

“People of the Book”

A Remnant Shall Return

**Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah,
Malachi, and the “Years of Silence”**

Prepared by Jonathan Caldwell

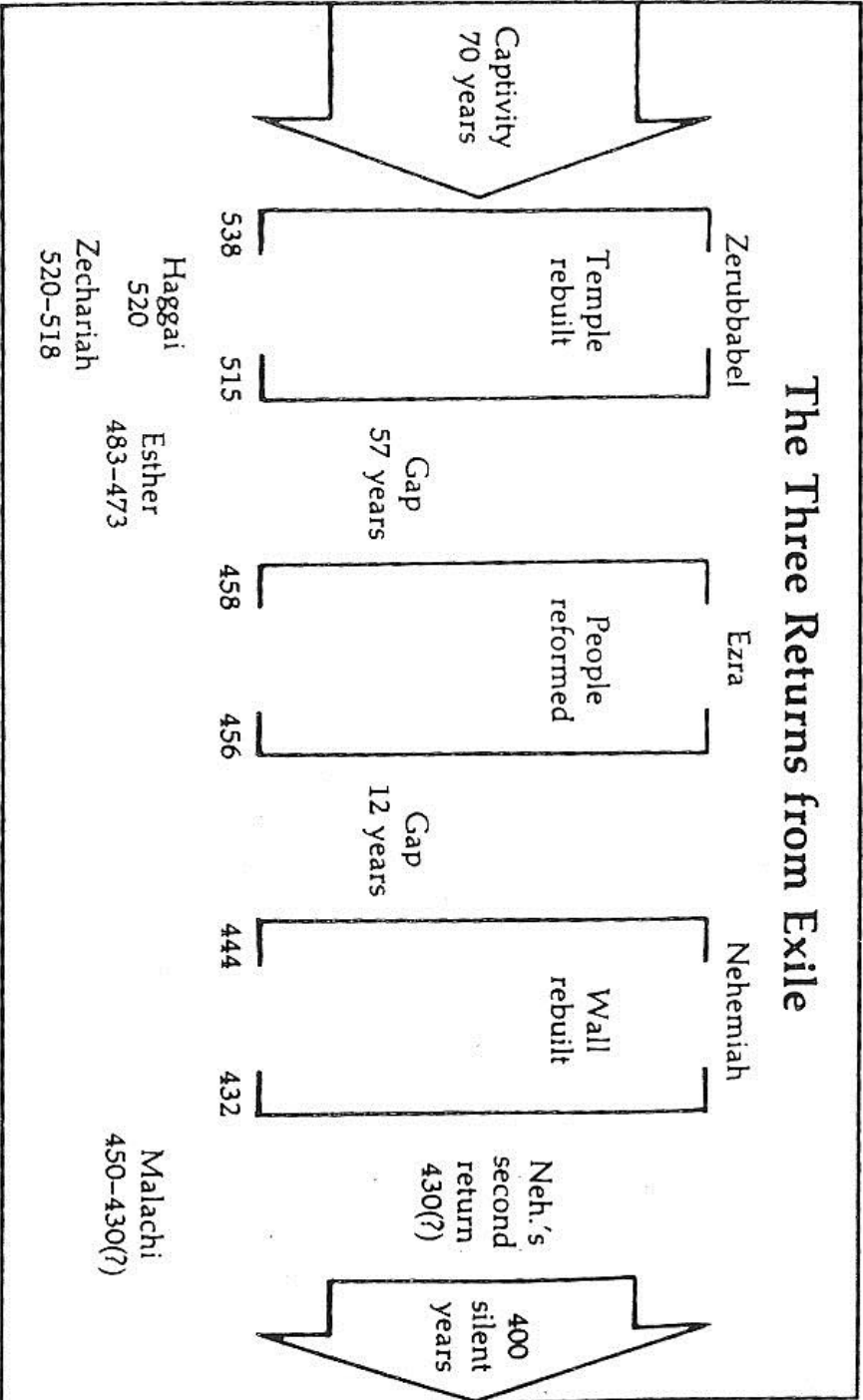
Syllabus

Date	Lesson	Text
Sunday, October 7	1. Return from Captivity; Rebuilding the Temple	Ezra 1-3
Wednesday, October 10	2. Opposition and Completion of the Work	Ezra 4-6
Sunday, October 14	3. The Work of Ezra	Ezra 7-10
Wednesday, October 17	4. Haggai	Haggai 1-2
Sunday, October 21	5. Zechariah's Visions (Part 1)	Zechariah 1-3
Wednesday, October 24	6. Zechariah's Visions (Part 2)	Zechariah 4-6
Sunday, October 28	7. Zechariah's Visions (Part 3)	Zechariah 7-10
Wednesday, October 31	8. Zechariah's Visions (Part 4)	Zechariah 11-14
Sunday, November 4	9. Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem to Rebuild the Wall	Nehemiah 1-3
Wednesday, November 7	10. Dealing with Opposition	Nehemiah 4-7
Sunday, November 11	11. The People Make a Covenant with God	Nehemiah 8-10
Wednesday, November 14	12. Dedication of the Wall	Nehemiah 11-13
Sunday, November 18	13. Esther Made Queen	Esther 1-2
Wednesday, November 21	14. Haman's Plot against the Jews	Esther 3-4
Sunday, November 25	15. Esther Reveals Haman's Plot	Esther 5-7
Wednesday, November 28	16. The Jews Defend Themselves and the Feast of Purim	Esther 8-10
Sunday, December 2	17. The Prophecy of Malachi (Part 1)	Malachi 1-2
Wednesday, December 5	18. The Prophecy of Malachi (Part 2)	Malachi 3-4
Sunday, December 9	19. Changing Powers: From Assyria to the Greeks	
Wednesday, December 12	20. Review	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Sunday, December 16	21. The Roman World	
Wednesday, December 19	22. Timeline from the United Kingdom to the Close of the Old Testament	
Sunday, December 23	23. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes	
Wednesday, December 26	24. Review of Idolatry in the Old Testament	
Sunday, December 30	25. Shifting Landscapes	
Wednesday, January 2	26. Open Class	

