

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

Creation BEGINNINGS

The book of Genesis records the creation of the world and humankind and their subsequent corruption because of sin. Afterwards, the flood and the Tower of Babel describe humanity beginning anew, but the depravity that remains. So, God set his plan of redemption in motion with one man and his family. Abraham and his descendents – Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph – led their families to worship God and create a new kind of people devoted to him.

❖ *Genesis, probably Job*

c.1500 B.C. DELIVERANCE

Exodus tells the story of Abraham's extended family becoming a nation that is enslaved by Egypt. God raised up Moses to deliver the Hebrew people from bondage. After the plagues on Egypt and the Passover sacrifice, Israel fled Egypt and was given a law code at the foot of Mt. Sinai. This law included the Ten Commandments, specific rules for civil order, regulations about holidays and sacrifices, and general instructions for creating a holy nation.

❖ *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*

LAND

After wandering in the desert, Moses' successor, Joshua, guided the Hebrew people into the Promised Land. They conquered some of the Canaanite inhabitants, but remained a disorganized group of tribes. Often straying from the law, the people adopted Canaanite practices and forsook God. Thus, God raised up local leaders, often called judges, who restored order and corrected the people's waywardness.

❖ *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*

c.1000 B.C. KINGDOM

Israel finally began to take shape as a nation when they crowned Saul as their first king. Other kings followed who established Israel as a military power in the ancient Near East. David set the precedent as a leader who genuinely loved God and led his people to be a light to all the surrounding nations. His son Solomon built the great temple in Jerusalem where Israelites could offer their sacrifices and worship God.

❖ *1 & 2 Samuel, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*

DOWNFALL

After Solomon, things went downhill. Fighting between the tribes began and the kingdom divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The kings of the two nations were often wicked and the people turned to idols and other gods. During this time, prophets challenged the Hebrew people and

warned of God's judgment if they didn't change their ways. Sure enough, in 722 B.C., Assyria destroyed Israel and carried the people into exile. In 586 B.C., Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and carried the people of Judah into exile.

❖ *1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Lamentations, all the prophets*

c.500 B.C. **REMNANT**

The Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians, who were soon overthrown by the Persians. During this time, the Jews lived in exile, but the Persians allowed them to return to the ruins of Israel. A remnant returned and slowly started rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the great temple. As the Jews searched for their identity, they wondered if God would raise up a messiah to restore the kingdom and establish God's rule in the world as the prophets foretold.

❖ *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*

PARENTHESES: INTERTESTAMENTAL TIMES

Though this period of about 400 years is not described in the Bible, other ancient historians fill in the details. In 323 BC, Alexander the Great conquered the ancient Near East and the Greek Empire was established. For a short time, the Jews gained their independence, but eventually Rome triumphed and the Jews found themselves living under Roman rule. A group of Jewish leaders called Pharisees emerged and challenged the people to return to God by obeying the letter of the law.

c. A.D. 1 **JESUS**

When all hope appeared lost for the Jewish people, a new teacher named Jesus came onto the scene. Proclaiming God's imminent kingdom, he attracted followers with his profound teaching and amazing miracles. Jewish leaders were threatened and influenced the Roman authorities to crucify Jesus as a rebellious criminal. Days later, Jesus appeared to his followers, risen from the grave with new life and hope. He challenged his followers to spread the good news that faith in his life, death, and resurrection was the long-awaited redemption from sin's curse for all of humanity.

❖ *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

CHURCH

Jesus' followers attracted other Jews who believed that Jesus was the messiah they had been looking for. Soon, non-Jews, called Gentiles, joined the movement believing that all ethnic barriers had been torn down and that Jesus was the hope for the whole world. These early Christians found new power in God's indwelling Holy Spirit and shared their message around the world. One Christian named Paul traveled around the Mediterranean sharing the good news and establishing local churches. The Bible concludes at the end of the first century with the Book of Revelation, a dramatic portrayal of the future consummation of God's redemptive plan for the world.

❖ *Acts, Pauline letters, General letters, Revelation*