

**HOW TO READ THE BIBLE (4):**  
**HOW DO WE READ THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORICAL BOOKS? JOSHUA–ESTHER - 1**  
 Covenant Fellowship Church  
 Wednesday, May 14, 2025  
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**Overview of the Old Testament Historical Books**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Chps</b>	<b>Main Theme</b>	<b>Brief Outline</b>
Joshua	24	Conquest and settlement of the Promised Land	1–5: Preparation and entry into Canaan 6–12: Conquest of the land 13–22: Division among tribes 23–24: Joshua’s farewell and covenant renewal
Judges	21	Israel’s cycle of sin, judgment, and deliverance	1–2: Background and failure to complete conquest 3–16: Stories of judges (e.g., Deborah, Gideon, Samson) 17–21: Moral decline and civil war
Ruth	4	God’s providence and loyalty in personal relationships	1: Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi 2: Ruth meets Boaz 3: Ruth’s request and Boaz’s promise 4: Redemption and lineage to David
1 Samuel	31	Transition from theocracy to monarchy	1–7: Samuel’s leadership 8–15: Saul’s rise and failures 16–31: David’s anointing and Saul’s decline
2 Samuel	24	David’s reign and its triumphs and troubles	1–10: David’s rise and successes 11–20: David’s sins and family turmoil 21–24: Final acts and reflections
1 Kings	22	Division and decline of the kingdom	1–11: Solomon’s reign and temple 12–16: Kingdom divides 17–22: Elijah’s ministry
2 Kings	25	Continued decline and eventual exile	1–17: History of Israel’s kings to Assyrian exile 18–25: Judah’s kings and Babylonian exile
1 Chronicles	29	David’s reign from a priestly perspective	1–9: Genealogies 10–29: David’s reign, temple preparations
2 Chronicles	36	History of Judah with focus on temple and reform	1–9: Solomon’s reign 10–36: Judah’s kings with emphasis on reform and temple
Ezra	10	Restoration of worship and law after exile	1–6: Return under Zerubbabel and temple rebuilding 7–10: Ezra’s return and reforms
Nehemiah	13	Rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls and spiritual renewal	1–7: Nehemiah rebuilds the wall 8–13: Spiritual reforms and covenant renewal
Esther	10	God’s providential care for His people	1–2: Esther becomes queen 3–7: Haman’s plot and downfall 8–10: Jewish deliverance and institution of Purim

*(over, please)*

## Timeline for the Old Testament Historical Books

1406 BC	Moses' death and Israel's entry into the land of Canaan under Joshua
1375(?)	Joshua's death
1375(?)–1050	Period of the Judges
1050–1010	Saul's reign
1010–971	David's reign
971–931	Solomon's reign
931–722	Divided kingdom (Israel) – 19 kings
722	Destruction of Samaria, Israel's capital, by Assyria, and Israel's resettlement
931–586	Divided kingdom (Judah) – 19 kings, 1 queen
586	Destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by Babylonia, and Judah's exile to Babylon
586–538/7	Judah's exile in Babylon
561	Release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon
539	Cyrus II of Persia captures Babylon
538/7	First return of Jews to Jerusalem under Jeshua and Zerubbabel
515	Temple rebuilding completed
484–465 (?)	Esther and Mordecai rise in the Persian court
458	Ezra's return to Jerusalem from Babylon
445	Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem from Babylon
445ff	Walls of Jerusalem rebuilt
433	Nehemiah's visit to Babylon and return to Jerusalem

### A bibliography of helpful sources:

S. G. de Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, 4 volumes in PDF

Available for free at <https://cantaroinstitute.org/promise-and-deliverance-vol-1/> [change last digit to volume number to download all 4 volumes]

C. VanderWaal, *Search the Scriptures*, 10 volumes in PDF

Available for free at <https://www.monergism.com/search-scriptures-10-volumes-pdf>

M. B. van't Veer, *My God Is Yahweh: Elijah and Ahab in an Age of Apostasy*

A great “sample” of redemptive-historical, covenantal interpretation of the Elijah narrative in 1 Kings.

Dale Ralph Davis:

*Joshua: No Falling Words*

*Judges: Such a Great Salvation*

*1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*

*2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*

*1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*

*2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*

*Ezra & Nehemiah: The Quest for Restoration*

*Luke 1–13: The Year of the Lord's Favour*

*Luke 14–24: On the Road to Jerusalem*

*The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative*

## Timeline of Old Testament Historical Books



### Joshua (c. 1400–1380 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Joshua
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Entry into the Promised Land
  - ☐ - Conquest of Canaan
  - ☐ - Allotment of tribal territories
  - ☐ - Covenant renewal at Shechem

### Judges (c. 1380–1050 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Cycles of sin, oppression, and deliverance
  - ☐ - Tribal conflicts
  - ☐ - Rise of charismatic judges