17 Periods of Bible History

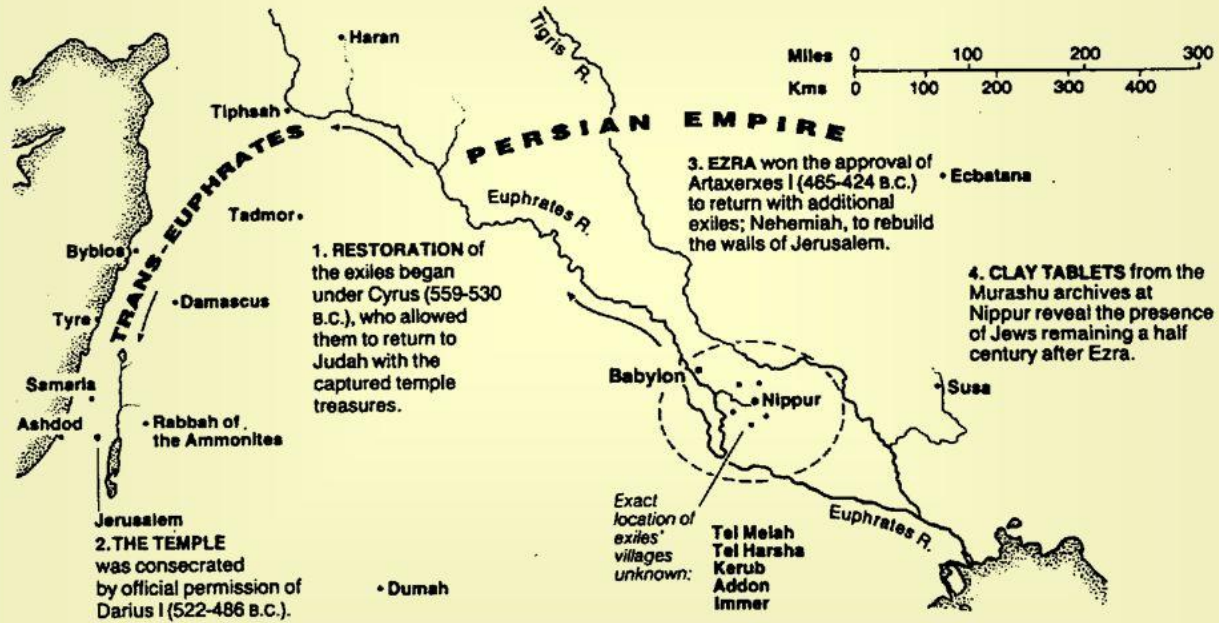
1. Before The Flood	Genesis 1-5
2. The Flood	Genesis 6-10
3. The Scattering of the People	Genesis 11
4. The Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50
5. The Exodus	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers 1-13
6. Wandering in the Wilderness	Numbers 14-36, Deuteronomy, Joshua 1-5
7. Invasion and Conquest	Joshua 6-24
8. The Judges	Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel 1-7
9. The United Kingdom	
Saul	1 Samuel 8-31, 1 Chronicles 10
David	2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles 11-29
Solomon	1 Kings 1-11, 2 Chronicles 1-9
10. The Divided Kingdom	1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17, 2 Chronicles 10-30*
11. Judah Alone	2 Kings 18-25, 2 Chronicles 30*-36
12. Captivity	Ezekiel, Daniel
13. Return from Captivity	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
14. Years of Silence	(Prophesy in Amos 8:11)
15. Life of Christ	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
16. The Early Church	Acts
17. Letters to the Christians	Romans - Revelation

The Three Returns from Exile



Return from Exile

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 95





Lesson 1: Return from Captivity; Rebuilding the Temple

Text: 2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1-3

Objectives:

- Note the date of Cyrus's decree.
- Review the progress of return from captivity.

Questions:

1. Which prophet mentions Cyrus by name 150 years before he was born?
2. What motivated Cyrus to release the captives?
3. What was returned to the Israelites before they returned to Judah?
4. Why were certain men excluded from the priesthood until the Urim and Thummim could be consulted?
5. How many people returned to Israel?
6. The people came together in the seventh month and rebuilt the altar. What feasts are in the seventh month?
7. Which two men act as leaders of the people?
8. After the foundation of the temple was laid, the people worshipped God "according to" what?

Be Ready to Discuss:

Why did the old men weep when they saw the foundation of the new temple?

Lesson 2: Opposition and Completion of the Word

Text: Ezra 4-6

Objectives:

- Note the non-chronological issues in this section.

Questions:

1. Please note that this book begins in the time of Cyrus. Ezra 4:5 mentions Cyrus and Darius, but the letter is addressed to Artaxerxes who is much later. The point of placing this letter here (out of chronological order) is to show that the Israelites faced opposition to their mission constantly throughout the rebuilding process. Notice that verse 24, picks up the chronology left off in verse 5.
2. The letter written to Artaxerxes claims that the Israelites are what kind of people?
3. What prophets were involved in the rebuilding process? What was their role?
4. Who poses a problem to the work in chapter 5? What is he looking for?
5. Did the Israelites understand their recent history of destruction and captivity?
6. According to the decree of Cyrus, who was to pay for the temple?
7. What is Darius's response to Tattenai?
8. Would Passover carry extra significance after the Babylonian captivity?

Be Ready to Discuss:
What other prophet discusses Nineveh and ends his book with a question?

Lesson 3: The Work of Ezra

Text: Ezra 7-10

Objectives: Note Ezra's goal in his work with the people.

