

Bible Survey I

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Genesis

Beginnings

Creation to Mt. Sinai
4000 BC to 1800 BC

AUTHOR

Moses has been named as the author of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) both by tradition and by Scriptural support. According to tradition, "the early church openly held to the Mosaic authorship, as does the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. As would be expected the Jerusalem Talmud supports Moses as author. It would be difficult to find a man in all the range of Israel's life who was better prepared or qualified to write this history. Trained in the "wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), Moses had been providentially prepared to understand and integrate, under the inspiration of God, all the available records, manuscripts, and oral narratives."¹ Writers outside the Bible have testified to Mosaic authorship as well. Ecclesiasticus 45:6 (written about 180 B.C.) and Philo (Life of Moses 3:39), who wrote about the time of Christ's birth, both declare Moses the author of the Pentateuch.²

Biblical references tie Moses to the writing of the Pentateuch also. "The Old Testament is replete with both direct and indirect testimonies to the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch (see Ex. 17:14; Lev. 1:1-2; Num. 33:2; Deut. 1:1; Josh. 1:7; 1 Kin. 2:3 2 Kin. 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11-13; Mal. 4:4). The New Testament also contains numerous testimonies (see Matt. 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; John 7:19; Acts 26:22; Rom 10:19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15).³ The testimony of Jesus ought to carry much weight on the matter. Since He did actually know who wrote the Scriptures and that He did not lie or deceive in His teaching, to claim that Moses wrote a particular verse would verify that Moses was indeed the author. These things Jesus spoke of Moses⁴:

John 5:46

"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.

Matthew 8:4

And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

Mark 12:26

"But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage about the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob'?"

Luke 16:29

"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'"

John 7:19

"Did not Moses give you the Law, and *yet* none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

DATE OF WRITING

The timing of the writing of Genesis is difficult to ascertain, yet if Moses is the author, then the date can be set sometime between the Exodus in 1440 BC and the death of Moses in 1400 BC. As Howard Vos writes, "When Moses wrote Genesis will never be known, but the latest possible date is the time of his death, just before the Hebrews crossed the Jordan and attacked Jericho. The time of that event depends on the date one assigns to the Exodus (about 1440) and thus concludes that Genesis must have been written by about 1400 B.C., for Moses died at the end of the subsequent forty years of wilderness wandering."⁵ A date of 1425 B.C. has been given for the time of its writing.⁶ Ryrie dates it between 1450-1410 B.C.⁷

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Conservatively, the time of the creation mentioned in Genesis 1 can be given as early as 4000 BC by using the chronological information provided in the Bible. With this as a reference point, Genesis would begin our current history at 4,000 BC and would cover about 2,300 years (approx. 4000 – 1800 BC). Chapters 1-11 cover about 2,000 years. Chapters 12-50 covers the other 300 years.

Approximate dates for the people and events of Genesis

Life of Noah: 3055 – 2105 BC

Date of flood: 2455 BC

Tower of Babel: 2300 BC

Life of Abraham: 2165 - 1990 BC

Death of Joseph in Egypt: around 1800 BC

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Genesis has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Law. The Jewish canon places it in the Torah, the first of the five books of Moses (called the Pentateuch = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

THEME

It is mostly accepted that the theme of Genesis is related to 'beginnings', and particularly "God's choice of a nation through whom He would bless all nations."⁸ It may also be suggested that there is a concentration of the path of redemption, which begins in this book. "Genesis was written to present the beginning of everything except God: the universe (1:1); man (1:27); the Sabbath (2:2-3); marriage (2:22-24); sin (3:1-7); languages (11); sacrifice and salvation (3:15, 21); the family (4:1-15); civilization (4:16-21); government (9:1-6); nations (11); Israel (12:1-3). It was also written to record God's choice of Israel and His covenant plan for the nation, so that the Israelites would have a spiritual perspective. Genesis shows how the sin of man is met by the intervention and redemption of God."⁹

Putting Genesis and the other 4 books of Moses together, “the Pentateuch’s theme is historical, legislative, and spiritual. Historically, it records the origins of the human race and the origins and early fortunes of the Hebrew race. Legislatively, it records the laws that God gave to the Hebrew nation, under which they should live. D. A. Hubbard identifies key points of its spiritual thrust: It is the record of God’s revelation in history and His Lordship over history. It testifies both to Israel’s response and to her failure to respond. It witnesses to God’s holiness, which separates Him from men, and His gracious love, which binds Him to them on His terms’.”¹⁰

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The command to Noah and his family after the flood was to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1). Approximately 150 years go by before we read of the construction of the Tower of Babel. As recorded in Genesis 11, the outcome of the Tower of Babel led to the formation of languages, ethnic distinctions, and the individual nations. These nations (family units) grew and struggled for many aspects of existence, including the domination of other nations. One of the earliest signs for the control of power is found in Genesis 14, where the cities (kings) of Shinar, Ellasar, Elam, Goiim, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admar, Zeboiim, and Zoar fought for dominance in the valley of Siddim by the Salt Sea (around 2095 BC – 200 years after the Tower of Babel). Prior to these events, we find the record of the existence of the Canaanite nations (Gen 12:6) as well as a Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen 12:10+). The fact that Egypt becomes a dominant power by the end of Genesis (approx. 1800 BC) is established in the events in Joseph’s life. The next 300 years will show the strength of Egypt through the bondage of the people of Israel.