### Ruth (c. 1100 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Ruth's loyalty to Naomi
  - ☐ - Marriage to Boaz
  - ☐ - Ancestry of David

### 1 Samuel (c. 1100–1010 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Samuel, Saul, David
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Samuel's ministry
  - ☐ - Establishment of monarchy
  - ☐ - Saul's reign and disobedience
  - ☐ - David's early rise

### 2 Samuel (c. 1010–970 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: David, Joab, Nathan, Absalom
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - David becomes king of Israel
  - ☐ - Establishment of Jerusalem as capital
  - ☐ - David's sin with Bathsheba
  - ☐ - Absalom's rebellion

### 1 Kings (c. 970–850 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Elijah
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Solomon's reign and temple construction
  - ☐ - Kingdom divides into Israel and Judah
  - ☐ - Rise of prophetic ministry (Elijah)

### 2 Kings (c. 850–586 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Elisha, Hezekiah, Josiah
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Ministry of Elisha
  - ☐ - Fall of Israel (722 BC)
  - ☐ - Religious reforms
  - ☐ - Fall of Judah (586 BC)

### 1 Chronicles (c. 1000–970 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: David, Levites
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Genealogies from Adam to David
  - ☐ - David's preparation for temple building

### 2 Chronicles (c. 970–586 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Solomon's temple and reign
  - ☐ - Focus on Judah's kings and religious reforms
  - ☐ - Destruction of the temple and exile

### Ezra (c. 538–450 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Zerubbabel, Ezra
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - First return from exile under Cyrus
  - ☐ - Temple reconstruction
  - ☐ - Ezra's return and law reforms

### Nehemiah (c. 445–432 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Nehemiah, Ezra
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Wall of Jerusalem rebuilt
  - ☐ - Covenant renewal
  - ☐ - Social and religious reforms

### Esther (c. 480–470 BC)

- ☐ Key Figures: Esther, Mordecai, Haman, King Xerxes
- ☐ Events:
  - ☐ - Esther becomes queen
  - ☐ - Haman's plot against Jews
  - ☐ - Jewish deliverance and feast of Purim

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The phrase “**the Old Testament historical books preach theological history**” means that these books are not just records of events, battles, and kings, but are written with the purpose of **revealing God’s actions, purposes, and character** in the context of real historical events.

### 1. Definition of Theological History

**Theological history** refers to the interpretation of historical events from a divine perspective. In the Old Testament:

- **God is the main actor**, even if not always directly named.
- History is not told for its own sake, but to teach **spiritual truths**.
- Events are chosen and arranged to highlight **God’s covenant relationship** with His people. These books answer not just “what happened?” but also “what does this mean in God’s plan?”

### 2. How the Historical Books Preach Redemption

#### a. God’s Sovereignty Over Nations and Kings

God raises up and brings down leaders (e.g., Saul, David, Solomon).

Military victories and defeats are portrayed as depending on obedience to God.

#### b. The Covenant as the Measure of Success

Kings are evaluated not by political or economic power, but by **faithfulness to the covenant** (especially in Kings and Chronicles).

Success is often shown to depend on worshipping the true God and following His law.

#### c. Divine Judgment and Mercy

The cycle in **Judges** (sin → oppression → repentance → deliverance) reflects God’s justice and mercy.

In **Samuel and Kings**, the rise and fall of the monarchy reflect the nation’s fidelity or rebellion.

#### d. God’s Presence and the Temple

In books like **1 Kings** and **2 Chronicles**, the building and desecration of the Temple are not just architectural facts but symbolize God’s presence and the spiritual state of Israel.

#### e. Providence and Redemption

Books like **Ruth** and **Esther** show God’s quiet providence preserving His people even when His name is barely mentioned.

**Ezra–Nehemiah** emphasize God restoring His people through leaders who obey His Word.

### 3. Why This Matters for Readers

Understanding the historical books as theological history:

- **Shapes faith:** Readers see how God works in the lives of nations and individuals.
- **Warns and encourages:** Obedience brings blessing; rebellion leads to judgment.
- **Reveals God’s character:** Just, merciful, faithful, patient, and sovereign.
- **Connects to Jesus:** These books point forward to the need for a faithful king and a restored people—fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

### 4. Examples of Theological Messaging

- **1 Samuel 8:** Israel’s desire for a king is not just political—it’s a rejection of God’s kingship.
- **2 Kings 17:** The fall of Israel is explained theologically: they worshiped other gods, breaking covenant.
- **Nehemiah 9:** A historical review is given through a long prayer, interpreting history as a record of God’s faithfulness and Israel’s repeated rebellion.

### Summary

The Old Testament historical books are **sermons in story form**. They use real history to proclaim **the truths of who God is, how He relates to His people, and what it means to live faithfully under His rule**. They are not neutral or merely factual—they are **profoundly theological**, meant to **instruct, convict, and draw readers closer to God**.