Questions:

1. Who is Ezra? How long did it take him to get to Jerusalem? What was his goal?
2. What instructions does Artaxerxes give to the recipients of his letter?
3. Who was missing from Ezra's group?
4. Why didn't Ezra ask the king for protection on their journey?
5. What upset Ezra after arriving in the Promised Land? Where is the prohibition for this activity in scripture?
6. How do the people respond?
7. What was the plan to deal with this problem?

Be Ready to Discuss:
How is the foreign marriage issue both a good sign and bad sign for the people?

Lesson 4: Haggai

Text: Haggai 1-2

Objectives: Note the setting of Haggai's prophecy.

Questions:

1. When did Haggai prophesy? Who is governor? Who is High Priest?
2. What is Haggai's first and major problem with the people?
3. What should have been a sign that the people were doing something wrong?
4. What is the Messianic prophecy of 2:9?
5. Holiness is not contagious, but what is?
6. What does it mean to "shake the heavens and the earth"?
7. Read Jeremiah 22, specifically verse 24. What is Haggai talking about in Haggai 2:23? Note the connection to the signet ring.
8. How is Zerubbabel like Moses? How is he like Solomon?

Be Ready to Discuss:

How might we, today, dwell in paneled houses while the Lord's house lies in ruins?

Lesson 5: Zechariah's Visions (Part 1)

Text: Zechariah 1-3

Objectives:

- Note the apocalyptic language of Zechariah.
- Review the setting of Zechariah's prophecy.

Questions:

1. When did Zechariah prophesy? What is going on with God's people?
2. Why does Zechariah advise the people, "Do not be like your fathers"?
3. What are the colors of the four horses and what did they do?
4. The four horsemen and the horns/craftsmen are visions of God's anger against whom?
5. What was the symbolism of the man with the "measuring line"?
6. Of what was Satan accusing Joshua? Who was Joshua?
7. What was the significance of this vision?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Zechariah reads a lot like what other books?

Lesson 6: Zechariah's Visions (Part 2)

Text: Zechariah 4-6

Objectives:

- Review the purpose of apocalyptic language.
- Note the connection of these visions to Israel's circumstances.

Questions:

1. Describe the vision of chapter 4 in your own words. Where are the images used in the New Testament?
2. Of whom does this vision speak? Compare with Haggai 2:20-23.
3. How big was the scroll? What was it doing?
4. What was the purpose of the scroll?
5. What do you think the vision of the woman in the basket symbolizes?
6. What are the colors of the horses in chapter 6?
7. Are these chariots related to the horses of chapter 2? If so, how?
8. What is the significance of a priest sitting on the throne?
9. What does it mean in 6:15 when it says, "those who are far off shall come and help build the temple of the LORD"?

Be Ready to Discuss:

Why do Zechariah, Daniel, and Revelation use such weird visions and images?

Lesson 7: Zechariah's Visions (Part 3)

Text: Zechariah 7-10

Objectives:

- Note God's desire, first, for the heart, then for the correct action.
- Review the required feasts of the Law of Moses.

Questions:

1. What feasts were in the fifth and seventh months?
2. What did God truly desire?
3. If the people were righteous and just, according to 8:19, then what would God want?
4. What does 8:23 foreshadow?
5. What cities does Zechariah prophesy against?
6. What passage from chapter 9 is fulfilled in Jesus?
7. What hope does the LORD give the people in chapter 10?

Be Ready to Discuss:

If Zechariah is in Jerusalem/Judah, why is he still talking about restoration?

Lesson 8: Zechariah's Visions (Part 4)

Text: Zechariah 11-14

Objectives:

- Note God's continual condemnation of Israel's leaders.
- Note the messianic prophecies in this text.

Questions:

1. Through the prophets, God regularly condemns what group of the people?
2. As Zechariah plays the part of a shepherd, what is the symbolism of the sheep "detesting" him? Who does Zechariah stand for? Who do the sheep stand for?
3. What detail in chapter 11 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
4. What is God promising in Zechariah 12:1-9?
5. What detail in chapter 12 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
6. What does God promise to cast out of the land?
7. What other prophet mentions the earthquake of 14:5?