OUTLINE

- A. Creation the Human Race 1-11 [4000 BC approx.]
 - a. Creation of the World, 1-2
 - b. The Fall of Man, 3-5
 - i. Concerning Adam and Eve, 3
 - ii. Concerning Cain and Abel, 4
 - iii. Concerning the Descendants from Adam to Noah, 5
 - c. The Flood, 6-9 [2455 BC approx.]
 - i. Reason for the Flood, 6
 - ii. Results of the Flood, 7-9
 - d. The Nations, 10-11
 - i. Descendants of Japheth, 10:1-5
 - ii. Descendants of Ham, 10:6-20
 - iii. Descendants of Shem, 10:21-32, 11:10-26
 - iv. Tower of Babel, 11 [2300 BC approx.]
- B. Creation of the Hebrew Race 12-50
 - a. Life of Abraham, 12-25 [2165 – 1990 BC]
 - i. God’s Call, 12
 - ii. Lot’s Separation, 13
 - iii. Lot’s Deliverance, 14
 - iv. Abraham’s Covenant, 15
 - v. Ishmael’s Birth, 16
 - vi. Abraham’s Circumcision, 17
 - vii. Sodom and Gomorrah, 18-19

- viii. Abimelech, 20
- ix. Isaac's Birth, 21
 - x. Offering Isaac, 22
 - xi. Sarah's Death, 23
 - xii. Isaac's Marriage, 24
 - xiii. Abraham's Death, 25
- b. Life of Isaac, [21-24] 24-27 [2065 – 1885 BC]
 - i. Jacob and Esau's Birth and Birthright, 25
 - ii. Abimelech, 26
 - iii. Blessing Jacob and Esau, 27
- c. Life of Jacob, [25-27] 27-36 [2005 – 1858 BC]
 - i. Deceiving Isaac, 27
 - ii. Running from Esau, Dreaming in Bethel, 28
 - iii. Living with Laban, 29-30
 - 1. Meeting Rachel, 29:1-14
 - 2. Marrying Leah and Rachel, 29:15-30
 - 3. Jacob's Children, 29:31-30:24
 - 4. Dealing with Laban, 30:25-43
 - iv. Returning to Canaan, 31-36
 - 1. Leaving Laban, 31
 - 2. Rejoining Esau, 32-33
 - 3. Family Problems in Shechem, 34
 - 4. Covenant at Bethel, 35: 1-15
 - 5. Rachel and Isaac's Deaths, 35:16-29
 - 6. Esau's Descendants, 36
- d. Life of Joseph, 37-50 [1914 – 1804 BC]
 - i. Sold into Slavery, 37
 - ii. Judah's Sin, 38
 - iii. Serving in Potiphar's House, 39
 - iv. Prison and Dreams, 40
 - v. Pharaoh's Dream, 41
 - vi. Reunited with Brothers, 42-46
 - 1. His Brothers' First Visit, 42
 - 2. His Brothers' Second Visit, 43-44
 - 3. His Revelation to His Brothers, 45
 - 4. His Family Moves to Egypt, 46-47
 - 5. Jacob's Blessings, 48-49
 - a. Of Joseph's Sons, 48
 - b. Of Jacob's Sons, 49
 - 6. Jacob's Death, 49
 - 7. Joseph's Death, 50

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- ⁸ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 7
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- ¹⁰ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 65.

Job

Sovereignty

Creation to Mt. Sinai
Time of the Patriarchs, 2000 BC

AUTHOR

Among the Old Testament books, few of them leave us without something to work from in discovering the author. Job is one of these few. Little is known about Job outside this book. The precision in naming the author is very difficult. However, there are a few intelligent “guesses” that we can make concerning the authorship.

JOB is naturally our first consideration, especially since he is the main character in the book. “The details of the lengthy conversations recorded in the Book of Job give the impression that it was written by an eyewitness. Job would recall also what others had said. In the 140 years he lived after being restored to health, he would have had ample time to compile the work. This view seems more plausible than the view that an author hundreds of years later compiled what had been handed down by oral tradition over many centuries.”¹ However, there are those who have doubts about this conclusion. “Job is an unlikely candidate because the book’s message rests on Job’s ignorance of the events that occurred in heaven as they related to his ordeal.”² Nevertheless, if indeed Job wrote after the fact, the information he did not know at the time of his experience could have been supplied to him from God, who, after all, is the author of the written Word of God.

MOSES has been suggested as the possible author of this book. Even though the traditions of the rabbis are inconsistent, there is the notion that Moses had access to the information needed. “The land of Uz (1:1) is adjacent to Midian, where Moses lived for forty years, and it is conceivable that Moses obtained a record of the dialogue left by Job or Elihu.”³ This idea has been expanded over the years. “The commentator Jacques Bolduc (1637) suggested that it may have been secondarily the work of Moses himself, who found it in an original Aramaic form and felt it worthwhile to translate into Hebrew. While it can scarcely be said that there is anything Mosaic about the style of Job, this theory would at least account for (1) its being possessed by the Hebrews, (2) its attaining a canonical status, (3) its patriarchal flavor and setting, and (4) the Aramaic flavor in some of the terminology and modes of expression exhibited by the text.”⁴ Outside of this information, there is no concrete proof that Moses was the author.

