

Search for Truth

6. A Nation Divided, Then United

A history lesson

Between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, is the history of the triumphs and tragedies of the people of God. You will also discover the lessons learned thru the process.

1. Conquering the Land of Promise

Death of Moses

Deuteronomy 6:4-6; also 10:12-13; 11:1; 13:3

At the age of 120, Moses delivered his farewell address. It spans the entire book of Deuteronomy, which means “second lawgiving” or “law repeated.” Moses purposely reinforced God’s laws once again in the minds of the people and our love for Him.

Joshua leads the way

Joshua 1:2-5

Joshua was a man of power, courage, wisdom and immediate action. He was one of two survivors of the original twelve spies sent to Canaan almost forty years earlier. Joshua and Caleb had given a positive report of faith.

Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3:3-6; 14-17

The people were instructed: “Prepare for crossing Jordan.” Remember for creation God prepares, and then he fills what he prepares. The trek itself was directed by their ministry—the Levites. The priests carried the ark, representing the presence of God. God’s plan remains that ministers of the gospel be examples in courage, guidance and leadership.

Conquering Canaan

Joshua 6:1-5

When Joshua and his people were absolutely obedient to God’s will and Word, they were victorious. Otherwise, when their own strategy was substituted, it resulted in failure and defeat.

After the conquest, the land was divided among the twelve tribes.

2. Judges and Kings in Israel

Fifteen judges reign in Israel

For two hundred years after Joshua’s death, Israel endured turbulent testings and trials. Scripture designates this period as “the days when the judges ruled” (Ruth 1:1). The entire era was a struggle for survival.

Judges were appointed to defend the people. However, such leaders were not like the magistrates of our courts of law. Israel’s judges were military types who brought victory while the people were settling in their homeland.

Gideon

Judges 6:1-2, 6-12; 7:2-7, 19-22

One of the most notable judges was Gideon and his 300 men. For seven years the Midianites had stolen Israel’s crops and inflicted terror. God called Gideon to deliver Israel.

Samson

Judges 13:1-5, 24-25,

Samson was the most unusual judge. He led no army, yet performed great supernatural feats by himself. He possessed miraculous physical power, yet he had recurring moments of moral and spiritual weakness.

Samuel

I Samuel 1:9-17; 3:4-10

From the confusion and turmoil of the judges era comes one of the greatest Old Testament figures—the prophet-priest-judge, Samuel. God called Samuel while a small boy sleeping in the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

Israel demands a king like other nations

I Samuel 8:4-7

When the elders approached the aged Samuel to ask for a king—“like all the nations” (I Samuel 8:5), he took it as a personal insult to his leadership. However, God thought differently: whenever you reject God’s man/plan you reject God.

First King of Israel, Saul

I Samuel 9:2; 10:1; 15:10-11, 17, 22, 30

God instructed Samuel to anoint Saul as king, yet Saul became full of pride, disobeyed God time and time again, to the point that God completely rejected him.

James 4:6 ... God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Second King of Israel, David

I Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-14, 22-23

II Samuel 6:12-15; Psalms 150

Saul's was jealousy against David but it did not matter, he was the "man after God's own heart." In all of the Old Testament writings, he expressed the most gratitude. Praise and thanksgiving overflowed for all God's blessings to him. His psalms have provided an outlet for praise and worship in every succeeding generation.

James 4:6 ... God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Third King of Israel, Solomon

I Kings 3:5-14; 10:4-9; 9:1-7; 11:1-2

Solomon was known primarily for two things; his great wisdom and building the magnificent temple for the Lord God in Jerusalem.

3. The Kingdom is Divided

This history is important so you understand who the prophets are talking to as you read your Bible.

Solomon's reign is often termed the "Golden Age" of ancient Israel. Actually, Solomon reigned over a rather impressive empire assembled by his father. When Solomon died, civil war loomed on the horizon.

