

Church of God

Sunday School

THE BIBLE — OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY



DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Be strong, courageous, and obedient (Joshua 1:6-9).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:24-25).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** God makes a covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:12-16).
- ❑ **Thursday:** The kingdom is divided (1 Kings 12:12-17).
- ❑ **Friday:** The walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt (Nehemiah 6:1-3, 15-16).
- ❑ **Saturday:** The Jews are commanded to remember God's deliverance (Esther 9:26-28).

MEMORY VERSE: *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*
—Romans 15:4

Why Are These Books Important?

The second category of books in the Bible is called the "Books of History." These twelve books cover major events in Israel's history, including entering the land of Canaan, the need of judges (military leaders), the transition from a theocracy (governed by God) to a monarchy (governed by kings or queens), the division of the nation (northern kingdom and southern kingdom), the captivity of both kingdoms, and the people of the southern kingdom returning from Babylon.

Yet, these books are not just history lessons; from them we learn more about God—who He is, His relationship with His people, and how to please Him. As we read interesting stories about heroes of the faith (listed in Hebrews 11:4-40) and villains (described in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13), we are learning what God's perfect will is and what the consequences of sin are as well. Experience is the best teacher, and the wisest man learns from the mistakes of others. So, read those stories! Learn from the character's victories, failures, faith, and sins.

As you read these books, keep in mind that all these stories took place before Jesus came and died on the Cross. They happened before Jesus preached the message of "love your enemies." The people in the Old Testament did not have Jesus living in their hearts to help them to live free from sin. Thankfully, examples of God's patience, grace, and forgiveness are found in these stories!

God's Chosen People

When God made a covenant with Abraham, He told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5). In time, Abraham's descendants became known as the people of Israel (Israel was the name given to Abraham's grandson Jacob). These people are also known as Jews. It was through this nation of people that God promised to bring salvation to the entire world. Jesus would be born to Jewish parents. The hope of a coming Savior is woven throughout the entire Old Testament.

To understand the rest of the Bible, it is important that we learn about Israel's history. All these stories were written for our learning (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). We can see a pattern developing throughout these books of history: when Israel was faithful to God, He blessed them and protected them from their enemies; when Israel turned to idol worship, God withdrew His blessings and protection.

Several events, people, and even objects point to Jesus' coming and great sacrifice on Calvary. The red cord that saved Rahab and her family from destruction in Jericho symbolizes the blood of Jesus that saves from sin. Joshua's

name means "the Lord's salvation." Samuel was a prophet, priest, and judge, just like Jesus (Matthew 21:11; Hebrews 9:24-26; Romans 14:10). David was also a type of Christ in that he was born in Bethlehem, he was a shepherd, and he was a king. There are many more examples that foretell of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection.

The Twelve Historical Books

JOSHUA: in this book Joshua becomes Israel's leader after the death of Moses. Israel learns that victory comes through faith and obedience to God. The military campaigns under Joshua's leadership were successful because God gave Joshua exact instructions, and Joshua obeyed. The land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel.

JUDGES: after Joshua's death, the spiritual condition of Israel was not good. The people had failed to obey God and drive out their enemies. There was a great lack of faith and obedience (2:1-3). In this book there are seven cycles of oppression (by Israel's enemies), Israel's cry for help, and deliverance through judges appointed by God.

RUTH: this book tells a beautiful story of love, devotion, and redemption. Ruth was a Moabite (a descendant of Lot) who married into a Jewish family. Throughout this story thirteen times we read the word *kinsman*, which means "one who redeems" (to buy back). This story points to the price Jesus paid on Calvary to redeem every one of us from the slave master of sin. This book ends with a genealogy (a list of family names), letting us know that some day Jesus would be born of Ruth's family.

1 & 2 SAMUEL: the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles were each divided into two books when translated from Hebrew to Greek. In the first book of Samuel we read of Israel's last judge and first prophet: Samuel. He also helped Israel make the change from being ruled by God only to being governed by King Saul. (God was still the true King.) These books also tell the story of David and the important covenant God made with him in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

1 & 2 KINGS: these two books begin with the death of King David and the crowning of King Solomon. They continue to tell of Solomon's accomplishments (including building the temple in Jerusalem) and also his failures. Solomon's pagan wives caused him to no longer follow God with a perfect heart (1 Kings 11:4). Solomon had a divided heart. Sadly, under the harsh rule of his son Rehoboam, the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah). The success or failure of all the kings of these two nations depended on their obedience or disobedience to God's commandments. Second Kings ends with Israel being taken captive by the Assyrians and Judah being taken captive by the Babylonians.

1 & 2 CHRONICLES: the word *chronicles* means "the words of the days" (Hebrew) and "things omitted" (Greek). These two books cover much of the same history found in 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings, but from a different viewpoint. It is believed that this was written when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity and were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. It was written to encourage God's people, reminding them of the faithfulness, promises, and power of God. It also emphasizes the importance of worship and reminds the Jews that they were God's people.

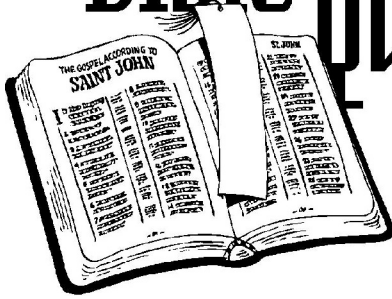
EZRA: in this book we read of the first two returns of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. The first return was led by Zerubbabel (appointed governor of Judah) to rebuild the temple; the second return was under Ezra's leadership, and it was to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people. This book is a beautiful portrayal of God's willingness to give second chances. We also see God protecting and preserving His people during their long years of captivity.

NEHEMIAH: the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book or manuscript. The name *Nehemiah* means "the comfort of Jehovah." Nehemiah (cupbearer to the king) led the Jews on the third and final return to Jerusalem. There he organized the people in the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. In spite of great opposition, the walls were rebuilt in 52 days! Even Nehemiah's enemies had to admit that it was the work of God (6:15-16). Although the physical rebuilding went quickly, restoring the spiritual condition of God's people took years under Nehemiah's leadership.

ESTHER: in this beautiful story, we read of Haman's plan to completely destroy the Jews. This was truly the plan of the devil, for if there were no Jews left, there could be no Savior born from the lineage of David (as God had promised). But God would not allow that to happen! His hand of protection is obvious throughout this book. God provided a deliverer through a brave young Jewish lady named Esther. The Feast of Purim is celebrated yearly to remind the Jews of God's faithfulness and of His protection.



Bible Quiz



1. List some of the major events covered in the Books of History:

2. Who was Israel's first judge (Judges 3:9)?

3. What is the pattern found all through the Books of History?

4. Look at the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22. Who is the son of Ruth?

5. How many years did it take to build Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:38)?

6. What determined if a king of Israel was successful or not?

7. Who was Ezra (Ezra 7:6; 10:10)?

8. Name some of Nehemiah's enemies (Nehemiah 6:1):

9. There is a famous quote that says, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Why did God tell His people to pass all these stories down from one generation to the next (Joel 1:3)?

10. What is the Feast of Purim?

11. How often did the Jews celebrate the Feast of Purim?

HEROES

Write the Scriptures below
the Hero being described



Rahab



Samuel



Gideon



Joshua

- ◆ Judges 8:28
- ◆ Joshua 24:1, 15
- ◆ 1 Samuel 3:19
- ◆ Acts 13:22
- ◆ Joshua 6:17



King David

OF THE FAITH