Foreshadowings: Hosea 2:23 is the wonderful prophetic message from God to include the Gentiles [non-Jews] as His children as recorded also in Romans 9:25 and 1 Peter 2:10. Gentiles are not originally "God's people," but through His mercy and grace, He has provided Jesus Christ, and by faith in Him we are grafted into the tree of His people (Romans 11:11-18). This is an amazing truth about the Church, one that is called a "mystery" because before Christ, God's people were considered to be the Jews alone. When Christ came, the Jews were temporarily blinded until the "full number of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:25).

Practical Application: The Book of Hosea assures us of God's unconditional love for His people. But it is also a picture of how God is dishonored and angered by the actions of His children. How can a child who is given an abundance of love, mercy, and grace treat a Father with so much disrespect? Yet, we have done just that for centuries. As we consider how the Israelites turned their backs on God, we need to look no further than the mirror in front of us to see a reflection of those same Israelites.

Only by remembering how much God has done for each of us will we be able to avoid rejecting the One who can give us eternal life in glory instead of the hell we deserve. It is essential that we learn to respect our Creator. Hosea has shown us God's heart of loving commitment. When we do sin, if we have a sorrowful heart filled with repentance, then God will bring us back to Himself and show His never-ending love to us (see 1 John 1:9).

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Book-of-Joel - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Joel"

Answer: Author: The Book of Joel states that its author was the Prophet Joel (Joel 1:1).

Date of Writing: The Book of Joel was likely written between 835 and 800 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Judah, the setting for the book, is devastated by a vast horde of locusts. This invasion of locusts destroys everything—the fields of grain, the vineyards, the gardens and the trees. Joel symbolically describes the locusts as a marching human army and views all of this as divine judgment coming against the nation for her sins. The book is highlighted by two major events. One is the invasion of locusts and the other the outpouring of the Spirit. The initial fulfillment of this is quoted by Peter in Acts 2 as having taken place at Pentecost.

Key Verses: Joel 1:4, "What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten."

Joel 2:25, "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten..."

Joel 2:28, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

Brief Summary: A terrible plague of locusts is followed by a severe famine throughout the land. Joel uses these happenings as the catalyst to send words of warning to Judah. Unless the people repent quickly and completely, enemy armies will devour the land as did the natural elements. Joel appeals to all the people and the priests of the land to fast and humble themselves as they seek God's forgiveness. If they will respond, there will be renewed material and spiritual blessings for the nation. But the Day of the Lord is coming. At this time the dreaded locusts will seem as gnats in comparison, as all nations receive His judgment.

The overriding theme of the Book of Joel is the Day of the Lord, a day of God's wrath and judgment. This is the Day in which God reveals His attributes of wrath, power and holiness, and it is a terrifying day to His enemies. In the first chapter, the Day of the Lord is experienced historically by the plague of locusts upon the land. Chapter 2:1-17 is a transitional chapter in which Joel uses the metaphor of the locust plague and drought to renew a call to repentance. Chapters 2:18-3:21 describes the Day of the Lord in eschatological terms and answers the call to repentance with prophecies of physical restoration (2:21-27), spiritual restoration (2:28-32), and national restoration (3:1-21).

Foreshadowings: Whenever the Old Testament speaks of judgment for sin, whether individual or national sin, the advent of Jesus Christ is foreshadowed. The prophets of the Old Testament continually warned Israel to repent, but even when they did, their repentance was limited to lawkeeping and works. Their temple sacrifices were but a shadow of the ultimate sacrifice, offered once for all time, which would come at the cross (Hebrews 10:10). Joel tells us that God's ultimate judgment, which falls on the Day of the Lord, will be "great and terrible."

Who can endure it?” (Joel 2:11). The answer is that we, on our own, can never endure such a moment. But if we have placed our faith in Christ for atonement of our sins, we have nothing to fear from the Day of Judgment.

Practical Application: Without repentance, judgment will be harsh, thorough and certain. Our trust should not be in our possessions but in the Lord our God. God at times may use nature, sorrow or other common occurrences to draw us closer to Him. But in His mercy and grace, He has provided the definitive plan for our salvation—Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins and exchanging our sin for His perfect righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). There is no time to lose. God’s judgment will come swiftly, as a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2), and we must be ready. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7). Only by appropriating God’s salvation can we escape His wrath on the Day of the Lord.

