



*An Overview of*  
**Old Testament**  
**HISTORY**

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# The Use of Biblical History

Every Christian has a duty to study the Scriptures, for they are the inspired Word of God. Our love for God should result in a greater desire to spend time in the Word. The Old Testament is a part of the Bible which is often neglected, yet it should not be so. It is as vital to the Christian as the New Testament.

However, the books that form the Old Testament, 39 in total, are not found in chronological order. The more historical books generally follow the order of time within themselves, but they are not necessarily placed in the order of time. This means that as you read through them in the order that they are given in our Bibles, you can easily be confused and get lost.

For this reason, I have compiled this small booklet, designed to give a very brief historical overview of Old Testament history, in chronological order. I have sought to include as many major characters and books as possible, so that they may easily be placed in this, but there are exceptions; for instance, certain of the minor prophets have no clear indication of the time of the author. Another example is that of Job; we know not the exact time that he lived, although many learned men suppose him to have lived around the time of Abraham, as I have stated in the text.

I trust that this will help to give you a broad view; this is no Old Testament commentary, as it might well have been, but a short account of main events.

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## CREATION & THE FALL

The Old Testament commences with the account of the creation of the world, in six twenty-four hour days, by God himself. All was created from nothing. On the sixth day, man was created. A short time after, however, man fell, being tempted by Satan, and here we find the first promise of the coming of Christ to redeem a people for himself (Genesis 3:15). But man is hereafter sinful, naturally, and his inclinations are turned naturally to the things that are evil. **Cain**, **Adam's** firstborn son, killed **Abel**, Adam's second son, jealous after his brother's offering was accepted, and his own rejected. After the death of Abel, **Seth** is born, and his line is what we would call the godly line, not because all in it were righteous, but because it was through this line that Christ should come. There follow many generations of men, of whom only **Enoch** is said to have walked with God. **Methuselah**, the longest living person in the Scriptures (969 years), was Enoch's son.

## THE FLOOD

Methuselah's grandson was **Noah**, who obeyed God, and built the ark. He stood for God, and preached the gospel in times of great wickedness. We can easily see the Old Testament imagery of the Gospel here, looking to Christ, who is the great ark in which men must be saved. All who are outside of the ark of Christ Jesus are doomed to everlasting destruction. Once the ark was built, in the timing of God, and having shown great mercy and grace towards the wicked people of the earth in delaying so long, God caused there to be a great flood, which covered the whole earth, and killed all save those which were in the ark. Noah had three sons, who were **Shem**, **Ham**, and **Japheth**. These, with their wives, and Noah's wife, were the eight who were saved. From these, the world was populated again.

# THE TOWER OF BABEL

But men continued as wickedly as before; we read even that righteous Noah sinned, and if such a godly man could fall into such sin, then one may but think how much greater the sin of the godless would be. These men built themselves cities, and one more notable than the rest was **Nimrod**, whose kingdom, we read, began with **Babel**. That was the place where men tried to build a tower up to heaven in rebellion against God. God judged them for their wickedness, and divided the builders of this tower by confusing their languages. This is the origin of all the different languages that there are in the world, and we may use these to remind us of the judgement of God upon the wicked. It is a constant warning to us and to those who know not Christ.

## ABRAHAM

From the line of Shem (the son of Noah) came the patriarch **Abraham**. It is thought that **Job** lived around this same time, though we cannot tell for certain. Abraham lived in a place of great idolatry, **Ur of the Chaldees**. But he was called out by God, and obeyed the call. The promise made to Abraham, and repeated a number of times throughout his life, spoke of a great nation which should descend from him, which was fulfilled in Israel of old, and also that in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed, which was ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

Abraham's nephew, **Lot**, who had been with Abraham until they parted due to a dispute between their herdsmen, was narrowly rescued from the destruction of **Sodom and Gomorrah**, which were destroyed for their wickedness. Abraham, seeing there to be no chance of having a child by **Sarah** his wife, took her maid to him, **Hagar**, and has a son by her, **Ishmael**, who would himself beget great nations. Of the names of his sons we read very little else. It appears that they were for the most part nomadic tribes. Abraham and his wife Sarah (Abram and Sarai at the first) were enabled by God to have a child when they were old, and that child was **Isaac**. Abraham sent his

servant to find a wife, and the Lord guided the servant to **Rebekah**, **Laban's** sister, who was of Abraham's wider family. Isaac and Rebekah married.

