

Historical Books



Introduction

What five things do you need to have a kingdom?

The Bible is shallow enough for a baby to wade in and deep enough for an elephant to swim in.

Joshua • The Kingdom Established

Structure:

1. _____ the land (1-12)

- 11:23—“ So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses... Then the land had rest from war.”

2. _____ the land (12-21)

- 21:43-45—“So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.”

3. _____ the land (22-24)

- 24:25— On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws... After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

Special Problem: Why all the killing?

1. God commanded it

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 • When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations... then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.

2. Israel's Conflicted Calling

a. The call to _____.

b. The call to be _____.

3. How is the conflict resolved? _____

The story of Rahab: Glimpsing the final word

What is the message of Joshua?

Judges • The Kingdom Degenerates

What is the cycle of Judges?

The Cycle in Deborah

What is the message of Judges?

Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25

Ruth • The Hope of the Kingdom

What is the message of Ruth?

Samuel • On the Cusp of the Kingdom

Was it a good thing or a bad thing for Israel to have a human king?

Israel's sin _____.

Judgment _____

Grace _____

Davidic Covenant—is this covenant conditional or unconditional?

What is the message of Samuel?

Kings • The Kingdom in Exile

To whom is this book written?

What is the message of Kings?

Is Solomon a Good or Evil King?

Rule #1 _____ Dt. 17: 16 & 1 Kings 4:26; 10:26, 28

Rule #2 _____ Dt. 17:16 & 1 Kings 11

Rule #3 _____ Dt. 17:16 & 1 Kings 10:27

Verdict—Solomon is _____ . 1 Kings 11:6

Breakdown of Kings in Israel and Judah:

Judah—_____ kings after Solomon: _____ right, _____ evil

Israel—_____ kings after Solomon: _____ right, _____ evil

Highlights of Kings:

Chronicles • Kingdom Remixed

To whom is this book written?

Genealogies—What the big deal?

Displaced people need _____.

God is restoring _____.

Special Problem—Is Chronicles Revisionist History?

Kings and Chronicles: Different _____ on the same _____.

What is the message of Chronicles?

Ezra-Nehemiah • Rebuilding the Kingdom

Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah:

I. Three Great Returns (Ezra 1:1-Neh. 7:3)

A. Zerubbabel (538-530BC; Ezra 2)

- Temple Rebuilt (Ezra 3-6)

B. Ezra (458BC; Ezra 7-8)

- Marriages Rebuilt (Ezra 9-10)

C. Nehemiah (445BC; Neh. 1-2)

- Wall Rebuilt (Neh. 2:11-7:3)

II. Three Great Renewals (Neh. 7:4-12:44)

A. Community Renewal (Neh. 7:4-12:44)

B. Covenant Renewal (7:73b-10:39)

C. Wall Renewal (11:1-12:43)

Special Problem—Why were the Israelites' interracial marriages wrong?

Ezra 10:10-11 • Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, 'You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel's guilt. Now honor the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.'

What is the message of Ezra-Nehemiah?

Esther • The Kingdom Reversal

What is the special problem of Esther?

Structure of Esther:

- A. Opening and background (chap 1)
 - B. The King's first decree (chaps 2-3) Mortal Danger
 - C. The clash between Haman and Mordecai (chaps 4-5)
 - X. On that night, the King could not sleep (6:1)
 - C'. Mordecai's triumph over Haman (chaps 6-7)
 - B'. The King's second decree (chaps 8-9) Salvation
- A'. Epilogue (chap. 10)

What is Esther's turning point?

What is the turning point of the book?

Turning the Tables	
3:10-the king gives Haman his ring	8:2-the king gives Mordecai ring
3:12-Haman summons the king's scribes	8:9-Mordecai summons the king's scribes
3:12-letters written & sealed with ring	8:10-letters written & sealed with ring
3:13-the Jews to be killed	8:11-the enemies to be killed
3:14-Haman's decree displayed	8:13-Mordecai's decree displayed
3:15-couriers go out in haste	8:14-couriers go out in haste
3:15-the city of Susa is bewildered	8:15-the city of Susa rejoices
4:1-Mordecai wears sackcloth and ashes	8:15-Mordecai wears royal robes
4:1-Mordecai goes through the city crying	6:11-Mordecai led in honor
5:14-Zeresh advises Mordecai's death	6:13-Zeresh predicts Haman's ruin



What is the message of Esther?