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Book of Amos - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Amos"

Answer: Author: Amos 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Amos as the Prophet Amos.

Date of Writing: The Book of Amos was likely written between 760 and 753 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Amos is a shepherd and a fruit picker from the Judean village of Tekoa when God calls him, even though he lacks an education or a priestly background. Amos' mission is directed to his neighbor to the north, Israel. His messages of impending doom and captivity for the nation because of her sins are largely unpopular and unheeded, however, because not since the days of Solomon have times been so good in Israel. Amos' ministry takes place while Jeroboam II reigns over Israel, and Uzziah reigns over Judah.

Key Verses: Amos 2:4, "This is what the LORD says: 'For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back [my wrath]. Because they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed.'"

Amos 3:7, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets."

Amos 9:14, "I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit."

Brief Summary: Amos can see that beneath Israel's external prosperity and power, internally the nation is corrupt to the core. The sins for which Amos chastens the people are extensive: neglect of God's Word, idolatry, pagan worship, greed, corrupted leadership and oppression of the poor. Amos begins by pronouncing a judgment upon all the surrounding nations, then upon his own nation of Judah, and finally the harshest judgment is given to Israel. His visions from God reveal the same emphatic message: judgment is near. The book ends with God's promise to Amos of future restoration of the remnant.

Foreshadowings: The Book of Amos ends with a glorious promise for the future. "I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God" (9:15). The ultimate fulfillment of God's land promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 15:7; 17:8) will occur during Christ's millennial reign on earth (see Joel 2:26,27). Revelation 20 describes the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, a time of peace and joy under the perfect government of the Savior Himself. At that time, believing Israel and the Gentile Christians will be combined in the Church and will live and reign with Christ.

Practical Application: Sometimes we think we are a "just-a"! We are just-a salesman, farmer or housewife. Amos would be considered a "just-a." He wasn't a prophet or priest or the son of either. He was just a shepherd, a small businessman in Judah. Who would listen to him? But instead of making excuses, Amos obeyed and became God's powerful voice for change.

God has used "just-a's" such as shepherds, carpenters, and fishermen all through the Bible. Whatever you are in this life, God can use you. Amos wasn't much. He was a "just-a." "Just-a" servant for God. It is good to be God's "just-a."

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Book of Obadiah - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Obadiah"

Answer: Author: Obadiah verse 1 identifies the author of the Book of Obadiah as the Prophet Obadiah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Obadiah was likely written between 848 and 840 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, is only 21 verses long. Obadiah is a prophet of God who uses this opportunity to condemn Edom for sins against both God and Israel. The Edomites are descendants of Esau and the Israelites are descendants of his twin brother, Jacob. A quarrel between the brothers has affected their descendants for over 1,000 years. This division caused the Edomites to forbid Israel to cross their land during the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. Edom's sins of pride now require a strong word of judgment from the Lord.

Key Verses: Obadiah verse 4, "Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD."

Obadiah verse 12, "You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble."

Obadiah verse 15, "The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head."

Brief Summary: Obadiah's message is final and it is sure: the kingdom of Edom will be destroyed completely. Edom has been arrogant, gloating over Israel's misfortunes, and when enemy armies attack Israel and the Israelites ask for help, the Edomites refuse and choose to fight against them, not for them. These sins of pride can be overlooked no longer. The book ends with the promise of the fulfillment and deliverance of Zion in the Last Days when the land will be restored to God's people as He rules over them.

Foreshadowings: Verse 21 of the Book of Obadiah contains a foreshadowing of Christ and His Church. "Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the LORD's" (NKJV). These "saviors" (also called "deliverers" in several versions) are the apostles of Christ, ministers of the word, and especially the preachers of the Gospel in these latter days. They are called "saviors," not because they obtain our salvation, but because they preach salvation through the Gospel of Christ and show us the way to obtain that salvation. They, and the Word preached by them, are the means by which the good news of salvation is delivered to all men. While Christ is the only Savior who alone came to purchase salvation, and is the author of it, saviors and deliverers of the Gospel will be more and more in evidence as the end of the age draws near.