The ten northern tribes revolted and appointed Jeroboam king. Rehoboam the son of Solomon retained possession of only two tribes—Judah and Benjamin. The northern kingdom became known as Israel and the southern kingdom was called Judah.

Israel—Northern Kingdom

Israel's capital was erected at Samaria. In the next two hundred years, her nineteen kings were responsible for an abundance of murders, suicides, and assassinations that kept the political situation in turmoil.

Prophets in Israel

Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Elisha and Elijah.

These Prophets were separated unto God, they were divine instruments to call the nation to repentance. Through their preaching, hope for redemption was preserved for the remnant—despite the destruction, disaster, and despair.

Assyrian Captivity

In 721 B.C., the king of Assyria captured the Israelites and destroyed the capital city at Samaria.

Judah—Southern Kingdom

Nineteen kings and one queen occupied the throne of Judah at Jerusalem. Some of the kings were righteous. Others were extremely wicked and idolatrous, even desecrating the Temple of God.

Prophets in Judah

Daniel, Ezekiel, Hezekiah, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Joel, Jeremiah and Isaiah.

Prophets warned Judah of judgment, but their influence was resisted. Eight prophets wrote warnings to Judah long before she was destroyed.

There were also many prophets of hope. Joel, known as the "prophet of Pentecost," highlighted his book with the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the future Christian church (Joel 2:23-31). Our generation is witnessing the completion of the "latter rain" promise. (Acts 2:1-4; 14-21).

Babylonian Captivity

In 606 B.C., more than 130 years after the northern kingdom had been taken captive by Assyria, the southern kingdom was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

4. A Remnant Is Restored

In the year 536 B.C., Cyrus issued a decree permitting Jews to return home. The sacred vessels were also restored. However, most Jews were affluently settled in the land of exile and preferred to remain there. A mere 42,000 people and 7,300 servants packed for the return trip to Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel, Governor of Judah

Ezra 1:1 - 2:2; 5:1-2

Cyrus appointed Zerubbabel to be the governor of Judah. Seven months after arriving in Jerusalem, these determined exiles had erected the altar on its ancient site and the priests were again offering sacrifices.

Rebuilding the Temple and repairing the walls

Preparations were made to begin rebuilding the Temple. However, numerous setbacks and opposition delayed it for several years. Through the encouragement of prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Temple construction was finally completed in 516 B.C., though the city itself was in ruins and the walls shattered.

At last, the Jews had a house of worship and religious life. The Temple was constructed on the same general plan as Solomon's, though much inferior by comparison.

Ezra restores law

Ezra 7:6-10

Sixty years after completion of the second Temple, a priest-scribe named Ezra gained permission from the fourth king of Persia, Artaxerxes I, to return to Jerusalem. Ezra and 1,700 other Jews returned to Jerusalem. His primary purpose was to teach the law and restore Temple service.

The Jews re-established their worship. However, Jerusalem was not yet a fortified city.

Nehemiah supervises reconstruction

Nehemiah 1:1-3; 6:15-16

After Ezra had been in Jerusalem for thirteen years, reports came to the court of King Artaxerxes concerning the sad state of Jerusalem and its exiles. At that crucial time, hope came to God's chosen people through Nehemiah, a

Jewish cupbearer to the king. Nehemiah received a leave of absence to lend help to his fellow countrymen.

5. Between the testaments

What happened in the time period known as, "the 400 silent years?"

- Old Testament Canon was written which is a history of the struggle of the Jewish people.
- New religious groups
 - Scribes
 - Pharisees
 - Sadducees
- Greek translation of Scriptures
- Quest for knowledge
- Universal Greek language
- Religious dissatisfaction
- Persecution and dispersion
- Roman roads

All of this was paving the way for Christ and His gospel. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

6. Dispensations of Time

We have briefly covered the first 5 of the dispensations of time

1. Innocence
2. Conscience
3. Human Government
4. Promise
5. Law

We will next, in much more detail, cover the dispensation we are now living in.

6. Grace

Then we will move into the final dispensations on the Earth.

7. Kingdom Age