One Word Summaries

Joshua • Land

Judges • Kingless

Ruth • *hesed*

Samuel • David

Kings • Exile

Chronicles • Return

Ezra-Nehemiah • Rebuild

Esther • Reversal

Bibliography

Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

Karen H. Jobes, *Esther* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

Chiasm | The Structure of Ruth

A. Naomi - Too old to conceive:	chapter 1
B. Possible Redeemer is introduced	2:1
C. Ruth and Naomi make a plan	2:2
D. Ruth and Boaz's Field	2:3
E. Boaz comes from Bethlehem	2:4
F. Boaz Asks: "Whose is that young woman?"	2:5-7
G. Ruth Becomes Part of the Boaz Clan	2:8-18
<i>Ruth brings ephah of barley and food to Naomi</i>	(2:18)
H. Naomi Blesses Boaz	2:19
I. Boaz the One in Position to Redeem	2:20
J. Ruth joins Boaz' Workers	2:21-2
X. The plan laid by Naomi and Ruth	3:1-8
J' Ruth Identifies Herself as Boaz' Handmaid	3:9
I' Ruth Challenges Boaz to Act as Redeemer	3:9
H' Boaz Blesses Ruth	3:10
G' Boaz Promises to Marry Ruth	3:11-15
<i>Ruth brings 6 measures of barley to Naomi</i>	(3:15)
F' Naomi asks: "Who are you?"	3:16-18
E' Boaz Goes to Bethlehem	4:1
D' Ruth and Field	4:2-12
C' Ruth and Naomi's Plan fulfilled, marriage	4:13
B' The Redeemer was not Denied	4:14-16
A' A son was Born to Naomi!	4:17
Epilogue = What a son! Grandfather of King David	4:19-22

Discussion Questions | Warning! These will force you to think hard!

Read the account of Achan's sin in Joshua 7. What was his sin? Nobody knew that he had sinned, and yet 36 Israelites died in battle that day. Why would God allow this to happen? Why did innocent men have to die because of the unknown sin of another man? What could Joshua have done differently? Was it right that Achan's children had to die along with him when he was punished? Is that a biblically-accurate punishment? Did that punishment please the Lord?

Read the account of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:26-12:33. God used Jeroboam as his instrument of punishment against Solomon, and yet Jeroboam was even more of an idolater than Solomon! If God knew that Jeroboam was going to lead the people of Israel astray, why did he choose him as the agent of punishment against Solomon? Why would God allow the nation to split into two like it did? None of the kings of Israel in the north served YHWH, and yet it was God's will to establish Jeroboam as king. Nothing redemptive came from the Northern Kingdom, so why would God allow this split of the nations?

Read the account of Jephthah in Judges 10:6-11:40. One of the primary reasons that God gave the land of Canaan to Israel was because of the detestable religious practices of the Canaanites. They sacrificed their children as burnt offerings to their god Molech. It appears, from the text, that Jephthah made his vow to sacrifice the first thing that came out of his house to greet him while the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. What do you think happened to his daughter? Did he sacrifice her as a burnt offering? Did he dedicate her to the service of YHWH? If he had offered her as a burnt offering, would God have accepted it?

Read the short account of Elisha being jeered by youths in 2 Kings 2:23-25. How can this man be God's prophet? Surely this act was extremely out of proportion with the crime! Why is this account in Scripture? What does this tell you about Elisha? Was this just? What is the point of this little story?

Ruth was from Moab, which was one of the mortal enemies of Israel. Because of the way that Moab had opposed Israel when they were on the verge of taking the promised land, God commanded Israel to not abide any Moabites in their land. This command is later exercised under Nehemiah, when the Israelites expel all of the Moabites in their land, even the Moabite women they had married! Yet David, the greatest king of Israel, was the great-grandson of Ruth, the Moabitess! How do you account for this apparent contradiction? How could God call for the expulsion of the Moabites when his greatest servant, David, has a Moabite woman in his family line?

Read the account of David bringing back the ark in 1 Chronicles 13. Surely it was God's will that the ark be brought back to Jerusalem, and David's intentions were right. Why, then, did Uzzah have to die? Wasn't he trying to protect the ark of YHWH? Does this seem to severe too you? Do you sympathize with David and his anger at God? How did David respond in his anger?

Read the account of Saul and the evil spirit from the Lord in 1 Samuel 16:14-23. How can an evil spirit be from the Lord? Why would God do this? Why would the evil spirit leave Saul when David played the harp?

Read the account of Ezra and his reaction toward the Israelites' intermarriage in Ezra 9:1-10:17. Why was intermarriage such a big deal to him? Was it that important to God? What do you think of Ezra's call to send away all the foreign wives and their children? Where would they go? Who would take care of them? Is this a just act? Why couldn't they just convert to Judaism? Isn't this the sort of zeal for the strictness of the Law that the Pharisees possessed? And weren't they Jesus' antagonists and the ones who ultimately turned him over to be crucified?