Practical Application: God will overcome in our behalf if we will stay true to Him. Unlike Edom, we must be willing to help others in times of need. Pride is sin. We have nothing to be proud of except Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

Book of Jonah - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Jonah"

Answer: Author: Jonah 1:1 identifies the book as telling the story of the prophet Jonah. Although the book is written in the third person, the traditional view is that Jonah is the author of the book, and there is no persuasive reason to theorize about an unknown author.

Date of Writing: The Book of Jonah was likely written between 793 and 758 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Disobedience and revival are the key themes in this book. Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale provides him with a unique opportunity to seek a unique deliverance, as he repents during this equally unique retreat. His initial disobedience leads not only to his personal revival, but to that of the Ninevites as well. Many classify the revival which Jonah brings to Nineveh as one of the greatest evangelistic efforts of all time.

Key Verses: Jonah 1:3, "But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish..."

Jonah 1:17, "But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights."

Jonah 2:2, "In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry."

Jonah 3:10, "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."

Brief Summary: Jonah's fear and pride cause him to run from God. He does not wish to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people, as God has commanded, because he feels they are his enemies, and he is convinced that God will not carry out his threat to destroy the city. Instead he boards a ship for Tarshish, which is in the opposite direction. Soon a raging storm causes the crew to cast lots and determine that Jonah is the problem. They throw him overboard, and he is swallowed by a great fish. In its belly for 3 days and 3 nights, Jonah repents of his sin to God, and the fish vomits him up on dry land (we wonder what took him so long to repent). Jonah then makes the 500-mile trip to Nineveh and leads the city in a great revival. But the prophet is displeased (actually pouts) instead of being thankful when Nineveh repents. Jonah learns his lesson, however, when God uses a wind, a gourd and a worm to teach him that He is merciful.

Foreshadowings: That Jonah is a type of Christ is clear from Jesus' own words. In Matthew 12:40-41, Jesus declares that He will be in the grave the same amount of time Jonah was in the whale's belly. He goes on to say that while the Ninevites repented in the face of Jonah's preaching, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who rejected Jesus were rejecting One who is far greater than Jonah. Just as Jonah brought the truth of God regarding repentance and salvation to the Ninevites, so too does Jesus bring the same message (Jonah 2:9; John 14:6) of salvation of and through God alone (Romans 11:36).

Practical Application: We cannot hide from God. What He wishes to accomplish through us will come to pass, despite all our objections and foot-dragging. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that He has plans for us and will see to it that we conform to those plans. How much easier it would be if we, unlike Jonah, would submit to Him without delay!

God's love manifests itself in His accessibility to all, regardless of our reputation, nationality or race. The free offer of the Gospel is for all people in all times. Our task as Christians is to be the means by which God tells the world of the offer and to rejoice in the salvation of others. This is an experience God wants us to share with Him, not being jealous or resentful of those who come to Christ in "lastminute conversions" or who come through circumstances dissimilar to our own.

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Book of Micah - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Micah"

Answer: Author: The author of the Book of Micah was the Prophet Micah (Micah 1:1).

Date of Writing: The Book of Micah was likely written between 735 and 700 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The message of the Book of Micah is a complex mixture of judgment and hope. On the one hand, the prophecies announce judgment upon Israel for social evils, corrupt leadership and idolatry. This judgment was expected to culminate in the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. On the other hand, the book proclaims not merely the restoration of the nation, but the transformation and exaltation of Israel and Jerusalem. The messages of hope and doom are not necessarily contradictory, however, since restoration and transformation take place only after judgment.

Key Verses: Micah 1:2, "Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple."

Micah 5:2, "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 6:8, "He has showed you, O man, 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 7:18-19, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

Brief Summary: The prophet condemns the rulers, priests, and prophets of Israel who exploit and mislead the people. It is because of their deeds that Jerusalem will be destroyed. The prophet Micah proclaims the deliverance of the people who will go from Jerusalem to Babylon and concludes with an exhortation for Jerusalem to destroy the nations who have gathered against her. The ideal ruler would come from Bethlehem to defend the nation, and the prophet proclaims the triumph of the remnant of Jacob and foresees a day when Yahweh will purge the nation of idolatry and reliance on military might. The prophet sets forth a powerful and concise summary of Yahweh's requirement for justice and loyalty and announces judgment upon those who have followed the ways of Omri and Ahab. The book closes with a prophetic liturgy comprising elements of a lament. Israel confesses its sin and is assured of deliverance through Yahweh's mighty acts.