SOLOMON has also been suggested, primarily as it relates to the category of wisdom books within the Old Testament. “Solomon is also a good possibility due to the similarity of content with parts of the book of Ecclesiastes, as well as the fact that Solomon wrote the other Wisdom books (except Psalms, and he did author Pss. 72; 127). Though he lived long after Job, Solomon could have written about events that occurred

long before his own time, in much the same manner as Moses was inspired to write about Adam and Eve.”⁵ There is as much validity to this view as there is to the others.

Besides these three leading candidates, there has been speculation that perhaps Elihu, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, or Ezra may have had the role of recording the book. Still others are willing to suggest that the author was a Gentile, due to the “non-Hebraic cultural background of this book”.⁶ But without further information, we categorize the book as anonymous.

DATE OF WRITING

If there were enough information that we could pinpoint the author of the book, the dating of it would certainly fall neatly into place. However, just as the first matter was a puzzle, so is the dating of the book of Job. The suggestions range from the 1800’s B.C. to the 200’s B.C.

Naturally, if Job were the author, it would be logical to date the book during his lifetime. Yet this too adds to the difficulty. By the best of our computations, Job must have lived during the days of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. “Job apparently lived in early, patriarchal times. We note the longevity of Job, the practice of true religion (attended by supernatural revelation) outside the bounds of the Abrahamic covenant, and the early economic and political developments reflected in the book.”⁷ Archer adds, “If the contents of Job are to be regarded as historically accurate and a faithful transcript of the actual conversations of the five men involved, it would be natural to assume that this record was composed soon after Job’s restoration to prosperity, the final addition, 42:16-17, having been completed not long after his decease. If therefore Job’s career took place before the time of Moses, the book itself must date back to that same approximate era. This was the view of the Talmud and was widely held by Christian scholars until modern times.”⁸

The second suggestion follows the dates of the time of Moses. Should he have been the author, the book would date in the 1400’s B.C. If this is so, then the writing of the book by Moses would pre-date his writing of the books of the Pentateuch as tradition has it that he wrote while living in Midian (1485-1445 B.C.).⁹

The next idea carries us down to the 900’s B.C. and the times of King Solomon. The basic point that many of these suggestions ride upon is that the dating of the actual events and the dating of the writing of the events do not have to be the same. If this is the case, then Solomon, or anyone else has as much possibility of being the author as Job does. The Open Bible states, “The grandeur and spontaneity of the book and its deeply empathetic re-creation of the sentiments of men standing early in the progress of revelation point to the early pre-exilic period, before the doctrinal, especially the eschatological, contribution of the prophets. Many conservative scholars favor a date in Solomon’s time, the great age of Biblical Wisdom literature.”¹⁰

Archer adds that there is much support for this opinion. “This view was advocated as early as the time of Gregory Nazianzen (fourth century A.D.) and also Martin Luther, Haevenick, Keil, and Franz Delitzsch....the grounds adduced for this dating fall generally under these heads: (a) Solomon’s age was one of prosperous leisure in which literary pursuits were practiced against a background of national self-realization; (b) the age of Solomon devoted particular interest to *hokma* and pondered the deepest practical problems of life; (c) there is a similar exaltation of godly wisdom in Proverbs 8 to that

which appears in Job 28; (d) a fairly extensive knowledge of foreign countries, or at least of conditions which existed throughout the Near East generally, indicates a wider acquaintance with the contemporary world than North Arabian conditions would presuppose. In Solomon's time, of course, there was the widest acquaintance with the foreign nations even as remote as India, which enjoyed commercial relations with the Hebrew empire. It cannot be denied that these considerations possess a certain cumulative force, yet it is questionable whether they can be regarded as really conclusive, for most of the four features above mentioned are reconcilable with an earlier date as well, particularly if the account was composed by a non-Israelite author on non-Israelite soil."¹¹

Following on down the line, another idea is that it was written during the days of King Manasseh in the 600's B.C. "This was an age of moral degeneracy and social injustice; a time when questions concerning divine providence would call for anxious scrutiny, with error on the throne and truth on the scaffold. Therefore, the prominence given to the suffering of the innocent and the prevalence of misfortune and calamity, "The earth is given into the hands of the wicked" (Job 9:24), accords well with the time of King Manasseh....But as Raven points out, these allusions in Job do not indicate any more widespread misfortune than could be found in many periods in Hebrew history, or indeed in human experience generally. The author quite clearly is referring to the hardships of individuals here and there as exemplified by Job himself, who in his despondency over private disasters naturally tended to emphasize these darker aspects of calamity which can befall any man in this life. There is no suggestion whatsoever that national misfortunes are referred to or that what is afflicting Job is intended to be parabolic for the distress of Israel generally."¹²

This theory may line up well with the position that Jeremiah was the author. "This is the view of J.E.Steinmueller, who feels that there is a striking similarity in both contents and language between Job and the writings of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 12:1-3 AND Job 21:7; Jer. 20:14-18 and Job 3:3). He thinks it significant that the land of Uz is mentioned outside of Job only in Jer. 25:20 and Lam. 4:21. Yet this evidence can scarcely be called compelling; the similarities referred to are quite vague in character and consist of common-place sentiments which can be found in the writings of many ancient authors."¹³

Without the information needed to make a logical statement about the author, it would also be merely speculation to set a date for this book. However, a date prior to the Exile is more preferable in light of the conservative standing in interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Conservatively, the time of the life of Job can be given as 2000 BC by using the chronological information provided in the Bible. The longevity of his life (140 years) certainly places him after the time of Noah and the flood (2400 BC) and perhaps even after the event of the Tower of Babel in 2300 BC. The similarity between the life of Job and the concept of wealth would match the life of Abraham around 2000 BC. Since there is no mention of Israel or any event we can link Job's life too, we assume that 2000 BC would be an appropriate time to give.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Job has been placed in the Hebrew Old Testament in the category of the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings). The Kethubim are divided into two sections, the poetical books of Psalms, Proverbs and Job, and the Megilloth (5 Scrolls) of the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. We also classify Job as Wisdom Literature, yet serving the dual role of historical narrative (because it is the story of a man) and poetry.