Read the account of David and the census of the fighting men in 2 Samuel 24. Why was it so wrong for David to make a count of the men who could fight? Why would God make him choose between three horrible fates that would affect many people besides David? Are any of the three punishments just? Why would God kill 70,000 people for the sin of one man? God relented just as the angel of death was reaching Jerusalem. What is the significance of this plot of land—the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite?

Read the account of the retribution of the Jews in Esther 9:1-17. Did they kill all of their enemies out of self-defense? Or were they the aggressors? What should they have done, do you think? In this whole book there is not one mention of God. Why is that? Martin Luther argued that Esther ought to be removed from the canon. What do you think?

Joshua | Outline

1-5 | jordan | Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (1:9)

The story of Joshua picked up immediately following the death of Moses. The people of Israel were gathered on the east side of the Jordan River, preparing to go in and conquer Canaan. Joshua may have been afraid, because the Lord tells him over and over, "Do not be afraid."

Joshua sent two men to spy out Jericho, and the prostitute Rahab took them in. She protected them from the city officials, and as a result, she and her whole family were spared. When the camp heard the good report, they moved out to cross the Jordan, which the Lord divided just like the Red Sea.

6-12 | war | So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies. (10:13)

The first victim of Israel's conquest was the fortified city of Jericho. In obedience to God's direction, the Israelites marched around the city for six days, then on the seventh day they marched seven times, gave a loud shout, and the walls came down. Everything and everyone in the city was destroyed. After Jericho, Israel destroyed the city of Ai.

The people of Canaan heard about the exploits of Joshua and the Israelites and they became very afraid of them. One nation, the Gibeonites, tricked Joshua into making a covenant with them, and so their lives were spared. The rest were not so lucky. Joshua conquered the Amorites and the kingdoms in the south, then moved on to destroy the cities in the north. All told, they conquered 31 kingdoms.

13-21 | allotment | Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you. (13:6b)

Even though they had not fully conquered Canaan, the time came to divide up the land and hand it over to the twelve tribes. These chapters are a detailed account of the boundaries of each tribe, including the cities and towns given to the Levites, who had no inheritance in the land because the Lord was their inheritance.

22-24 | shechem | Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. (24:15b,d)

After the land had been conquered and allotted, the 2 ½ eastern tribes went home, back across the Jordan. They set up a massive altar there, which infuriated the rest of Israel because the only valid altar in the nation was the one in the tabernacle. But the eastern tribes had only made this altar as a monument—not as an actual place of sacrifice.

Toward the end of his life, Joshua gathered the leaders of Israel at Shechem to renew the covenant with God. This is where he famously presented them with the choice to either serve YHWH or the gods of their forefathers. The people adamantly chose to serve YHWH. After the covenant had been renewed, Joshua died.

Judges | Outline

1-5 | deborah | When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the Lord! (5:2)

After the death of Joshua, Israel lacked a strong leader to act as a mediator between the people and God. The nation became a loose confederation of tribes because they had no king to unite them.

When Israel went to war against the remaining Canaanites, they were unable or unwilling to completely rout them and remove them from the land. This failure to conquer the land led to countless troubles both in the near and distant future. So the Lord raised up judges to rule over the people—twelve in all. The judges were: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson.

Deborah was the most prominent of the early judges, and together with Barak, she defeated the Canaanites who were oppressing Israel. Her song, recorded in chapter 5, is a record of her great triumph over the Canaanites.

6-12 | gideon | A sword for the Lord and for Gideon! (7:20c)

The cycle of Israelite faithlessness went like this: idolatry, captivity, petition, arrival of the judge, victory, faithfulness, death of the judge, return to idolatry. This cycle repeated itself throughout the time of the judges, from Othniel to Samson.

In the middle of this cycle, seven years after the death of Deborah, God called Gideon to lead Israel. Because he was a young man, and the least of the weakest clan in Manasseh, Gideon did not believe that God was truly calling him to lead Israel against the Midianites. Famously, he asked God for two signs involving a fleece and the morning dew; and it was only after God had confirmed both signs (and a previous sign besides) that Gideon was convinced that this really was the Lord.

Gideon's original army contained 32,000 fighting men. However, God did not want Israel to boast of its strength, so he pared the army down to just 300 men. With trumpets and torches, they routed the vast army of Midian, relentlessly pursuing them until they were all dead.

13-16 | samson | With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. (16:16)

Like Isaac, Samson was born to a woman who was supposedly barren. His birth was also announced by an angel of God, who gave very specific instructions to Samson's parents about his upbringing.