Foreshadowings: Micah 5:2 is a Messianic prophecy quoted when the magi were searching for the king born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:6). These kings from the East were told that from the tiny village of Bethlehem would come forth the Prince of Peace, the Light of the world. Micah's message of sin, repentance and restoration finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ who is the propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:24-25) and the only way to God (John 14:6).

Practical Application: God gives warnings so we will not have to suffer His wrath. Judgment is certain if God's warnings are not heeded and His provision for sin in the sacrifice of His Son is rejected. For the believer in Christ, God will discipline us—not from hate—but because He loves us.

He knows that sin destroys and He wants us to be whole. This wholeness which is the promise of restoration awaits those who remain obedient to Him.

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Book of Nahum - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Nahum"

Answer: Author: The author of the Book of Nahum identifies himself as Nahum (in the Hebrew “Consoler” or “Comforter”) the Elkoshite (1:1). There are many theories as to where that city was though there is no conclusive evidence. One such theory is that it refers to the city later called Capernaum (which literally means “the village of Nahum”) at the Sea of Galilee.

Date of Writing: Given the limited amount of information that we know about Nahum, the best we can do is narrow the timeframe in which the Book of Nahum was written to between 663 and 612 B.C. Two events are mentioned that help us to determine these dates. First, Nahum mentions Thebes (No Amon) in Egypt falling to the Assyrians (663 B.C.) in the past tense, so it had already happened. Second, the remainder of Nahum's prophecies came true in 612 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Nahum did not write this book as a warning or “call to repentance” for the people of Nineveh. God had already sent them the prophet Jonah 150 years earlier with His promise of what would happen if they continued in their evil ways. The people at that time had repented but now lived just as bad if not worse than they did before. The Assyrians had become absolutely brutal in their conquests (hanging the bodies of their victims on poles and putting their skin on the walls of their tents among other atrocities). Now Nahum was telling the people of Judah to not despair because God had pronounced judgment and the Assyrians would soon be getting just what they deserved.

Key Verses: Nahum 1:7, “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.”

Nahum 1:14a. “The LORD has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: ‘You will have no descendants to bear your name.’”

Nahum 1:15a, “Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace!” See also Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15.

Nahum 2:13a, “Behold I am against you,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

Nahum 3:19, “Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?”

Brief Summary: Nineveh once had responded to the preaching of Jonah and turned from their evil ways to serve the Lord God. But 150 years later, Nineveh returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance (Nahum 3:1–4). Once again God sends one of His prophets to Nineveh warning of judgment in the form of the destruction of their city and exhorting them to repentance. Sadly, the Ninevites did not heed’s Nahum’s warning, and the city was brought under the dominion of Babylon.

Foreshadowings: Paul repeats Nahum 1:15 in Romans 10:15 in regard to the Messiah and His ministry, as well as the apostles of Christ in His time. It may also be understood of any minister of the Gospel whose business it

is to "preach the Gospel of peace." God has made peace with sinners by the blood of Christ, and has given to His people the peace that "transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). The preacher's work is also to "bring glad tidings of good things" (KJV), such as reconciliation, righteousness, pardon, life, and eternal salvation by a crucified Christ. The preaching of such a Gospel, and bringing such news, make their feet beautiful. The imagery here is of one who runs to others, eager and joyful to proclaim the Good News.

Practical Application: God is patient and slow to anger. He gives every country time to proclaim Him as their Lord. But He is not mocked. Any time a country turns away from Him to serve its own motives, He steps in with judgment. Almost 220 years ago, the United States was formed as a nation guided by principles found in the Bible. In the last 50 years that has changed, and we are turning daily in the opposite direction. As Christians it is our duty to stand up for biblical principles and scriptural truth, for Truth is our country's only hope.

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Book of Habakkuk - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Habakkuk"

Answer: Author: Habakkuk 1:1 identifies the Book of Habakkuk as an oracle from the Prophet Habakkuk.

Date of Writing: The Book of Habakkuk was likely written between 610 and 605 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The prophet Habakkuk decries the sins of Judah but grapples with the fact that God's chosen people will suffer at the hands of enemies even more wicked than they. God answers Habakkuk's questions, resulting in continuing faith in God's wisdom, sovereignty, and salvation.