## **ISAAC & JACOB**

Rebekah gives birth to **Esau** (the firstborn) and **Jacob**. Jacob bargains with Esau for the birthright, and then obtains the blessing of his father Isaac at the end of his days by treachery and deceit. Jacob, when threatened by his brother with death, flees to Laban, his uncle (Rebekah's brother), and there serves him to marry his daughter. But Laban deceives Jacob, and the conclusion of the matter is that he marries both of Laban's daughters. Jacob has twelve sons by his wives and their handmaids, which were to form the twelve tribes of Israel. Those twelve sons (in order of birth) were: **Reuben**, **Simeon**, **Levi**, **Judah**, **Dan**, **Naphtali**, **Gad**, **Asher**, **Issachar**, **Zebulun**, **Joseph**, and **Benjamin**.

As Jacob returns with trepidation to **Canaan** (since his brother desired to kill him), at the command of God, by the **ford Jabbok**, he wrestles with God, and his name is changed to Israel. Esau's heart is turned towards his brother, and there is no hostility. After some time, Jacob's son Joseph is sold into **Egypt** by his brethren. He is employed by **Potiphar**, but he is falsely accused after a short time by Potiphar's wife, and put into prison.

In time, however, he is restored, and lifted up to a very high position of authority in Egypt, after God granted him the interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream. Then, during a time of great famine, his brethren were compelled to come down to Egypt to find food. There he made himself known to them, and had them all come into Egypt, along with Jacob his father. The family remained in Egypt, and saw many generations pass. But the Pharaoh who raised Joseph up died, and another rose up which knew them not. Israel was now seen as a threat, and therefore held in bondage and oppressed with hard labour.

# MOSES & THE EXODUS

After many years of increasing affliction in **Egypt**, the children of Israel were delivered. God raised up the man **Moses**. He was raised in Pharaoh's court, though he was an Israelite by birth. God ensured that he had forty years of training in Pharaoh's court, before a further forty years as a shepherd in the wilderness, before he came back, with the commission of God, to lead Israel out, which took place following God's destruction of Egypt by the ten plagues. Israel were brought out with a high hand by God, and travelled through the wilderness towards the **Promised Land of Canaan**. The departure from Egypt is accounted of in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. Moses was the writer of the first five books of the Bible, and also one of the psalms, Psalm 90, which is ascribed by the title to this man Moses.

## WILDERNESS WANDERINGS & CONQUERING CANAAN

The law was given to Moses upon **mount Sinai**, including the Ten Commandments. As they proceeded, they complained about their circumstances, and murmured, speaking against God, and his representative, Moses, despite the fact that food was provided for them, and they never lacked anything necessary. When they reached the border of that land of **Canaan**, the people sent spies into the land, who brought back a negative report. The only exceptions to this were **Caleb** and **Joshua**, men of God, who proclaimed the goodness of the land. But the people, swayed by the evil, rebelled, and would not go forth to possess the land. As a punishment, they were condemned to die in the wilderness, their children being those who would be inheriting the land.

But, having been thus judged, they decided to rebel further, and now go up to Canaan. They were driven back by their enemies, and heavily defeated. They wandered in the wilderness for forty years, until all who were above twenty years old in the rebellion had died, before Joshua led the children of Israel over the Jordan to conquer

the Promised Land.

Moses died after seeing the land, being denied entrance into it. The conquering of the land continued after Joshua's death, and it was never fully completed, as the Israelites failed to conquer some nations; they remained as a thorn in the side of the nation. The entrance to the land is described in the book of Joshua.