It could be said of Samson that he had a love-hate relationship with the Philistines. He fell in love with and married a Philistine woman, much to the chagrin of his family. At the wedding feast, his bride pressed him for the answer to a riddle, and he finally answered her because she cried so much. His father-in-law later gave Samson's wife to a friend who had attended him at the wedding. Because of this treachery, Samson burned up the crops of the Philistines. After they killed his wife, they came to get him, but he killed a thousand of them with the jawbone of a donkey.

Later on, he fell in love with Delilah. The Philistines approached her and persuaded her to discover the source of Samson's strength. Samson deceived her three times, but the fourth time he gave in and told her the truth (for the same reason he had told his wife about the riddle). So Samson's head was shaved, his strength left him, and the Philistines captured him, gouging out his eyes. Later on, they brought him into the temple of their god to dance for them. He prayed one last time to receive the strength he had before, and he destroyed the temple, killing himself and thousands of Philistines.

17-21 | benjamin | In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (21:25)

A Levite from Ephraim took a woman from Judah as his concubine, but she refused to live with him in Ephraim, and instead went back to her family in Bethlehem. The Levite returned to get her, but was hindered from leaving by her father's persistent hospitality. The Levite finally left, with his servants and concubine, toward the end of the day, and they were only able to get to Gibeah before the sun went down.

What happened in Gibeah bears a striking resemblance to what happened to the two angels of the Lord in Sodom. The men of the city came to where the man was staying and demanded that he be brought out so that they could rape him. Rather than bring the man out, the Levite's concubine was sent out, and the men raped her all night. The Levite found her dead on the doorstep. He took her home, cut her body into twelve pieces and sent them to all the tribes of Israel.

When the rest of Israel heard about this, they were incensed, and demanded to go to war against Benjamin, in whose land this had happened. So the eleven tribes of Israel waged war against the single tribe of Benjamin, and tens of thousands of people died in the battle. This was the first instance of civil war within Israel.

Ruth | Outline

1-4 | kinsman-redeemer | Wherever you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. (1:16b)

Ruth was a Moabite woman who married an Israelite man, the son of Naomi. Naomi and her family had been living in Moab because of the famine in Israel, but her husband and both sons died there. She returned to Israel, in Bethlehem, with Ruth by her side.

One day, Ruth went out into the field of Boaz, a close relative of Naomi, to glean some of the harvest. Boaz treated Ruth kindly, and instructed all of his servants to treat her well. When Naomi decided to find a husband for Ruth, the obvious choice was Boaz. So Ruth went to him while he was asleep and laid down at his feet. When he awoke in the middle of the night, he promised to work everything out according to the Law of Moses. So Boaz treated her with dignity and honor, and they were eventually married. Their great-grandson was King David.

1 Samuel | Outline

1-7 | samuel | Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (3:10b)

Like many important women of the Bible, Samuel's mother Hannah was barren. Her husband had two wives, and the other woman consistently abused and mocked her for her infertility. Hannah desperately cried out to the Lord, and he heard her plea, granting her request. When Samuel was born, she fulfilled her promise to God by dedicating him to the priests.

Samuel grew up at the tabernacle under the tutelage of Eli, who had two wicked sons who corrupted the priesthood. Because Eli did not discipline them or put an end to their wickedness, the priesthood was removed from his family.

During this time, the Israelites took the ark of the Lord into battle against the Philistines, who captured it. But every foreign city that housed the ark suffered horrible loss and disease. So the Philistines returned the ark to Israel, but there was consistent animosity between the two nations.

8-15 | saul | It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. (8:7b)

Israel approached Samuel and demanded that a king be appointed over them. Samuel did not approve of anointing a king, because YHWH was their king, but they persisted. So Samuel found Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, and anointed him as king over Israel. Saul's first military test came against the Ammonites when he rescued the city of Jabesh. After his military victory, the nation confirmed him as king, even those who were previously opposed to him.

Saul's primary military adversary, like David after him, were the Philistines. In his first battle against the Philistines, Saul's son Jonathan slipped away in secret with his armor-bearer, and the two of them routed a Philistine outpost. Then God sent a panic throughout the Philistine army, and the Israelites saw that they had the advantage, and routed their enemies.

Some time later, God commanded Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, because of the way they had opposed Israel during their sojourn from Egypt. Saul, however, disobeyed the Lord by allowing the Amalekite king to live, along with the choicest of his flocks and herds. Saul claimed that he intended to use the animals as a burnt offering to the Lord, but Samuel insisted that he had disobeyed the word of the Lord. Saul's disobedience signaled the beginning of the end of his reign as the chosen ruler of Israel.

16-23 | david | Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands. (18:7b)

God gave Samuel the unpleasant task of anointing a new king while the old king was still alive and well. The Lord directed him to Bethlehem, to the family of Jesse, and finally to David, the youngest of Jesse's sons. Not long after this, David goes out to his most famous fight—his battle with Goliath. Goliath was the Philistine champion, truly a giant among them, and David was just a boy. But David killed the giant with a stone between the eyes, and then he led the Israelites in their rout of the Philistines.