Key Verses: Habakkuk 1:2, "How long, Oh Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save."

Habakkuk 1:5, "Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if I told you."

Habakkuk 1:12, "Oh, Lord are you not from everlasting? My God, My Holy One, we will not die."

Habakkuk 2:2-4, "Then the Lord replied: Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation waits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and not delay. See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright - but the righteous will live by his faith."

Habakkuk 2:20, "But the Lord is in His Holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him."

Habakkuk 3:2, "Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy."

Habakkuk 3:19, "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to go on the heights."

Brief Summary: The Book of Habakkuk begins with Habakkuk crying out to God for an answer to why God's chosen people are allowed to suffer in their captivity (Habakkuk 1:1-4). The Lord gives His answer to Habakkuk, essentially stating, "You wouldn't believe it if I told you" (Habakkuk 1: 5-11). Habakkuk then follows up by saying, "Ok, you are God, but still tell me more about why this is happening" (Habakkuk 1:17-2:1). God then answers him again and gives him more information, then tells the earth to be silent before Him (Habakkuk 2:2-20). Then Habakkuk writes a prayer expressing his strong faith in God, even through these trials (Habakkuk 3:1-19).

Foreshadowings: The Apostle Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 on two different occasions (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11) to reiterate the doctrine of justification by faith. The faith that is the gift of God and available through Christ is at once a faith that saves (Ephesians 2:8-9) and a faith that sustains throughout life. We attain eternal life by faith and we live the Christian life by the same faith. Unlike the "proud" in the beginning of the verse, whose soul

is not right within him (NASB) and whose desires are not upright (NIV), but we who are made righteous by faith in Christ are made completely righteous because He has exchanged His perfect righteousness for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and has enabled us to live by faith.

Practical Application: The application to the reader of Habakkuk is that it is permissible to question what God is doing, although with respect and reverence. Sometimes it is not evident to us what is going on, especially if we are thrown into suffering for a period of time or if it seems our enemies are prospering while we are just barely getting by. The Book of Habakkuk affirms that God is a sovereign, omnipotent God who has all things under control. We just need to be still and know He is at work. He is who He says He is and does keep His promises. He will punish the wicked. Even when we cannot see it, He is still on the throne of the universe. We need to stay focused on this: “The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights” (Habakkuk 3:19). Enabling us to go on the heights is taking us to the higher places with Him where we are set apart from the world. Sometimes the way we have to go to get us there is through suffering and sorrow, but if we rest in Him and trust Him, we come out where He wants us.

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Book of Zephaniah - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Zephaniah"

Answer: Author: Zephaniah 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Zephaniah as the Prophet Zephaniah. The name Zephaniah means "defended by God."

Date of Writing: The book of Zephaniah was written during the reign of King Josiah, likely in the early part of his reign, between 635 and 625 BC.

Purpose of Writing: Zephaniah's message of judgment and encouragement contains three major doctrines: 1) God is sovereign over all nations. 2) The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be vindicated on the day of judgment. 3) God blesses those who repent and trust in Him.

Key Verses: Zephaniah 1:18, "Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth."

Zephaniah 2:3, "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 3:17, "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Brief Summary: Zephaniah pronounces the Lord's judgment on the whole earth, on Judah, on the surrounding nations, on Jerusalem and on all nations. This is followed by proclamations of the Lord's blessing on all nations and especially on the faithful remnant of His people in Judah.

Zephaniah had the courage to speak bluntly because he knew he was proclaiming the Word of the Lord. His book begins with "The word of the Lord" and ends with "says the Lord." He knew that neither the many gods the people worshiped nor even the might of the Assyrian army could save them. God is gracious and compassionate, but when all His warnings are ignored, judgment is to be expected. God's day of judgment is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. The prophets called it the "Day of the Lord." They referred to various events such as the fall of Jerusalem as manifestations of God's Day, each of which pointed toward the ultimate Day of the Lord.

Foreshadowings: The final blessings on Zion pronounced in 3:14-20 are largely unfulfilled, leading us to conclude that these are messianic prophecies that await the Second Coming of Christ to be completed. The Lord has taken away our punishment only through Christ who came to die for the sins of His people (Zephaniah 3:15; John 3:16). But Israel has not yet recognized her true Savior. This is yet to happen (Romans 11:25-27).