Israel in New Testament times is the church, and this does picture both the church, and the individuals which form the church. The church is infested with such thorns, in the form of false teachers, and prophets of Baal, and even some of those from within the church. Likewise, with the individual; we all have indwelling sin, and this is as a thorn to the Christian.

It did not take long before the children of Israel fell away from the Lord after the passing away of Joshua. Having no leader, they did every man what was right in his own eyes. A new generation grew up without being taught the ways of the Lord, and they did evil. They were then delivered into the hands of their enemies. But the Lord had mercy on them, and raised up judges, who were men of God, who delivered Israel.

## THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES

There was a series of judges, which I shall list here for the sake of keeping concise: **Othniel**, **Ehud**, **Deborah** and **Barak**, **Gideon**, **Abimelech**, **Tola**, **Jair**, **Jephthah**, **Ibzan**, **Elon**, **Abdon**, **Samson**, and **Samuel**. You can read of all of these but Samuel in the book of Judges. **Ruth** lived around this time. Between each of these, there was almost always a time of great apostasy, before some revival during their lives, but with swift degeneration afterwards until the next judge. When Samuel, the last of the judges, became old, the people of Israel desired a king, as Samuel's sons were living wickedly. Samuel was against the idea, for the church of Christ, as Israel of old, is an absolute monarchy, ruled by God. However, it was the will of God that the people should have their way, and Samuel was



instructed by God to allow the people to have a king.

Their king was to be **Saul**. Saul began well, but ended badly. He disobeyed God on several occasions, and ended his own life on a battlefield, having just recently consulted with a witch, which was the last, and perhaps worst, of his many sins. He spent much time pursuing and trying to kill a man of God, the man anointed by Samuel by God's instruction, that being **David**.

## **KING DAVID**

David is instated as king of **Judah**, in the south, following the death of Saul, but after a short time the whole kingdom falls under his hand. David fought many battles, and conquered many nations, making them tributary to Israel. He sinned with **Bathsheba**, and that meant that he struggled with family problems for the rest of his life, with various sons rebelling against him and doing wickedly. There was some dispute over who should obtain the throne after David was old, but the son of David who obtained the throne after his decease was **Solomon**. David was the writer of many of the psalms, being the most prolific contributor to that compilation of praises to God. He desired to build a house for God, but because of the fact that he was a man of war, God did not allow him to do so. Therefore he made arrangements so that it could be built by his son.

## **KING SOLOMON**

Solomon was known for his great riches and wealth, and for the fact that the temple was built during his reign. David was a good king, and is held up as one of the best; Solomon did not walk thus with God. We see the kingdom declining in his time, and this was most manifest as the nation was divided shortly after his son **Rehoboam** claimed the throne. He did very wickedly, and while we have reason to believe that Solomon did repent at the end of his days, he still was ensnared by the world, and did not walk as closely as David, even with his faults.



Solomon wrote for our learning the book of Proverbs, the book of Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher, and the Song of Solomon, which can be taken as a love story between Christ and his people.

## REHOBOAM AND HIS SONS

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, took the throne after him, but saw division. **Jeroboam** took the throne of the **northern kingdoms of Israel**, whilst Rehoboam was left with the **southern kingdom of Judah**, for the sake of David. God's final statement about Rehoboam was that he did evil; he was a wicked king, though at times he seemed to repent. His son took the throne, **Abijah**, and he was again a wicked man, for his heart was not right with God, however good his works may have been. Abijah did, however, have a good son, in **Asa**.

He did that which was good and right. He had faults, but so does every man. His heart was right, and that is what ultimately matters before God, though it is the duty of every man to strive to keep within the commandments of God. Asa also had a good son, that being **Jehoshaphat**, of whom we read that he walked in the ways of David. However, the son of Jehoshaphat was a wicked man, **Jehoram**.

Jehoshaphat had made certain alliances with wicked men of other nations, and it proved to have set his son a bad example, since Jehoram wrought that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.