It wasn't long before the people were praising David more than Saul, and the old king became insanely jealous. He tried to kill David several times, even though David had married his daughter Michal, and become fast-friends with his son, Jonathan. It was Jonathan who helped David to escape from one of Saul's plots to kill him.

David fled from Saul to Nob, where he met Ahimelech the priest, who gave him and his men some of the consecrated bread to eat. Shortly after, Saul and his men arrived at Nob and killed all the priests, but Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, was able to escape. While still running from Saul, David and his men came to the rescue of a city that had been attacked by the Philistines. He put himself in harm's way through this daring rescue, and Saul almost caught him, but the king turned away at the last minute when he heard a report that the Philistines were raiding the land.

24-31 | transition | The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the Lord. (24:6)

Although the writing had been on the wall since David killed Goliath, the tide really turned in David's favor when he twice refused to kill Saul, even though he had the chance. When things got out of hand, David, along with his two wives and 600 soldiers, moved to Philistine territory to a city named Ziklag. Meanwhile, Saul's pursuit had turned away, but he was again faced with war against the Philistines. Desperate for an assurance of victory, he consulted a witch, who brought out the spirit of Samuel (who had died), but he received no assurances. David and his men had joined forces with the Philistines to fight against Israel, but he was not permitted to fight. When they returned to Ziklag, they discovered that the Amalekites had destroyed the city and carried off all the men's families and possessions. David destroyed the Amalekites and rescued his family, while at the same time the Philistines defeated Saul, who committed suicide rather than be taken by the foreign invaders.

2 Samuel | Outline

1-6 | consolidation | And David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. (5:12)

David learned of Saul's death through the Amalekite who helped Saul commit suicide. In a rage, David had the man killed, then sang a dirge for Saul and Jonathan. David was then anointed as king over the tribe of Judah, and went to war with the descendants of Saul, a war he eventually won. The general of Saul's army, Abner, defected to David's side, but David's general, Joab, became jealous and murdered Abner. Saul's son, Ish-Bosheth, was king over the rest of Israel at the time, but he was murdered by his own men. This was the final straw, and all of Israel came over to the side of David.

With the nation behind him, David conquered Jerusalem of the Jebusites, and made it his capital. Soon after that, the Philistines tested David's mettle, and were twice defeated in battle. David then brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, his capital, and his power was officially consolidated.

7-10 | glory | The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you. (7:11b)

These were the glory days of David's rule. He intended to build a temple for YHWH, but instead, God declared that he would establish David's house forever. David was victorious in every battle he entered, and he conquered many lands. He greatly extended the borders of Israel, covering much of the land that God originally promised to his people.

In an act of overwhelming graciousness, David invited Saul's only remaining grandson, the crippled Mephibosheth, to live with him in Jerusalem. This was a generous gesture because in those times a king fully consolidated his power by killing all the members of the previous regime's family.

11-19 | absalom | Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" (12:7a)

The glory days ended in horror. One spring, rather than leading his army in battle, David stayed in Jerusalem. Wandering around on the roof of his palace, he saw a beautiful woman, Bathsheba, bathing. Although she was married to Uriah the Hittite (one of David's 30 mighty men), David called her to the palace and slept with her, and she got pregnant. In a futile effort to conceal his sin, David brought Uriah back from the battlefield and tried to get him to sleep with his wife, but the man refused. So David had him killed in battle. Everything in David's family fell apart after that.

His son Amnon raped his daughter (by different mothers) Tamar, and Tamar's full-brother Absalom killed Amnon. Over the years, Absalom turned the hearts of the people toward himself because he was very charming and handsome. When David heard about this, he fled with his most loyal people. Tragically, David and his son Absalom waged war against one another. David ordered his men not to kill Absalom, but Joab killed him anyway. David mourned bitterly for his son, and even though he returned to Jerusalem triumphantly, nothing was ever the same for him or the nation.

20-24 | warriors | Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who... went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. (23:20ac)

The shedding of blood never left David for as long as he lived. After returning from his victory over his son Absalom, a man named Sheba led Israel in revolt (but Judah remained faithful to David). Joab and the army hunted him down until he was killed by his own people. The rest of the house of Saul was killed, except for Mephibosheth, and there was war with the Philistines again.

At the end of the book, after a psalm and David's last words, is a list of the names and exploits of David's mighty men. There were 37 mighty men in all, and many of them performed heroic deeds on the battlefield.

The final account of the book is the strange story of the plague coming upon Israel. The angel of death was about to come into Jerusalem, but David stopped him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David set up an altar there, and this became the land on which the temple was built.

