

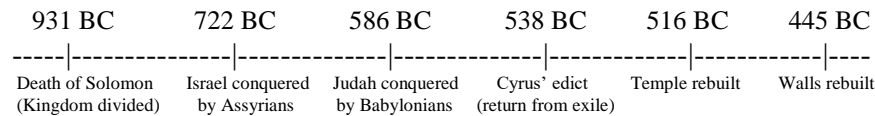
## THE WHOLE BIBLE: 66 BOOKS IN 10 WEEKS

### Kings – Esther

#### A theology of exile and restoration

- Israel staying in land contingent on keeping the Mosaic Covenant
- land is picture of heaven | blessing of land is provisional
- invasion and exile is God’s judgment on Israel’s sin
- but God promises a return from exile | full restoration
- forgiveness of sins, Temple rebuilt, Davidic king, joy and prosperity
- this is gospel in nutshell

#### Timeline of Israel’s latter history



#### INTRODUCTION TO 1 AND 2 KINGS

- written to exiles – God’s promise to Abraham and David untrue?

#### Role of kings

- Solomon begins slide towards unfaithfulness with foreign wives
- Jeroboam, first king of northern Israel, sets up 2 golden calves
- Ahab institutes worship of Baal; tries to destroy true religion

#### 2 Kings 17:11-13

<sup>11</sup> And the people did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, <sup>12</sup> and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this.”

<sup>13</sup> Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer.

#### Role of prophets

- previously, counselors of king | example: Nathan and David
- now, outsiders – calling people to repentance | covenant prosecutors
- most prominent prophets are Elijah and Elisha

#### 1 Kings 18:20-21 | Contest on Mt. Carmel

<sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.

#### People are straddling between Baal and Yahweh

- God demonstrates he is the only true God...but nothing changes

#### 2 Kings 11:1-3 | Davidic line hangs by a thread

<sup>1</sup> Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family. <sup>2</sup> But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were being put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not put to death. <sup>3</sup> And he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

#### God preserves the Davidic line

- 2 Kings ends – Jehoiachin freed, sits at king’s table
- hope of the Messiah and fulfillment of Davidic Covenant

#### INTRODUCTION TO 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

- perception of boring – covers same material Samuel and Kings
- many Bible stories are repeated | each version different angle
  - Kings explains, why exile, and looks forward to restoration
  - Chronicles waiting for full restoration and coming Messiah

#### Crucial differences between Chronicles and Kings

- Chronicles focuses exclusively on Judah | nothing on Israel
- no mention of David’s sin (Bathsheba) and Solomon’s (wives)
- no prophets decrying the sins of Judah’s kings
- Chronicles focuses on future hope of Davidic king
- elaborate preparations and description of Temple
- rebuilt Temple is focal point of repentance and renewal
- lengthy prayers and speeches | ends with Cyrus’ decree
- encourage people, surrounded by hostile forces, to seek God

## 2 Chronicles 7:11-16 | Solomon builds the Temple

<sup>11</sup> Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. <sup>13</sup> When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, <sup>14</sup> if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. <sup>15</sup> Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

### Promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is not addressed to America

- "land" is Promised Land | addressed to returned exiles

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA-NEHEMIAH

- along with Malachi, the last book of Old Testament written
- story of the Return from Exile – God restores his people
- story of Zerubbabel (Temple) | Ezra (law) | Nehemiah (wall)

### Restoration of exiles is disappointing and incomplete

- prophets spoke of the restoration of Israel in lavish terms
- but reality is a pale shadow of the promises

## Ezra 3:10-13 | Temple is rebuilt!

<sup>10</sup> And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. <sup>12</sup> But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, <sup>13</sup> so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

## The exile never ended | a future, glorious Return is awaiting

- New Testament opens w/ people still waiting for the "exile" to end

### Return from exile does not solve the problem of sin

## Nehemiah 13:15-18, 23-26

<sup>15</sup> In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. <sup>18</sup> Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

<sup>23</sup> In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. <sup>25</sup> And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. <sup>26</sup> Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women?"

### Poignant image – Nehemiah frustrated, beating and berating people

- problem is human heart | even after exile, people's hearts still wicked
- therefore, prophets spoke of a "New Covenant" (Jer. 31, Ezek. 36)

## INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER

- Jewish people are threatened with total destruction
- Providence of God – when most hidden, still active and at work
- God's way is often hidden and mysterious, but always good and wise

## Esther 6:1-4

<sup>1</sup> On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. <sup>2</sup> And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. <sup>3</sup> And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." <sup>4</sup> And the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

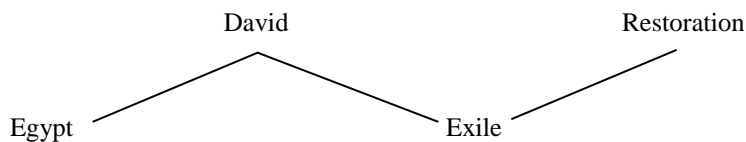
## Notes

### Last lesson – story of Conquest and Settlement of Land

- theological meaning of geography
  - Promised Land represents New Heavens and New Earth
  - conquest begun with Joshua, complete with King David
- 2 Samuel 7: Davidic Covenant
  - David’s son will establish an everlasting kingdom | “son of God”