Be Ready to Discuss:

Are the prophecies of Zechariah 14 good or bad?

Lesson 9: Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem

Text: Nehemiah 1-3

Objectives:

- Review the setting for the book of Nehemiah.
- Note Nehemiah's prayer life.

Questions:

1. In what shape is the remnant of God's people?
2. Who does Nehemiah blame for their current condition?
3. Who was Nehemiah?
4. What does Nehemiah do before making his request to the king?
5. Who is introduced as the opposition?
6. What is said of the people in chapter 2 before they begin the work?
7. Why might the priests be listed first in chapter 3?

Be Ready to Discuss:
What role did the "cupbearer" serve?

Lesson 10: Dealing with Opposition

Text: Nehemiah 4-7

Objectives:

- Note the attitude of Nehemiah and the people in the face of opposition.
- Note the total submission to the Law.

Questions:

1. How did Sanballat and Tobiah oppose the Jews?
2. What was Nehemiah's response?
3. According to 4:6, why were the people able to succeed in building the wall?
4. What was the plan to continue the work while preventing an attack?
5. What passages prohibit exacting interest from a fellow Israelite?
6. How does Nehemiah lead by example?
7. What characteristic does Nehemiah show in chapter 6?
8. Who are the people listed in chapter 7?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Why are the genealogies of chapter 7 so important?

Lesson 11: The People Make a Covenant with God

Text: Nehemiah 8-10

Objectives:

- Note the emphasis on confession and covenant.

Questions:

1. How long did the people spend listening to the word of God?
2. How did the people know to celebrate the Feast of Booths?
3. In what activity do the people participate in chapter 9?
4. What groups of people signed the covenant?
5. What promise is made concerning their children?
6. What promise is made concerning the Sabbath and interest?
7. The second half of chapter 10 outlines the promises of the people to provide for what?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Is this a new covenant the people make with God?

Lesson 12: Dedication of the Wall

Text: Nehemiah 11-13

Objectives:

- Note the people's spiritual failures.
- Note the need to submit to the authority of God's word.

Questions:

1. According to chapter 11, who stayed in Jerusalem? Why?
2. What did the people do to celebrate the completion of the wall around Jerusalem?
3. Did Nehemiah develop new plans for temple service? How did they know what to do?
4. Nehemiah 13:1-3 reflects back to what story in Ezra?
5. Why didn't Nehemiah prevent the evil of Eliashib?
6. Why had the Levites abandoned their posts?
7. What did Nehemiah do to prevent the people from buying and selling on the Sabbath?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Did the people keep the covenant they made with God?

Lesson 13: Esther Made Queen

Text: Esther 1-2

Objectives:

- Review the setting for the book of Esther.
- Review the historical timeline of the events in the book of Esther.

Questions:

1. Who is king? Over what people? Where is the capital?
2. What command did the king make of Vashti?
3. What responses were made to her refusal?
4. How is Vashti to be replaced?
5. Who is Mordecai? Who is Hadassah?
6. Two facts are introduced to the story and will come into play later. Esther is of what nationality? And the women only go in to the king if they are _____.
7. What plan did Mordecai discover?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Why were Esther and Mordecai still in Persia?

Lesson 14: Haman's Plot against the Jews

Text: Esther 3-4

Objectives:

- Note the connection between arrogance and sin.
- Review other stories that emphasize the providence of God.

Questions:

1. What did Mordecai do to upset Haman?
2. How does Haman convince the king to destroy the Jews? How does he sweeten the pot?
3. What was to be done to the Jews? Which Jews?
4. Who acts as messenger between Mordecai and Esther?
5. Why is Esther hesitant to go to the king?
6. What statement of Mordecai's leads us to think about the providence of God?
7. Esther seems to agree to approach the king, but what does she plan to do first?