THEME

The principle question raised as a theme of the Book of Job is “Why do the righteous suffer?” Suffering, without a doubt, has a prominent place in this book. But other aspects can also be seen as dominant themes in the book. Themes that promote the sovereignty of God and the nature of His ways are also valid for this book.

Archer follows the suffering theme in his suggestions. “This book deals with the theoretical problem of pain and disaster in the life of the godly. It undertakes to answer the question, ‘Why do the righteous suffer?’ This answer comes in a threefold form: (1) God is worthy of love even apart from the blessings He bestows; (2) God may permit suffering as a means of purifying and strengthening the soul in godliness; (3) God’s thoughts and ways are moved by considerations too vast for the puny mind of man to comprehend. Even though man is unable to see the issues of life with the breadth and vision of the Almighty; nevertheless God really knows what is best for His own glory and for our ultimate good. This answer is given against the background of the stereotyped views of Job’s three “comforters,” Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.”¹⁴

Wilkinson goes beyond the “suffering” theme and makes these comments. “The basic question of the book is, Why do the righteous suffer if God is loving and all-powerful? Suffering itself is not the central theme; rather, the focus is on what Job learns from his suffering – the sovereignty of God over all creation.”¹⁵

If God’s sovereignty is to be the issue of the book, then Jensen would say that the theme should have more of a response to the sovereignty of God aspect to it. “The book of Job teaches that the person with genuine trust worships God basically for who he is. That person may have unanswered questions as to why God does what He does, but he still worships God wholeheartedly for who He is. Job the combatant became Job the worshiper when he heard God reveal Himself to His smitten child (38: 1ff).”¹⁶

I believe that all three ideas are well fitted to the book as a theme. Suffering brings questions. Sovereignty answers them. Worship and trust responds to the answers.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The command to Noah and his family after the flood was to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1). Approximately 150 years go by before we read of the construction of the tower of Babel. As recorded in Genesis 11, the outcome of the tower of Babel led to the formation of languages, ethnic distinctions, and the individual nations. These nations (family units) grew and struggled for many aspects of existence, including the domination of other nations. Job records two events in 1:15 and 1:17 that give to us the names of the Sabeans and the Chaldeans. These two groups attacked the servants of Job and stole his property. It is said that the Sabeans are the descendants of Seba

(Genesis 10:7). Isaiah would later mention them as from Africa (Isaiah 43:3). As for the Chaldeans, “Recent discoveries, more especially in Babylonia, have thrown much light on the history of the Hebrew patriarchs, and have illustrated or confirmed the Biblical narrative in many points. The ancestor of the Hebrew people, Abram, was, we are told, born at “Ur of the Chaldees.” The Chaldees were a tribe who lived on the shores of the Persian Gulf, and did not become a part of the Babylonian population till the time of Hezekiah. Ur was one of the oldest and most famous of the Babylonian cities. Its site is now called Mugheir, or Mugayyar, on the western bank of the Euphrates, in Southern Babylonia. About a century before the birth of Abram it was ruled by a powerful dynasty of kings.”¹⁷

OUTLINE

- A. The Prologue: Job before the Crisis, 1-2
 - a. The Setting, 1-1:12
 - b. The Suffering, 1:13-2:13
- B. Suffering and Human Wisdom, 3-37
 - a. First Discussion, 3-14
 - i. Job Speaks, 3
 - ii. Eliphaz Speaks, 4-5
 - iii. Job Replies, 6-7
 - iv. Bildad Speaks, 8
 - v. Job Replies, 9-10
 - vi. Zophar Speaks, 11
 - vii. Job Replies, 12-14
 - b. Second Discussion, 15-21
 - i. Eliphaz Speaks, 15
 - ii. Job Replies, 16-17
 - iii. Bildad Speaks, 18
 - iv. Job Replies, 19
 - v. Zophar Speaks, 20
 - vi. Job Replies, 21
 - c. Third Discussion, 22-26
 - i. Eliphaz Speaks, 22
 - ii. Job Replies, 23-24
 - iii. Bildad Speaks, 25
 - iv. Job Replies, 26
 - d. Job’s Protest, 27-31
 - i. His Innocence, 27
 - ii. Wisdom, 28
 - iii. Testimony of his life, 29-31
 - e. Fourth Discussion, 32-37
 - i. Elihu’s first speech, 32-33
 - ii. Elihu’s second speech, 34
 - iii. Elihu’s third speech, 35
 - iv. Elihu’s fourth speech, 36-37

- C. Suffering and Divine Wisdom, 38-42
 - a. God's first speech, 38-39
 - b. God's second speech, 40-41
 - c. Job's repentance, 42
- D. The Epilogue: Job After the Crisis, 42:7-17

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¹¹ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, p. 508-509.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 509-510.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

¹⁴ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, p. 503-504.

¹⁵ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 145.

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¹⁷ Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary, WORDsearch Bible Study Software. Copyright 1987-2000, iExalt, Inc. All rights reserved. Database c1996 NavPress Software.