The promise of peace and safety for Israel, a time when their King is in their midst, will be fulfilled when Christ returns to judge the world and redeem it for Himself. Just as He ascended to heaven after His resurrection, so

will He return and set up a new Jerusalem on earth (Revelation 21). At that time, all God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

Practical Application: With a few adjustments in names and situations, this prophet of 7th century B.C. could stand in our pulpits today and deliver the same message of judgment of the wicked and hope for the faithful. Zephaniah reminds us that God is offended by the moral and religious sins of His people. God's people will not escape punishment when they sin willfully. Punishment may be painful,

but its purpose may be redemptive rather than punitive. The inevitability of the punishment of wickedness gives comfort in a time when it seems that evil is unbridled and victorious. We have the freedom to disobey God but not the freedom to escape the consequences of that disobedience. Those who are faithful to God may be relatively few, but He does not forget them.

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Book of Haggai - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Haggai"

Answer: Author: Haggai 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Haggai as the Prophet Haggai.

Date of Writing: The Book of Haggai was written in approximately 520 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Haggai sought to challenge the people of God concerning their priorities. He called them to reverence and glorify God by building the Temple in spite of local and official opposition. Haggai called them not to be discouraged because this Temple would not be quite as richly decorated as Solomon's. He exhorted them to turn from the uncleanness of their ways and to trust in God's sovereign power. The Book of Haggai is a reminder of the problems the people of God faced at this time, how the people courageously trusted in God and how God provided for their needs.

Key Verses: Haggai 1:4, "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"

Haggai 1:5-6, "Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.'"

Haggai 2:9, "'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."

Brief Summary: Will the people of God reconsider their priorities, take courage, and act on the basis of God's promises? God sought to warn the people to heed His words. Not only did God warn them, but He also offered promises through His servant Haggai to motivate them to follow Him. Because the people of God reversed their priorities and failed to put God in first place in their lives, Judah was sent into Babylonian exile. In response to Daniel's prayer and in fulfillment of God's promises, God directed Cyrus the Persian king to allow the Jews in exile to go back to Jerusalem. A group of Jews returned to their land with great joy, put God first in their lives, worshiped Him and began to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem without the aid of the local people who lived in Palestine. Their courageous faith was met with opposition from the local people as well as the Persian government for approximately 15 years.

Foreshadowings: As with most of the books of the minor prophets, Haggai ends with promises of restoration and blessing. In the last verse, Haggai 2:23, God uses a distinctly messianic title in reference to Zerubbabel, "My Servant" (Compare 2 Samuel 3:18; 1 Kings 11:34; Isaiah 42:1-9; Ezekiel 37:24,25). Through Haggai, God promises to make him like a signet ring, which was a symbol of honor, authority, and power, somewhat like a king's scepter used to seal letters and decrees. Zerubbabel, as God's signet ring, represents the house of David and the resumption of the messianic line interrupted by the Exile. Zerubbabel reestablished the Davidic line of kings which would culminate in the millennial reign of Christ. Zerubbabel appears in the line of Christ on both Joseph's side (Matt. 1:12) and Mary's side (Luke 3:27).

Practical Application: The Book of Haggai draws attention to common problems most people face even today. Haggai asks us 1) to examine our priorities to see if we are more interested in our own pleasures than doing the work of God; 2) to reject a defeatist attitude when we run into opposition or discouraging circumstances; 3) to confess our failures and seek to live pure lives before God; 4) to act courageously for God because we have the assurance that He is with us always and is in full control of our circumstances; and 5) to rest secure in God's hands knowing that He will abundantly bless us as we faithfully serve Him.

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Book of Zechariah - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Zechariah"

Answer: Author: Zechariah 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Zechariah as the Prophet Zechariah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Zechariah was likely written in two primary segments, between 520 and 470 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Zechariah emphasized that God has used His prophets to teach, warn and correct His people. "Unfortunately, they refused to listen." Their sin brought God's punishment. "The book also bears evidence that even prophecy could be corrupted." History shows that in this period prophecy fell into disfavor among the Jews, leading to the period between the Testaments when no lasting prophetic voice spoke to God's people.