Be Ready to Discuss:

Is there any situation in which Esther would be justified in NOT going to the king?

Lesson 15: Esther Reveals Haman's Plot

Text: Esther 5-7

Objectives:

- Note the king's favor toward Esther.
- Note the continued theme of providence.

Questions:

1. What does the king offer Esther?
2. What is Esther's request at the first feast?
3. What does Haman plan to do with Mordecai?
4. Why is the king reminded of what Mordecai had done for him?
5. How is Haman humiliated before Mordecai?
6. What is the king's response to discovering Haman's villainy?
7. How was Haman punished?

Be Ready to Discuss:

What passages teach that the one who lays the trap will fall into it?

Lesson 16: The Jews Defend Themselves / Feast of Purim

Text: Esther 8-10

Objectives:

- Note the providence of God in this story.
- Review the connection between Esther and the Gog / Magog prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39.

Questions:

1. To what place is Mordecai promoted?
2. Why can't the king undo what Haman planned?
3. Haman's plan was still scheduled but what were the Jews allowed to do (by the King's authority)?
4. Who helped the Jews defend themselves?
5. How many enemies were killed?
6. Where does the word "Purim" come from? What kind of holiday was it?
7. How many times does this book mention God?

Be Ready to Discuss:
What other Bible heroes are elevated to second in rank?

Lesson 17: Malachi (Part 1)

Text: Malachi 1-2

Objectives:

- Note the way Malachi writes.
- Review the situation behind Malachi’s warnings.

Questions:

1. How is this book written? What kind of style?
2. How was Jacob the “loved” or chosen son?
3. How had the people despised God’s name?
4. How does one “cheat” in offering sacrifices?
5. According to chapter 2, what was one of the main jobs of the priests?
6. Check different versions (ESV, NASB, NIV) on Malachi 2:16. What is the passage talking about?
7. How does Malachi 2:17 compare to Isaiah 5:20?

Be Ready to Discuss:

How do the people allow their heart to wander in such a short time?

Lesson 18: Malachi (Part 2)

Text: Malachi 3-4

Objectives:

- Note the forward-looking nature of these chapters.
- Note that Malachi is the last of scripture for 400 years.

Questions:

1. Note the connection between Malachi 3:1-5 and John, the Baptist's statements about Jesus coming and the judgment He would render.
2. What is God's response when we withhold what He has asked for?
3. What Psalms talk about the evildoer prospering?
4. Where else are books with names in them mentioned?
5. Malachi 4:5 is a prophecy of whom?
6. What does 4:6 mean?
7. How is this book a fitting end to prophetic activity for 400 years?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Why should we serve God?

Lesson 19: Changing Powers – From Assyria to Rome

Text: None

Objectives:

- Note the shifting political sands during the 700 years before Christ.
- Review how these kingdoms intersect with the Biblical story.

Questions:

1. What Assyrian kings are mentioned in the Bible?
2. What battle lead to Babylonian supremacy?
3. What Babylonian kings are mentioned in the Bible?
4. What Medo-Persian kings are mentioned in the Bible?
5. Who expanded the empire of the Greeks? What happened when he died?
6. Who controlled Palestine during the intertestamental period?
7. Who fights for Jewish independence during the intertestamental period?
8. By Jesus' birth, what is the dominate world power?
9. Why was the land of Israel such a desired prize?
10. How long was Rome the dominate world power?

Be Ready to Discuss:

How does history prove Daniel's prophecies in Daniel 2 and 7?

Lesson 20: Review

Text: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Objectives:

- Review the settings and messages of these books.

Questions:

1. Who leads the first group of captives back to Israel? The second? The third?
2. What does Zerubbabel help to rebuild?
3. What is the main message of Haggai?
4. In your opinion, what is the strangest vision of Zechariah?
5. What issues does Ezra have to deal with?
6. Who was Nehemiah?
7. How long does it take Nehemiah and the people Old Testament rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?
8. What was the main problem Malachi dealt with?
9. What is the major element of Esther's story? Or, who is the main mover?