Exodus

Redemption

Creation to Mt. Sinai
1875 BC to 1445 BC

AUTHOR

As written concerning Genesis: Moses has been named as the author of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) both by tradition and by Scriptural support. According to tradition, “the early church openly held to the Mosaic authorship, as does the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. As would be expected the Jerusalem Talmud supports Moses as author. It would be difficult to find a man in all the range of Israel’s life who was better prepared or qualified to write this history. Trained in the “wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22), Moses had been providentially prepared to understand and integrate, under the inspiration of God, all the available records, manuscripts, and oral narratives.”¹ Writers outside the Bible have testified to Mosaic authorship as well. Ecclesiasticus 45:6 (written about 180 B.C.) and Philo (Life of Moses 3:39), who wrote about the time of Christ’s birth, both declare Moses the author of the Pentateuch.²

Biblical references tie Moses to the writing of the Pentateuch also. “The Old Testament is replete with both direct and indirect testimonies to the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch (see Ex. 17:14; Lev. 1:1-2; Num. 33:2; Deut. 1:1; Josh. 1:7; 1 Kin. 2:3 2 Kin. 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11-13; Mal. 4:4). The New Testament also contains numerous testimonies (see Matt. 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; John 7:19; Acts 26:22; Rom 10:19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15).³ The testimony of Jesus ought to carry much weight on the matter. Since He did actually know who wrote the Scriptures and that He did not lie or deceive in His teaching, to claim that Moses wrote a particular verse would verify that Moses was indeed the author.

DATE OF WRITING

“Since Moses first became involved with leading the Israelites after his eightieth birthday (7:7), the date for the composition of the Book of Exodus must fall between his eightieth birthday and his one hundred and twentieth birthday, when he died, just as the wilderness wandering was drawing to a close (Deut 34:7). Thus the approximate date for the composition of this second book of the Pentateuch rests on the date set for the Exodus from Egypt.”⁴

Ryrie gives the dates of 1450-1410 B.C.⁵ as the perimeters of the last third of Moses life. Somewhere between those dates, Moses recorded the book of Exodus. If 1445 B.C. is the acceptable date for the exodus out of Egypt, and allowing for the duration of the

time spent at Sinai receiving the law and the instructions for the tabernacle, to put the date for the writing of Exodus around 1444 B.C. is logical.

“Moses probably wrote this book soon after the completion of the tabernacle, described in Exodus 35-40. The date is in the last half of the fifteenth century B.C. (The tabernacle was completed in 1444 B.C. (cf. 40:17.)”⁶

Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus appear to be recorded within a short time after the Exodus (1444-1440 B.C.), while Numbers, then Deuteronomy were recorded closer to the end of the life of Moses, approximately 1410 B.C.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Exodus covers about 430 years (1875-1445 BC). The life of Moses (120 years) and the time spent with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai (about 1 year) are significant aspects of this book.

Approximate dates for the people and events of Exodus

Life of Moses: 1525 – 1405 BC

Date of the exodus from Egypt: 1445 BC

Giving of the Law & the construction of the Tabernacle, 1444 BC

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Exodus has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Law. The Jewish canon places it in the Torah, the first of the five books of Moses (called the Pentateuch = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

THEME

The significance of the book of Exodus revolves around the bringing out of the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The book begins with the bringing out of Moses from the river Nile, and then follows the events that brought Israel out to their own land. Terms like “redemption” and “deliverance” are given as themes for the book as seen in the comments of the Bible Knowledge Commentary. “The central events in the Book of Exodus are the miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and God’s establishing the theocratic nation under Moses by means of a new “constitution,” the Mosaic Covenant (19:3-19). Unger notes, “The aim of the Book of Exodus centers in the great experience of redemption and the constitution of Jacob’s posterity as a theocratic nation at Mount Sinai. God, connected heretofore with the Israelites only through His covenant with Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, now brings them to Himself nationally through redemption. As the Chosen People through whom the Redeemer was to come Jehovah also places them under the Mosaic Covenant and dwells among them under the cloud of glory” (Introductory Guide to the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951, p. 196). Thus the Book of Exodus is a connecting link between the origin of the people in God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2) and the beginning of the theocratic kingdom under Moses. The people of promise were miraculously redeemed from servitude and placed under the Mosaic Covenant so that they might become “a holy nation” (Ex. 19’6), an avenue of blessing to the Gentiles (Gen. 12:3; cf. “a light for the Gentiles,” Isa. 42:6). The Book of Exodus, then, stresses redemption and consecration.”⁷

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

There is no difficulty in identifying Egypt as the principle world power in the time of the Exodus. It is believed that the Pharaoh at the time of the exodus was Rameses II or Amenhotep II. The name of the daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I at the time of Moses' birth (80 years prior to the exodus) is given as Hatshepsut. It must also be noted that the strength of the Canaanite nations is developing (in cities such as Jericho), as well as the descendants of Esau (the Edomites), Lot (Moab), King Sihon (Amorites), King Og (Bashan) and the Jebusites – all of which will prove to be a challenge to Israel as they travel toward the promised land.