1 Kings | Outline

1-4 | solomon | Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. (3:9a)

Near the end of David's life, his son Adonijah set himself up as king without David's knowledge or blessing. So instead of Adonijah, David chose Solomon, his son with Bathsheba, to be king. When Adonijah heard of this, he threw himself before Solomon and begged for mercy, which was granted. After charging Solomon to walk in the ways of YHWH, David died.

With David gone, Solomon had to consolidate power for the throne through force. He had Benaiah kill Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei; and he deposed Abiathar the priest. Now everyone in the royal court and all who held positions of power supported Solomon. The Lord appeared to Solomon and promised to give him whatever he wanted—he could ask for anything and God would give it to him. Rather than asking for power or wealth, Solomon asked for wisdom, which God granted, along with power and wealth. Solomon's fame quickly spread throughout the entire world, and he was known for his wisdom and wealth.

5-10 | temple | But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! (8:27)

Soon after he ascended to the throne, Solomon began the preparations for the temple, with Hiram, king of Tyre, supplying many of the resources. It took Solomon seven years to build the temple, and he spared no expense in its construction and decoration. Only the best wood and most precious metals were used to build YHWH's temple. After the construction of the temple, Solomon spent 13 years building his palace.

At the temple dedication ceremony, the ark of the covenant was brought in to the inner room, and the glory of the Lord came down and filled the temple so thickly that the priests could not perform their duties. Solomon prayed a long prayer of dedication and also renewed the covenant between YHWH and Israel. After the ceremony, the Lord appeared to Solomon and reconfirmed the promise he had made to David to establish his throne forever, on the condition that he remain faithful to the Lord.

11-16 | split | What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David! (12:16b)

Solomon was led astray to worship other gods because he married 700 women, and had 300 concubines! Many of his wives were royals from other countries, and they persuaded him to worship the gods of their homes. God was angered by what Solomon had done, and so he promised to give the 10 tribes of Israel (besides Judah) to Jeroboam, a royal official. After Solomon died, the people rebelled against his son Rehoboam, and chose Jeroboam as their king. All that was left to Rehoboam was Judah. But Jeroboam (and Rehoboam) was worse than Solomon! He set up golden calves in Israel as the people's gods, and so God removed the kingship from his family's line after just two generations. There was a great deal of political turmoil and turnover in Israel until the time of Ahab.

17-22 | ahab | And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. (19:12b-13a)

Ahab was the most wicked king Israel had ever had, but he had a lengthy reign, during which he was tormented by Elijah, YHWH's prophet. One of the most famous encounters between Elijah and Ahab occurred on Mount Carmel, where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal (the god that Ahab and his wife Jezebel worshipped) to a fight. Both groups set out an offering and prayed to their god to burn it up. Baal, of course, did nothing. But YHWH answered Elijah's prayer and consumed his offering with fire from heaven. After this, Elijah fled from the wrath of Jezebel, who was extremely wicked in the way she dealt with the prophets who remained faithful to YHWH.

Ahab's petulant character is revealed in the story of Naboth's vineyard. He was both spineless and wicked. He finally met his fate on the battlefield, where he was killed while dressed as a normal soldier. During Ahab's reign, Asa and Jehoshaphat were kings in Judah, and both were righteous men who followed YHWH as David had done.

2 Kings | Outline

1-8 | elisha | “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. (2:9b)

Elijah’s prophetic ministry came to an end when he was taken up into heaven by a whirlwind and chariots of fire. (Elijah and Enoch are the only biblical characters who were taken up to heaven rather than dying.) Before he was taken, Elisha, his apprentice, asked for a double portion of his spirit, so that he could continue the prophetic ministry. God granted his request.

Elisha performed many miraculous signs—some that are remarkably similar to the miracles of Jesus, including the changing of water, abundant provision of food, healing lepers, and raising the dead. Elisha also served the kings of Israel, even though they had no regard for YHWH. He once trapped a raiding band of Arameans who had been blinded by the Lord and handed them over to the king.

9-11 | jehu | You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the Lord’s servants shed by Jezebel. (9:7)

The sins of Ahab and Jezebel had not been punished or abandoned while their son Joram was king. Elisha anointed Jehu to become the next king, and Jehu killed both Joram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah. He then went to the royal palace and had Jezebel killed. After killing the leading members of Ahab’s family, he had all the rest of the family killed. Then Jehu called an assembly of all the ministers of Baal, and had them all killed in the temple of Baal.

12-17 | assyria | All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God. (17:7a)

All the kings of Israel were wicked, including Jehu, whom the Lord chose to cleanse the land of the wicked sin of Ahab. The sins of Jeroboam were never abandoned, and the people of the northern kingdom never forsook their idolatry. They waged war against their brothers in Judah, and they had several coup d’états of their own.

