

An Overview of the Books of the Bible.



Overview of the Bible #3

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Welcome again to our study of the books of the Bible. This is our third class. So far we have covered the first 22 books of the Old Testament.

Tonight, we will cover the remaining 17 books and the years between the books of Malachi and Matthew.

In the next session tonight, we will cover the New Testament books.

There will be time for questions and discussion during and following the class.

Let us begin...

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The last 17 books of the Old Testament were written by men whose names they bear. These men were God's messengers.

Last night we closed with a text that spoke of their purpose in being sent and how they were treated:

2 Chronicles 36:15-16: *“The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.”*

Insight to these prophets' work and lives can also be seen from these New Testament passages. **[1 Peter 1:10-12; Matthew 13:17; 2 Peter 1:21]**

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Isaiah:

His was the first in order of 17 writings by prophets of God. Isaiah was a prophet of Judah. He prophesied to Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (**1:1**). These 17 books were primarily purposed for God's people. The reason can be seen from such texts as **2 Kings 17:6-23**, which describes the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel and **2 Chronicles 36:11-21**, which describes the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom of Judah. Isaiah prophesied "concerning Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

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Jeremiah:

Jeremiah was from the tribe of Benjamin and prophesies from the time of Josiah, king of Judah and continues until the Babylonian captivity (**1:2-3**). He also went to Babylon.

Lamentations:

Lamentations are “laments”; expressions of grief and sorrow. They were written by Jeremiah. **He writes of his brokenness over the demise [ruin] of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians.**

Ezekiel:

Ezekiel was a priest of the tribe of Levi. He, like Jeremiah, also was taken with other captives to Babylon. This is how we know that he was from the southern kingdom of Judah. His prophecies came while there.

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Daniel:

Daniel was from the tribe of Judah (**1:6**). He also was taken captive to Babylon and he prophesied while there.

Hosea:

Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel and prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. His work was during the same time as the prophets Isaiah and Micah, who prophesied to Judah. He was the last prophet God sent to Israel before the Assyrian captivity.

Joel:

By the mention of Zion (**2:1, 15; 3:21**), along with Judah and Jerusalem (**3:1, 19-20**), the indication is that the southern kingdom of Judah was the land in which Joel labored. There is no mention of Assyria or Babylon, but he mentions the ‘scattering’ of Israel (**3:2**).

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Amos:

He was a prophet from the tribe of Judah (**1:1**), but sent to the northern kingdom of Israel to prophesy during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Because he foretold of punishment from God for their sins, Amos was told to *“flee to the land of Judah... and prophesy there”* (**7:12-13**).

Obadiah:

Obadiah was a prophet of Judah, but his prophecies were against the kingdom of Edom, (descendants of Esau – **Genesis 36:1**). Their violence toward Judah and gloating over the misfortunes of Judah’s captivity would be repaid. In **chapter 3:15**, Edom is told, *“As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealing will return on your own head.”*

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Jonah:

Jonah prophesied against the evil city of Nineveh. Jonah was from Galilee (**2 Kings 14:25**). We know that the people repented at the preaching of Jonah from **Matthew 12:41** and **Luke 11:32**.

Micah:

Micah prophesied during the same time as Hosea, in Israel; and Isaiah in Judah. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, concerning Samaria and Jerusalem (the capital cities of Israel and Judah). **He foretold of both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.**

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Nahum:

Nahum was a prophet in Judah. He, like Jonah prophesied against Nineveh (about 1 ½ century later). **This time, no mercy will be shown. Destruction is certain to come from God.**

Habakkuk:

Habakkuk prophesied of the Babylonian (Chaldean) captivity upon Judah.
[READ COMMENTS BELOW]

Zephaniah:

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah. He condemned the idolatry in Judah, and foretold of punishment, but spoke of a return to the land of Canaan afterward for the faithful.

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The last three books of the Old Testament were prophecies after a remnant of God's people returned from Babylonian captivity.

To summarize these three books, we need to mention a prophecy of **Isaiah**. Some 200 years earlier **Isaiah** had prophesied that a king by name of Cyrus would give orders for Jerusalem and Judah to be rebuilt (**Isaiah 44:26-45:4**).

The kingdom of Babylon was conquered by the Persians and the Medes. Cyrus was king of Persia. He issued an order that all displaced persons could return to their homeland. Approximately 50,000 Jews gathered in Babylon to begin the journey back to the land of Canaan (the "promised" land) – [**Ezra 2:64-65**].

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After the return, work began on the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The temple foundation was laid in 536 B.C. Because of oppositions, the work stopped for 16 years.

In 520 B. C. God raised up Haggai and Zechariah who encouraged the people to resume their work. By 515 B.C. the work was finished.

(The books of **Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther** fall into this period).

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Haggai:

Other references to Haggai: [Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Haggai 1:3, 12, 13; 2:1, 10, 20](#). Haggai preached in the post-captivity period encouraging the Jews to rebuild their temple.

Zechariah:

Other references to Zechariah: [Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Zechariah 7:1; Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51](#). Zechariah urged Judah to rebuild their shattered lives by adhering to God's law.

Malachi:

After the temple had been completed, the people complained that it was “too much” to worship God.*

** This attitude toward worship will be different in Jesus' day/time.*

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Between the Old and New Testaments

After the work of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi. God chose to draw a curtain across the history of His people. The prophet Amos had predicted such a day. He said, **“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord”** (**Amos 8:11**). The time of famine had come. But God’s plan was still on schedule. The “fulness of time” that Paul spoke of in **Galatians 4:4** was drawing near: **“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.”**

There was 400 years between Malachi and Matthew.

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Between the Old and New Testaments

The Old Testament closed with God's people in poverty under Persian control. The New Testament opens with Jerusalem a prosperous city ruled by the Romans. **Ezra, Nehemiah,** and **Malachi** dealt with a generation of people that were indifferent in their worship. These prophets urged the people to observe the law.

By the time of the New Testament, the leaders of God's people had taken that to mean that the path to God's favor lay in perfect obedience. Gradually, teachers began to argue over how to keep each law exactly. This was the environment that Jesus dealt with as He taught.

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