OUTLINE

THE HISTORICAL SECTION

- A. The Bondage of Israel 1-12
 - a. Birth, Training, and Call of Moses, 1-5
 - i. Israel's Slavery, 1
 - ii. Moses in Egypt, 2
 - iii. Moses Called in the Wilderness, 3-4
 - iv. Sent to Egypt, 5-7
 - 1. Visit's Pharaoh, 5:1-7:7
 - 2. Visit's Pharaoh Again, 7:8-13
 - b. Return to Egypt, 7-12
 - i. Plagues of Egypt, 7-12
 - 1. Blood, 7:14-25
 - 2. Frogs, 8:1-15
 - 3. Lice, 8:16-19
 - 4. Flies, 8:20-32
 - 5. Beast's Disease, 9:1-7
 - 6. Boils, 9:8-12
 - 7. Hail, 9:13-35
 - 8. Locusts, 10:1-20
 - 9. Darkness, 10:21-29
 - 10. Passover, 11-12:36
- B. The Freedom of Israel 12-18
 - a. Leaving Egypt, 12
 - b. Dedicating the First Born, Direction by Cloud and Fire 13
 - c. Drying up the Red Sea, 14
 - d. Song of Deliverance, 15
 - e. Complaining by Israel, 15-17
 - i. Bitter Water, 15:22-27
 - ii. Hunger and Manna, 16
 - iii. Lack of Water, 17
 - iv. Battle and Leadership, 17-18
 - 1. Amalek, 17:8-16
 - 2. Jethro, 18:1-27

THE LEGAL SECTION

- C. The Law For Israel, 19-40
 - a. Instruction for the People, 19-24
 - i. Getting Ready for the Law, 19
 - ii. Receiving the Law, 20
 - iii. Detail of the Law, 21-23

1. Injury, 21
2. Theft, 22:1-4
3. Property Damage, 22:5-6
4. Dishonesty, 22:7-15
5. Immorality, 22:16-17
6. Obligations, 22:18-23:9
7. Sabbaths and Feasts, 23:10-19
8. Conquests, 23:20-33
- iv. Ratified Law and the Glory of God, 24
- b. Instruction for the Tabernacle, 25-31
 - i. Direction for Construction
 1. Ark and Mercy Seat, 25:10-22
 2. Table of Show Bread, 25:23-30
 3. Lampstand, 25:31-40
 4. Curtains, 26:1-14
 5. Altar, 27:1-8
 6. Court, 27:9-19
 7. Oil, 27:20-21
 8. Altar of Incense, 30:34-38
 9. Laver, 30:17-21
 10. Anointing Oil, 30:22-33
 11. Incense, 30:34-38
 - ii. Direction for Garments, 28
 - iii. Direction for Consecration, 29
 - iv. Direction for Offering Money, 30
 - v. Direction for Builders, 31
- c. Breaking the Law, 32-34
 - i. The Golden Calf, 32:1-10
 - ii. Confronted by Moses, 32:11-35
 - iii. Repentance and Prayer, 33
 - iv. Renewing the Covenant, 34
- d. Constructing the Tabernacle, 35-40
 - i. Making the Structure and Furniture, 35-38
 - ii. Making the Garments and Inspection, 39
 - iii. Erecting the Tabernacle and Indwelling by the Lord, 40

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Leviticus

Holiness

Creation to Mt. Sinai
1444 BC

AUTHOR

As written concerning Genesis & Exodus: Moses has been named as the author of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) both by tradition and by Scriptural support. According to tradition, “the early church openly held to the Mosaic authorship, as does the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. As would be expected the Jerusalem Talmud supports Moses as author. It would be difficult to find a man in all the range of Israel’s life who was better prepared or qualified to write this history. Trained in the “wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22), Moses had been providentially prepared to understand and integrate, under the inspiration of God, all the available records, manuscripts, and oral narratives.”¹ Writers outside the Bible have testified to Mosaic authorship as well. Ecclesiasticus 45:6 (written about 180 B.C.) and Philo (Life of Moses 3:39), who wrote about the time of Christ’s birth, both declare Moses the author of the Pentateuch.²

Biblical references tie Moses to the writing of the Pentateuch also. “The Old Testament is replete with both direct and indirect testimonies to the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch (see Ex. 17:14; Lev. 1:1-2; Num. 33:2; Deut. 1:1; Josh. 1:7; 1 Kin. 2:3 2 Kin. 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11-13; Mal. 4:4). The New Testament also contains numerous testimonies (see Matt. 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; John 7:19; Acts 26:22; Rom 10:19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15).³ The testimony of Jesus ought to carry much weight on the matter. Since He did actually know who wrote the Scriptures and that He did not lie or deceive in His teaching, to claim that Moses wrote a particular verse would verify that Moses was indeed the author.

DATE OF WRITING

Ryrie gives the dates of 1450-1410 B.C.⁴ as the perimeters of the last third of Moses’ life. Somewhere between those dates, Moses recorded the book of Leviticus. If 1445 B.C. is the acceptable date for the exodus out of Egypt, and allowing for the duration of the time spent at Sinai receiving the law and the instructions for the tabernacle, to push the date beyond 1444 B.C. is logical. “Moses probably wrote this book soon after the completion of the tabernacle, described in Exodus 35-40. The date is in the last half of the fifteenth century B.C. (The tabernacle was completed in 1444 B.C. (cf. 40:17).”⁵

I am under the impression that Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus were recorded within a relatively shorter time after the Exodus (1444-1440 B.C.), while Numbers, then Deuteronomy were recorded closer to the end of the life of Moses, approximately 1410 B.C. Jensen includes a chart which he believes outlines the writings of Moses in relation to calendar events. The book of Exodus was recorded on the first month of the second year since the Exodus, the same time that the Levitical laws were given. In the second month of that same year, the orders were given in Numbers to prepare for the wilderness journey.⁶ Therefore, Leviticus was written within months of the book of Exodus, between the construction of the tabernacle and the moving of the Israelites toward Canaan.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Leviticus does not cover a specific duration of time. It is noted that the book of Exodus covers about 430 years (1875-1445 BC) and the life of Moses is given as 120 years. Leviticus was written when the Israelites were at Mt. Sinai for about 1 year.