## THE SONS OF AHAZIAH

Jehoram's son **Ahaziah** followed him in his wickedness, having an alliance again with the wicked house of Ahab, king of **Israel (northern tribes)**. The prophet **Elijah** lived around this time, in **Israel**. Then came the time of the wicked reign of Ahaziah's mother, **Athaliah**. But one son of the royal line was preserved; that being **Joash**. He was a very young king when he began to reign, and he did right in the sight of the Lord all the days of the priest of that time. Sadly, when that priest died, then he turned to wickedness. His son **Amaziah** did that which was right before God, but his heart was not perfect, or sincere,

towards God. **Uzziah** was Amaziah's son, and he did that which was right in the sight of God. However, he tried to worship God against his commands, and he was made a leper as a result. This was the time of the prophets **Hosea**, **Amos**, and **Isaiah**, and is mentioned within the pages of the latter's prophecy, most notably at the beginning of chapter 6, where it is recorded that Isaiah saw his vision in the year that king Uzziah died. Uzziah's son **Jotham**, though he never entered the temple, yet was as his father before God, and God caused him to become mighty. **Micah** prophesied around this time. But Jotham's son was another wicked man – **Ahaz**. He performed all manner of abominations in Judah. **Hezekiah** was the son of Ahaz. And he was a good king in the land. It is said of him that he was as David in the sight of God. It was around this time, or shortly before, that the **northern tribes of Israel** were dispersed, and carried away by the nation of **Assyria**.

## THE SONS OF HEZEKIAH

But wicked men seem to get worse and worse; Hezekiah's son was **Manasseh**, and he was thoroughly wicked. It was for his sake that Judah must go into captivity in the future. But remarkably, this man was converted, though he had done so much evil in the land of **Judah**. Late in his days, he called upon the Lord, and was saved. **Josiah**, his son, was a godly man, seeking the Lord while he was yet young. He walked according to the law of God. He repented of the sins of the nation, and strove to revive the law and worship of God in the land. In the time of Josiah, the prophet **Zephaniah** was prophesying the destruction of **Judah** for her rebellion against God.

## THE EGYPTIAN INVASION

His son **Jehoahaz** was evil, and was carried away to **Egypt**. The Pharaoh of the time then set up his brother **Eliakim** as king, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He also did evil in the sight of God. This was punishment from God, for the wickedness of the people, that