### But latter history of Israel

- story of moral decay, invasion, exile and return from exile
- this is dominant theme in Old Testament (prophetic books)



### A theology of exile and restoration

- Israel staying in land contingent on keeping Mosaic Covenant
  - “covenant of works” with regard to land | redux of test in Eden
- Deut. 28 – if obey, blessings | if disobey, curses (famine, invaders, exile)
- therefore, invasion by foreigners and exile is God’s punishment for sin
- re-dramatization of expulsion from Garden of Eden | away from God
- thus, the Temple is destroyed (God’s presence is no more)

### But, here is the gospel

- God graciously promises a return from exile (God’s grace)
- this is dominant theme of prophetic books | full restoration
- forgiveness of sins, Temple rebuilt, Davidic king will reign
- peace and joy and prosperity | this is gospel

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 AND 2 KINGS

- written during exile to address shock of Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the exile of God’s people to foreign land
- for us, distant fact of history, but for Jeremiah, deeply traumatic

### Lamentations 3:4-6

He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead.

### Deep theological problem

- exile seems to annul all promises of God to Abraham and David
- Abraham – make into great nation, bless you, give land everlasting
- David – son will reign everlasting, dynasty never end
- instead, enemies of God crow in victory | Satan has triumphed

### Book of Kings is answer to that question

- (1) exile is result of unfaithfulness
  - God is in control
  - invasion is not defeat of God, but God’s punishment to people
- (2) but promise of restoration
  - all promises will still come true, by grace

### Role of Kings

- history shows God’s long patience in face of repeated disobedience

### Solomon

- kingship begins well – asks for wisdom (2 women, Proverbs)
- people are prosperous | Gentiles pay homage (Queen of Sheba)
- builds Temple | for awhile, it looked like fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7
- but Solomon’s downfall – marries foreign princesses
- Solomon loved the Lord, but also loved his many wives

### 1 Kings 11:4

For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

**Rehoboam** – boastful idiot

**Jeroboam** – first king of Israel, golden calves at Bethel and Dan

**Ahab and Jezebel** – institutes worship of Baal, tries wipe out Yahweh

### Israel – 19 kings

- virtually all evil, except Jehu (mixed record, sins of Jeroboam)

### Judah – 20 kings

- 8 mixed/good, 12 evil (intermittent good, but long slide into evil)
- 4 very good – Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah
- good kings are too little, too late
- after Hezekiah, his son Manasseh is most wicked
  - worships Baal, turns Temple into pagan temple, child sacrifice

### 2 Kings 17:11-13

<sup>11</sup> And the people did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger,  
<sup>12</sup> and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them,  
“You shall not do this.” <sup>13</sup> Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah  
by every prophet and every seer.

### Role of prophets | God repeated warned his people

- kingship and priesthood corrupted, prophets arise to warn people
- previously, counselors of king | example: Nathan and David
- now, outsiders – calling people to repentance | covenant prosecutors
  
- most prominent prophets are Elijah and Elisha
  - northern kingdom of Israel
- but ultimately fail to turn back heart of God’s people

### 1 Kings 18:20-24 | Contest on Mt. Carmel

<sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets  
together at Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> And Elijah came near to all the  
people and said, “How long will you go limping between two  
different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal,  
then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.

### Elijah enters story, announcing a drought – 1 Kings 17

- after 3 years, Elijah comes back from hiding, proposes contest
- “how long limping b/w 2 different opinions?”
- people were trying have it both ways – both Baal and Yahweh

### Elijah proposes a test – sacrifice bull on alter, but no fire

- 450 prophets of Baal dance around alter, but nothing happens
- then Elijah commands alter drenched in water – fire comes down
- people kill Baal prophets | then begins to rain
  
- but in the end, nothing changes | Jezebel puts out a death warrant
- Elijah flees, so discouraged, to God – “take my life”
- Elijah at Mt. Horeb – wind, earthquake, fire, but low whisper

### 2 Kings 11:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was  
dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family. <sup>2</sup> But  
Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took  
Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the  
king’s sons who were being put to death, and she put him and his  
nurse in a bedroom. Thus they hid him from Athaliah, so that he  
was not put to death. <sup>3</sup> And he remained with her six years, hidden  
in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

### Jehoshaphat makes alliance with Ahab

- his son, Joram, marries Ahab (and Jezebel’s) daughter, Athaliah
- Joram reigns 8 years and dies | son, Ahaziah reigns 2 years and dies
  
- then Athaliah decides to seize power and wipe out Davidic line
- but Jehosheba (and Jehoiada) hide baby Joash
- Messianic line hangs by a thread

### God preserves the Davidic line

- 2 Kings 25 – Jehoiachin released from prison and sits at king’s table
- hope of the Messiah and fulfillment of Davidic Covenant

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

- perception of boring – covers same material Samuel and Kings
- many Bible stories are repeated | each version different angle
  - Kings explains, why exile, and looks forward to restoration
  - Chronicles waiting for full restoration and coming Messiah