Approximate dates for the events of Leviticus
Giving of the Law & the construction of the Tabernacle, 1444 BC

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Leviticus has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Law. The Jewish canon places it in the Torah, the first of the five books of Moses (called the Pentateuch = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

THEME

“The book of Leviticus is God’s manual for His people on how to approach Him and live pleasing in His sight. In the experience of the Israelites, encamped on Mount Sinai, the Laws of Leviticus were the guideposts which they needed for life on the wilderness journey ahead, and for settling in Canaan. The key command, “Ye shall be holy,” pervades the book, revealing something of the awesome message which God always wants all His people to hear and obey.”⁷

In greater detail, MacArthur expresses the theme of Leviticus in relation to the holiness of God. “The core ideas around which Leviticus develops are the holy character of God and the will of God for Israel’s holiness. God’s holiness, mankind’s sinfulness, sacrifice, and God’s presence in the sanctuary are the book’s most common themes. With a clear, authoritative tone, the book sets forth instruction toward personal holiness at the urging of God (11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; cf. 1 Pet. 1:14-16). Matters pertaining to Israel’s life of faith tend to focus on purity in ritual settings, but not to the exclusion of concerns regarding Israel’s personal purity. In fact, there is a continuing emphasis on personal holiness in respect to the holiness of God (cf. this emphasis in chaps. 17-27). On over 125 occasions, Leviticus indicts mankind for uncleanness and/or instructs on how to be purified. The motive for such holiness is stated in two repeated phrases: “I am the Lord” and “I am holy.” These are used over 50 times.”⁸

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Information about the events and world powers at the time of the writing of Leviticus corresponds directly with that of the time of the book of Exodus. As written concerning the book of Exodus: There is no difficulty in identifying Egypt as the principle world power in the time of the Exodus (and Leviticus). It is believed that the Pharaoh at the time of the exodus was Rameses II or Amenhotep II. The name of the daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I at the time of Moses' birth (80 years prior to the exodus) is given as Hatshepsut. It must also be noted that the strength of the Canaanite nations are developing (in cities such as Jericho), as well as the descendants of Esau (the Edomites), Lot (Moab), King Sihon (Amorites), King Og (Bashan) and the Jebusites – all of which will prove to be a challenge to Israel as they travel toward the promised land.

OUTLINE

- A. Laws concerning the Worship of God, 1-10
 - a. The Offerings, 1-7
 - i. Burnt Offerings, 1, 6:8-13
 - ii. Grain Offerings, 2, 6:14-23
 - iii. Peace Offerings, 3, 7:11-38
 - iv. Sin and Trespass Offerings, 4-5, 6:24-7:10
 - b. The Priests, 8-10
 - i. Consecration to Service, 8
 - ii. Commissioned to Service, 9
 - iii. Condemnation of Nadab and Abihu, 10
- B. Laws concerning the Walk with God, 11-27
 - a. Laws for the People, 11-20
 - i. In regards to Purity, 11-15
 - 1. Food, 11
 - 2. Childbirth, 12
 - 3. Leprosy, 13-14
 - 4. Body, 15
 - ii. In regards to the Day of Atonement, 16
 - iii. In regards to Sacrifices, 17
 - iv. In regards to Daily Expectations, 18-20
 - 1. Sexual Relationships, 18
 - 2. Daily Life, 19
 - 3. Wicked Offenses, 20
 - b. Laws for the Priests, 21-22
 - c. Laws for the Nation, 23-27
 - i. In regards to the Sabbath and Feasts, 23
 - ii. In regards to Blasphemy, 24
 - iii. In regards to Special Holidays, 25
 - iv. In regards to Obedience, 26
 - v. In regards to Tithes and Vows, 27

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- ⁷ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, p. 101.
- ⁸ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 153-154.

Numbers Wanderings

Mt. Sinai to Monarchy
1445 BC to 1405 BC

AUTHOR

Moses has been named as the author of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) both by tradition and by Scriptural support. “Restricting attention to evidence from Numbers itself, it may be remarked in a general way that the question of authorship is practically settled by what has been advanced on its literary structure and historical credibility. For, if the materials of the book were substantially the work of one pen (whoever may have been their first collector or last redactor), and if these materials are upon the whole trustworthy, there will be little room to doubt that the original pen was in the hand of a contemporary and eyewitness of the incidents narrated, and that the contemporary and eyewitness was Moses, who need not, however, have set down everything with his own hand, all that is necessary to justify the ascription of the writing to him being that it should have been composed by his authority and under his supervision.”¹ Within the book there are “eighty or more claims presented...that “the Lord said to Moses” or that “Moses recorded their starting places...”²

DATE OF WRITING

“Moses wrote the book of Numbers as an eyewitness to the events recorded in it. Numbers concludes with Israel ready to enter and conquer Canaan. Since this conquest began just after Moses’ death in 1405, a date of about 1406 B.C. is given.”³ “The book of Numbers must be dated ca. 1405 B.C., since it is foundational to the book of Deuteronomy, and Deuteronomy is dated in the 11th month of the 40th year after the Exodus (Deut. 1:3).”⁴

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Numbers covers a specific duration of 40 years. It is a record of the last 40 years of Moses’ life (120 years in all) and spent entirely in the wilderness above Mt. Sinai and below the land of the Canaanites.