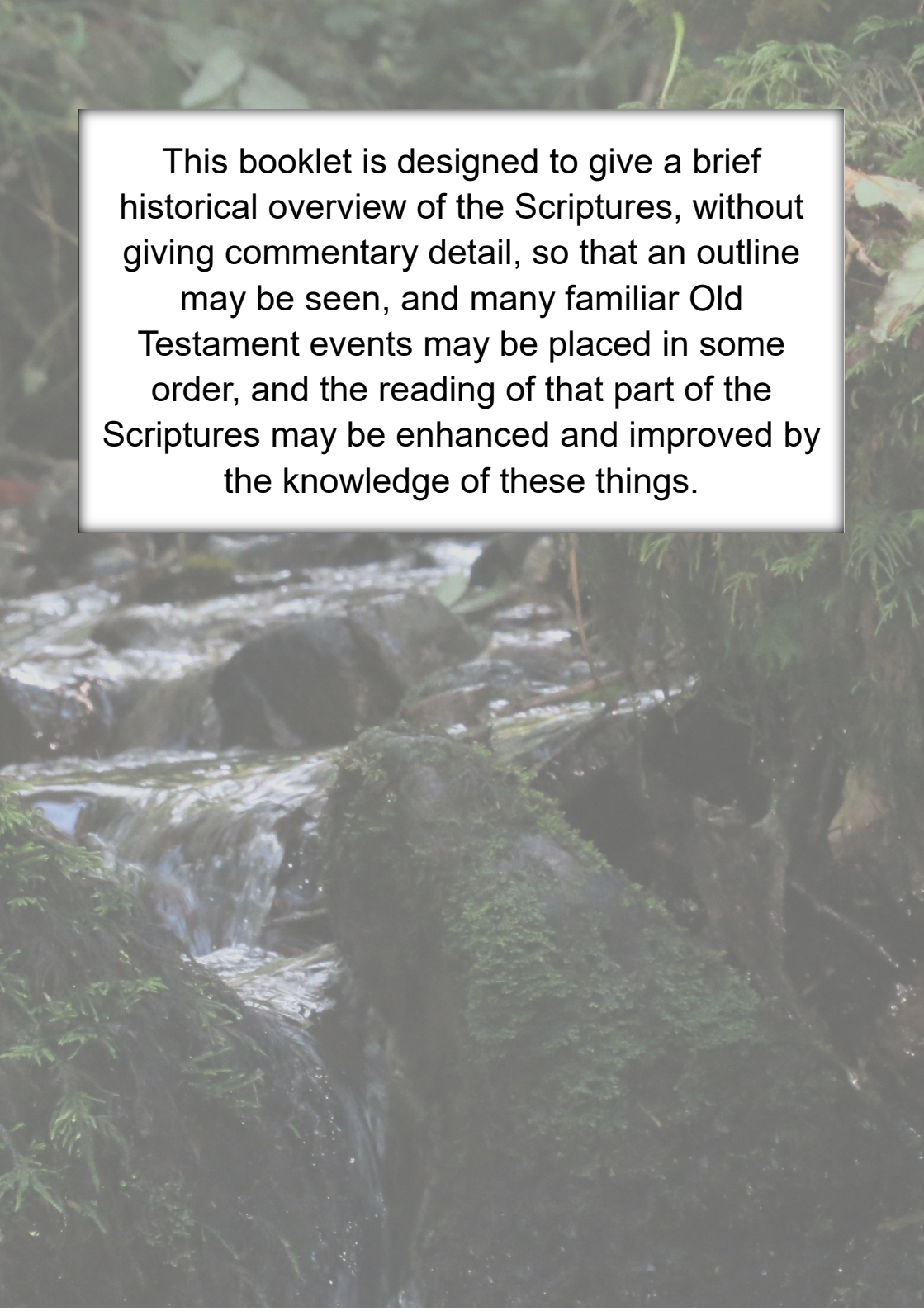
they should suffer this from the Egyptians. Nonetheless, worse was to follow.

## THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

**Jehoiachin** was Jehoiakim's son, and was another young king, but also another wicked king. This man was taken to **Babylon** by **Nebuchadnezzar**, and his wicked brother was set up in his place, whose name was **Zedekiah**. **Judah** was now carried off to **Babylon**. **Assyria** had destroyed the other Israelite tribes, but they would have none left to return. Judah alone were promised a remnant by God, which was communicated by the prophets. **Jeremiah** the prophet (who wrote the Lamentations also) was in **Jerusalem** in this last time, and **Ezekiel** was in **Babylon**. Judah had been removed out of their place because of their wickedness. Their particular sin was that they did not keep the sabbath. **Esther** and **Daniel** were both characters in **Babylon** during this time of exile. During Daniel's time, the **Medo-Persian** empire overran the **Babylonian** empire as it was judged for its sins, and God would have them to be destroyed.

## THE RETURN FROM THE EXILE

A little while after, **Cyrus**, a king of **Persia**, ordered that the temple should be rebuilt in **Jerusalem**. We read the account of this in **Ezra**, and then of the building of the walls which followed on in **Nehemiah**. These also were the times of **Zechariah** and **Haggai**, and the last book of the Old Testament is **Malachi**, who is supposed to have written his prophecy around this time. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and there is no further inspired words until the beginning of the New Testament. There is a gap of four hundred years between the close of the Old Testament, and the commencement of the New Testament.



This booklet is designed to give a brief historical overview of the Scriptures, without giving commentary detail, so that an outline may be seen, and many familiar Old Testament events may be placed in some order, and the reading of that part of the Scriptures may be enhanced and improved by the knowledge of these things.