Key Verses: Zechariah 1:3, "Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty."

Zechariah 7:13, "'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty."

Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Zechariah 13:9, "This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

Brief Summary: The Book of Zechariah teaches that salvation may be obtained by all. "The last chapter depicts peoples from all over the world coming to worship God, who desires that all people follow Him." This is not the doctrine of universalism, i.e., that all people would be saved because it is God's nature to save. "Rather, the book teaches that God desires that all people worship Him and accepts those who do, regardless of their national or political expressions." Finally, Zechariah preached that God is sovereign over this world, any appearance to the contrary notwithstanding. "His visions of the future indicate that God sees all that will happen." The depictions of God's intervention in the world teach that ultimately He will bring human events to the end He chooses. "He does not eliminate the individual's freedom to follow God or rebel, but holds people responsible for the choices they make." In the last chapter, even the forces of nature respond to God's control.

Foreshadowings: Prophecies about Jesus Christ and the messianic era abound in Zechariah. From the promise that Messiah would come and dwell in our midst (Zechariah 2:10-12; Matthew 1:23) to the symbolism of the Branch and the Stone (Zechariah 3:8-9, 6:12-13; Isaiah 11:1; Luke 20:17-18) to the promise of His Second Coming where they who pierced Him will look upon Him and mourn (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:33-37), Christ is the theme of the Book of Zechariah. Jesus is the Savior of Israel, a fountain whose blood covers the sins of all who come to Him for salvation (Zechariah 13:1; 1 John 1:7).

Practical Application: God expects sincere worship and moral living of us today. Zechariah's example of breaking through national prejudice reminds us to reach out into all areas of our society.

We must extend God's invitation of salvation to people of all national origins, languages, races and cultures. That salvation is only available through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, who died in our place to atone for sin. But if we reject that sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice through which we can be reconciled to God. There is no other name under heaven by which men are saved (Acts 4:12). There is no time to lose; today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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Book of Malachi - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of Malachi"

Answer: Author: Malachi 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Malachi as the Prophet Malachi.

Date of Writing: The Book of Malachi was written between 440 and 400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Malachi is an oracle: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi (1:1). This was God's warning through Malachi to tell the people to turn back to God. As the final book of the Old Testament closes, the pronouncement of God's justice and the promise of His restoration through the coming Messiah is ringing in the ears of the Israelites. Four hundred years of silence ensues, ending with a similar message from God's next prophet, John the Baptist, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2).

Key Verses: Malachi 1:6, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the Lord Almighty. It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name."

Malachi 3:6-7, "I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty."

Brief Summary: Malachi wrote the words of the Lord to God's chosen people who had gone astray, especially the priests who had turned from the Lord. Priests were not treating the sacrifices they were to make to God seriously. Animals with blemishes were being sacrificed even though the law demanded animals without defect (Deuteronomy 15:21). The men of Judah were dealing with the wives of their youth treacherously and wondering why God would not accept their sacrifices. Also, people were not tithing as they should have been (Leviticus 27:30, 32). But in spite of the people's sin and turning away from God, Malachi reiterates God's love for His people (Malachi 1:1-5) and His promises of a coming Messenger (Malachi 2:17-3:5).

Foreshadowings: Malachi 3:1-6 is a prophecy concerning John the Baptist. He was the Messenger of the Lord sent to prepare the way (Matthew 11:10) for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. John preached repentance and baptized in the name of the Lord, thus preparing the way for Jesus' first advent. But the Messenger who comes "suddenly to the Temple" is Christ Himself in His second advent when He comes in power and might (Matthew 24). At that time, He will "purify the sons of Levi" (v. 3), meaning that those who exemplified the Mosaic Law would themselves need purification from sin through the blood of the Savior. Only then will they be able to offer "an offering in righteousness" because it will be the righteousness of Christ imputed to them through faith (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Practical Application: God is not pleased when we do not obey His commands. He will repay those who disregard Him. As for God hating divorce (2:16), God takes the covenant of marriage seriously and He does not want it broken. We are to stay true to the spouse of our youth for a lifetime. God sees our hearts, so He knows

what our intentions are; nothing can be hidden from Him. He will return and He will be the judge. But if we return to Him, He will return to us (Malachi 3:6).

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