### Crucial differences between Chronicles and Kings

- Chronicles focuses exclusively on Judah | nothing on Israel
- no mention of David’s sin (Bathsheba) and Solomon’s (wives)
- no prophets decrying the sins of Judah’s kings
  
- this is not white-washing history | Kings is not forgotten
- rather, focuses on future hope of Davidic king | Israel excluded
- exiles were under Persian rule, still waiting for Messiah to come
- David is portrayed as ideal king | waiting for “David’s son”
- Matthew’s genealogy traces Davidic line – Jesus is true Son of David
  
- elaborate preparations by David, and lengthy desc. of Temple
- theology of Temple – presence of God among his people
  - gold and botanical imagery | garden of Eden
- rebuilt Temple is focal point of repentance and renewal in God
- Jesus is true Temple | “Word became flesh,” “destroy/rebuild in 3 days”
  
- lengthy prayers and speeches | ends with Cyrus’ decree
- encouraging people surrounded by hostile forces, disappointment
- to seek God, continue in repentance, and look for future deliverance

### 2 Chronicles 7:11-16 | Solomon builds the Temple

<sup>11</sup> Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king’s house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. <sup>13</sup> When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, <sup>14</sup> if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. <sup>15</sup> Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.”

### Promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is not addressed to America

- “land” is Promised Land | land has specific theological meaning
- not a general equation, “if repent, then God bless land”
  
- rather, addressed to returned exiles to repent and seek God
- promise is tied specifically to the Temple
- speech goes on to warn against covenant unfaithfulness
- ultimately, pointing us to Christ as necessity of a savior

## INTRODUCTION TO EZRA-NEHEMIAH

- along with Malachi, the last book of Old Testament written
- story of the Return from Exile – God restores his people
  - deep symbolism of salvation
- focuses on Zerubbabel (Temple), Ezra (law) and Nehemiah (wall)

### Restoration to land was disappointing and incomplete

- prophets spoke of the restoration of Israel in lavish terms

### Isaiah 49

This is what the LORD says: “In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, ‘Come out,’ and to those in darkness, ‘Be free!’ They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up. See, they will come from afar – some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan. Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

### Prophets go on the describe

- land fully restored, Temple rebuilt, righteous king, enemies subdued
- but reality is a pale shadow of the promises

### **Ezra 3:10-13 | Temple is rebuilt, but bittersweet**

<sup>10</sup> And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. <sup>12</sup> But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, <sup>13</sup> so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

#### **Poignant scene**

- intermingling of rejoicing and weeping

#### **Prophets spoke of a new Temple – more glorious and majestic**

- Ezekiel 40-48 | centerpiece is Ezek. 43, glory of God fills Temple

#### **In first Temple, the glory-cloud fills the Temple (1 Kgs. 8:11)**

- same thing happening to Tabernacle (Lev. 9:22)
- but here, 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple, no shekinah-glory

#### **The exile never ended, but continues**

- people are still oppressed and subjugated to foreign powers
- problem of sin and unfaithfulness continues (Nehemiah end)
- Temple is shoddy replacement of original, nothing like Ezekiel’s
- no righteous Davidic king reigning in power and justice

#### **A future, glorious Return is awaiting**

- New Testament opens w/ people still waiting for the “exile” to end
- Mark 1:1 quotes Isaiah 40, “voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

### **Return from exile does not solve the problem of sin**

#### **Nehemiah 13**

<sup>15</sup> In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. <sup>18</sup> Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

<sup>23</sup> In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. <sup>25</sup> And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take oath in the name of God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. <sup>26</sup> Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women?”

#### **Poignant image – Nehemiah frustrated, beating and berating people**

- problem is human heart | even after exile, people’s hearts still wicked
- therefore, prophets spoke of a “New Covenant” (Jer. 31, Ezek. 36)

#### **INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER**

- story of exiles who remain in Persia
- 3 central characters – Haman, Mordecai and Esther
- famously, no mention of “God” anywhere in book | no miracles
- yet, story of God’s care of his people from destruction

#### **Doctrine of Providence**

- when God is most hidden, he is still active and at work in our lives
- God’s way is often hidden and mysterious, but always good and wise

#### **Story of Esther**

- Haman, prime minister of Persia, intent to destroy Jewish people
- Mordecai refuses to pay homage to Haman | casts lots (Purim)
- Jewish people are targeted for their covenant loyalty to God

**But through an amazing series of events, Jewish people are saved**

- just so happens, Ahasuerus' queen Vashti happens to be removed
- Esther, Jewish identity hidden, just happens to be selected next queen
  
- then, King Ahasuerus just happens to have sleepless night
- chronicles are read – Mordecai is rewarded for past deed
- just happens, Haman is one to designate reward
- reward is extremely lavish – royal robes, king's horse,  
“Thus shall be done to man whom the king delights to honor”
  
- Mordecai is elevated with high honors
- Haman's wife recognizes Haman's plan is doomed
- that evening, Haman is hanged on gallows intended for Mordecai