The last king of Israel, Hoshea, rebelled against Assyria, which had conquered Israel and forced them to pay tribute. So Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, attacked and completely destroyed Samaria, the capital of Israel. All the Israelites of standing were deported, and foreigners were brought in to settle the land. Israel ceased to be a nation in 722/1 BC.

18-25 | babylon | So Judah went into captivity, away from her land. (25:21b)

Hezekiah became king of Judah about six years before Israel was destroyed by Assyria. Hezekiah was a great king who honored the Lord—the best king in Judah since Solomon. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, threatened Jerusalem with siege, but he was turned back when an angel of the Lord put 185,000 Assyrian troops to death in one night. The prophet Isaiah was ministering during this time, and he foretold the deliverance of Jerusalem and the death of Sennacherib. Some time later, Hezekiah was gravely ill, but the Lord healed him. When the Babylonian king heard about this, he sent an envoy to Jerusalem with gifts. Hezekiah foolishly showed the Babylonians all the riches of his kingdom, and Isaiah prophesied that Judah would one day go into exile in Babylon.

Manasseh became king when his father Hezekiah died, and he was the most wicked king Judah had ever seen. However, his grandson, Josiah, was a king like Hezekiah. During Josiah’s reign, the book of the Law was found in the temple, and he initiated great and sweeping reforms to conform to the teaching of the book of the Law. Josiah renewed the covenant between YHWH and his people, but it proved to be too little, too late. The next four kings of Judah (the last four) all did evil in the eyes of God, and so Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came and destroyed Judah and Jerusalem, and the people went off into captivity. There was then no Jewish presence to speak of in the Promised Land.

1 Chronicles | Outline

1-9 | genealogy | These were the sons of Israel... (2:1a)

The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are a record of the genealogy of Israel. Because this book was probably written during the return from exile to Babylon, a detailed record of ancestry would have been crucial to the social life and structure of the reborn nation.

10-17 | david | Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? (17:16b)

Chronicles gives a more condensed version of David's life that focuses heavily on the plans for the temple. Much of what is found in 2 Samuel is found here. The author goes into great detail about the mighty men and the warriors who joined David and became the commanders of his army.

David brought the ark back to Jerusalem (with great effort and grief) and set it up in the tabernacle. All the people celebrated the return of the ark to its rightful place, and David had Asaph and the musicians play a psalm of thanksgiving that he had written. The episode ends with David's desire to construct a temple for YHWH. The prophet Nathan's first response is to go ahead with the construction, but God spoke to him later that David would not build the temple because he was a man of blood. David's response was gracious and humble, and he urged the Lord to remember his household and his promise to bless it forever.

18-21 | battle | In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath and its surrounding villages from the control of the Philistines. (18:1)

David's victories in battle are well attested both here and in 2 Samuel. He defeated the Philistines, the Moabites, the Arameans, the Ammonites—every foreign nation that opposed David he defeated. One story that is noticeably missing from this section is the account of Bathsheba (it should go with chapter 20). Chapter 21 gives the account of the plague found in chapter 24, but with subtle differences. The author notes that David reserved the threshing floor where he confronted the angel of death as the future site of YHWH's temple.

22-29 | temple | David said, "The house of the Lord God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel." (22:1)

David made all the preparations for the construction of the temple. He also appointed his son Solomon to become king after he died. The regulations and genealogies of the priests and Levites are laid out in great detail, as well as the divisions of the army. This section serves as a blueprint, of sorts, for the fledgling remnant community who have just come out of exile. It is also a reminder of the greatness of the first temple and of the Davidic kingship.

2 Chronicles | Outline

1-9 | dedication | Now, my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. (6:40)

Solomon's first act as king was to offer extensive sacrifices to YHWH, and he asked God to give him wisdom to govern the people. God was pleased with this request, and vowed to give him wealth, honor, and peace as well.

Solomon set his mind toward building the temple, and Hiram king of Tyre supplied many of the building materials and skilled laborers. The temple was built and furnished extravagantly, with so much gold, bronze, and cedar that it couldn't be counted. The ark was brought up from the tabernacle to the temple, and all the people worshipped God with their whole hearts. Solomon prayed a lengthy and powerful prayer of dedication, and fire came down from heaven to consume the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple with so thick a cloud that the priests could no longer perform their duties.

10-28 | judah | For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (16:9a)

The book of Chronicles focuses exclusively on the reigns of the kings of Judah. Much of the material found in 1 and 2 Kings is repeated here, with, occasionally, some new information. Particular attention is paid to the righteous reigns of Asa and his son Jehoshaphat. They were the two most righteous kings to reign in Judah between Solomon and Hezekiah.