Be Ready to Discuss:
What are the main struggles of the remnant?

Lesson 21: Intertestamental Life and Literature

Text: Consider Daniel 1, 3, and 6

Objectives:

- Note the constant pressure on Jews to assimilate.
- Note the nature of intertestamental literature.
- Discuss the non-inclusion of these works into the Bible.

Questions:

1. Apocrypha: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, The Wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), 1 Baruch, as well as additions to Daniel and Esther.
2. Pseudepigrapha: 3 and 4 Maccabees, Assumption of Moses, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, Ascension of Isaiah, Psalms of Solomon, 2 Baruch, Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs.
3. Who controlled the land of Israel between Alexander the Great and the Maccabean revolt?
4. Who was Antiochus IV, Epiphanes?
5. Why might the literature of this time be considered “chaotic” or “persecution literature”?
6. What parallel can we see from the intertestamental time to today when it comes to living a godly life?

Be Ready to Discuss:
Why are some Jewish books considered scripture and others are not?

Lesson 22: Timeline for 1 Samuel to Malachi

Text: The Historical Books and the Prophets

Objectives:

- Review the historical timeline from the kings to the close of the Old Testament period.

Questions:

1. What three kings reign during the United Kingdom?
2. What was the political reason the kingdom divided? What was the theological reason?
3. List the good kings of Judah.
4. Every king in the North is compared to _____. Except for Ahab. Why?
5. Who are the main prophets during this time?
6. What nation destroys Samaria? In what year?
7. What nation destroys Jerusalem?
8. Who is taken in the first deportation?
9. Who is taken in the second deportation?
10. Who is left in the land?
11. What King sends the Jews back to Jerusalem? Why?
12. Who are the leaders and prophets of the remnant? What are their building projects?

Lesson 23: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes

Text: The Gospels

Objectives:

- Note the history of the Jewish sects.
- Review the differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Questions:

1. Who are the Pharisees regularly associated with?
2. Who are the Sadducees regularly associated with?
3. Who did Jesus usually have debates with?
4. Why do some argue that John, the Baptist was an Essene?
5. Which one of the Apostles was known as a “zealot”?
6. How did the Pharisees and Sadducees differ on the subject of the resurrection?
7. What was Saul of Tarsus?

Be Ready to Discuss:

Is there a temptation to see all Jews as being sinful? Why?

Lesson 24: Review of Idolatry in the Old Testament

Text: The Old Testament

Objectives:

- Review the laws against idolatry.
- Note the continued idolatry throughout Israel's history.

Questions:

1. In Genesis 35, Jacob prepares his family to worship God and commands them to do what with their idols?
2. What are the first two commandments?
3. After the giving of the 10 Commandments, what is the first sin of the people?
4. Who was the main God of Canaan that Israel so often turned to?
5. What did the people do to Gideon's ephod?
6. What king showed, by example, that idolatry was acceptable?
7. How did Jeroboam add to the problem of idolatry?
8. What is Elijah's victory on Mt. Carmel?
9. Which kings are said to remove the high places?
10. What had the people done with the bronze serpent of Moses?
11. Consider Isaiah 40-48. Why is idolatry so foolish?

Lesson 25: Shifting Landscapes

Text: The Gospels and Acts

Objectives:

- Review the succession of world powers.
- Note the “Hellenization” of the world.
- Review the place of the Jews in these shifting landscapes.

Questions:

1. Complete the order of world powers: Assyria, _____, Medo-Persia, _____, and Rome.
2. What becomes the dominate language of the world?
3. Who are the Hasmoneans?
4. After Rome established control in Palestine, how did Rome exercise control? A king? Governor?
5. When Jesus was born, who was governing Judah?
6. Who executed John, the Baptist?
7. When Jesus was killed, who was governing Judah?
8. Who executed James, the Apostle?
9. When Paul was on trial, who was governing Judah?