29-32 | hezekiah | People of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. (30:6b)

Hezekiah's very first act as king was to repair the temple and reestablish the worship of YHWH throughout the land. He called the priests and Levites together and ordered them to consecrate themselves and then go into the temple and purify it from the idolatry of the previous kings. They then offered sacrifices to God and the whole community worshipped him.

Hezekiah decided to celebrate the Passover that year, and he sent couriers all throughout Judah and Israel to call the people of God back to Jerusalem to celebrate it with him. Many of the Israelites mocked and abused his messengers, but some returned to worship. The Passover celebration was a huge success—it was even extended an additional week!

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came against Jerusalem to overthrow it. He wrote Hezekiah a threatening letter, and Hezekiah went to the temple and spread it out before the Lord and pleaded with him to act on behalf of his people. Hezekiah, together with Isaiah, desperately cried out before the Lord for the deliverance of Israel, and he rescued them.

Hezekiah became desperately ill, and he pleaded with God to heal him, which he did. When the king of Babylon heard of this, he sent envoys to Hezekiah to congratulate him. Hezekiah foolishly showed them everything in his treasuries and armories. When Isaiah heard of this, he prophesied that one day Judah would go into exile in Babylon, but Hezekiah thought it good news because it wouldn't happen in his lifetime!

33-36 | humbled | In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. (33:12)

Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, was the most wicked king Judah had ever seen. He did the same horrible things that the Canaanites had done. But after being captured by the Assyrian king, he humbled himself before God, and God was moved by his contrition. His grandson, Josiah, also humbled himself (along with the whole nation) before God when the Book of the Law was found in the temple. Like Hezekiah, Josiah held a monumental Passover feast during his reign. The four kings after Josiah, however, did not humble themselves, and so Judah was destroyed by Babylon, and led off into captivity. The book closes with an edict from Cyrus, king of Persia, who, after conquering Babylon, set the Hebrews free to rebuild the temple and worship YHWH in their home land.

Ezra | Outline

1-10 | return | What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. (9:13)

Cyrus, the king of Persia, conquered Babylon and issued a decree that the Israelites may return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of YHWH. Although they were poverty-stricken, thousands of people returned to Jerusalem, and when the foundation of the temple had been laid, they held a great feast.

Many people in the region of Judah opposed the exiles, and letters were written, over a period of several years, to the various kings of Persia. Finally, the matter was settled by King Darius, and the Jewish exiles were permitted to continue the construction of the temple. When it was finally completed, the people dedicated the temple and held a Passover feast there.

After the temple was completed, Ezra, a priest, returned to Jerusalem to teach the people about the Law of Moses. When he arrived he found that many of the men had intermarried with pagan women, and he was deeply distressed. The people resolved to send their foreign wives and children away.

Nehemiah | Outline

1-7 | rebuild | The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire. (1:3b)

Nehemiah was a high-ranking official of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, when he heard the report of the terrible conditions in Jerusalem. He prayed to God and received permission from the king to return to Jerusalem, where he ruled as governor for twelve years. Under his leadership the wall of Jerusalem was restored, despite the opposition of many of the other peoples in the area.

8-13 | worship | All the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. (8:3b)

All the people assembled before the Lord, and Ezra brought out the Book of the Law and read it aloud. The people mourned over their sin, but Ezra and the Levites encouraged them not to mourn, for that day was to be a joyful celebration before the Lord, because the people were recommitting themselves to the covenant between YHWH and his people. The people were led in a lengthy confession of their sins and rededicated themselves to God.

After some time away, Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem and found that the people had become lax in their observance of the Law and their commitment to YHWH. He instituted many reforms to ensure the people's obedience to the Book of the Law.

Esther | Outline

1-10 | purim | And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? (4:14b)

The book of Esther takes place in Susa, the capital of Persia during the reign of King Xerxes, and it is the only book in the Bible that doesn't mention God. Xerxes held a feast and demanded that his queen, Vashti, come to the feast so that he could show her off. She refused, and was therefore deposed, and the search for a new queen was begun. Esther, a Jew, became that queen.

Haman, one of the royal officials, hated Mordecai, another royal official and a Jew, and plotted to have all the Jews killed in the twelfth month of the year (which was decided by casting the lot, or pur). When Mordecai learned of the plot, he urged Esther to go before the king and plead for the lives of the Jews. Though she was afraid, she agreed to do it. Through a dramatic series of events and turns of fortunes, Haman was killed, Mordecai was honored, and the Jews were permitted to defend themselves on the day marked for their destruction. This is the story of the establishment of the Jewish holiday of Purim.