Approximate dates for the people of Numbers

Moses (1525 – 1405 BC)

Aaron, First High Priest, older brother of Moses (1528 – 1405 BC)

Miriam, older sister of Moses (her death is a short time before Aaron’s)

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Numbers has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Law. The Jewish canon places it in the Torah, the first of the five books of Moses (called the Pentateuch = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

THEME

“Three theological themes permeate Numbers. First, the Lord Himself communicated to Israel through Moses (1:1; 7:89; 12:6-8), so the words of Moses had divine authority. Israel’s response to Moses mirrored her obedience or disobedience to the Lord. Numbers contains three distinct divisions based on Israel’s response to the word of the Lord: obedience (chaps. 1-10), disobedience (chaps. 11-25), and renewed obedience (chaps. 26-36). The second theme is that the Lord is the God of judgments. Throughout Numbers, the “anger” of the Lord was aroused in response to Israel’s sin (11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 14:18; 25:3, 4; 32:10, 13, 14). Third, the faithfulness of the Lord to keep His promise to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan is emphasized (15:2; 26:52-56; 27:12; 33:50-56; 34:1-29).⁵

In unison with this, Wilkinson states, “The theme of Numbers is the consequence of disbelief and disobedience to the holy God. The Lord disciplined His people but remained faithful to His covenant promises in spite of their fickleness. Numbers displays the patience, holiness, justice, mercy, and sovereignty of God toward His people. It teaches that there are no short-cuts to His blessings – He uses trials and tests for specific purposes.”⁶

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Historically, Israel has moved away from Egyptian threats and bondage during the 40 years of wandering through the wilderness. However, new military and political powers were looming on the horizon. The land of Canaan was occupied by many distinct nations and kings. Most of them will be a formidable challenge for Israel to overcome. Among them are the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) and Lot (Moab) – relatives of the Israelites. Two significant kingdoms are settled on the eastern side of the Jordan River: King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan. On the western side is the fortress of Jericho and in a fortress later to be called Jerusalem are the Jebusites. Along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea are the Philistines. – all of which will prove to be a challenge to Israel as they travel toward the promised land.

OUTLINE

- A. Preparing to Travel, 1-10:10
 - a. The First Census, 1-4
 - b. Final Details, 5-10
 - i. The Things that Defile, 5
 - ii. The Nazirite Vow, 6
 - iii. The Offerings, 7
 - iv. The Levites, 8
 - v. The Passover and the Way God Leads, 9-10

- B. The Disobedient Generation, 10:11-21
 - a. Beginning the Journey, 10
 - b. Beginning to Complain, 11-12
 - c. Beginning to Disobey, 13-21
 - i. The Spies Report, 13
 - ii. The People's Response, 14
 - iii. The Discipline of God, 15
 - iv. The Sin of Korah, 16
 - v. The Rod of Aaron, 17
 - vi. The Levites, 18
 - vii. The Red Heifer, 19
 - viii. The Sin of Moses, 20
 - ix. The Trouble with Edom and the Death of Aaron, 20
 - x. The Bronze Serpent and the Defeat of Sihon and Og, 21
- C. The New Generation, 22-36
 - a. A Bad Start, 22-25
 - i. Balak and Balaam, 22
 - ii. Balaam Blesses Israel, 23-24
 - iii. Israel and Baal, 25
 - b. The Second Census, 26
 - c. Instructions for the New Land, 27-36
 - i. Rules for Inheritance, 27
 - ii. Offerings and Feasts, 28-29
 - iii. Vows, 30
 - iv. Defeat of Midian, 31
 - v. Settling of the East Side of Jordan, 32
 - vi. Reviewing the Journey, 33
 - vii. Dividing the Land, 34-36
 - 1. Boundries, 34
 - 2. Levite and Refuge Cities, 35
 - 3. Women Inheritance, 36

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- ⁵ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 196.
- ⁶ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 29.

Deuteronomy

Covenant

Mt. Sinai to Monarchy
1405 BC

AUTHOR

Moses has been named as the author of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) both by tradition and by Scriptural support. Since most of the books of the Pentateuch have been discussed already, reference to those books and their support of Mosaic authorship is recommended. However, it is worth noting that Moses is identified as the author of Deuteronomy at least 40 times within the book. The only exception is that the death of Moses is recorded in the final chapters – we assume that Joshua or one of his contemporaries completed the book.

DATE OF WRITING

“The dating of the book of Deuteronomy rests upon the dating of the book of Numbers. “Numbers concludes with Israel ready to enter and conquer Canaan. Since this conquest began just after Moses’ death in 1405, a date of about 1406 B.C. is given.”¹ “The book of Numbers must be dated ca. 1405 B.C., since it is foundational to the book of Deuteronomy, and Deuteronomy is dated in the 11th month of the 40th year after the Exodus (Deut. 1:3).”²

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Like the book of Leviticus, the book of Deuteronomy is a record of the giving of the Law – for a second time and 40 years after the first. The gap between Leviticus and Deuteronomy is recorded as the history of the book of Numbers. The events that transpired during Moses’ second giving of the Law (Deuteronomy) may have transpired during the course of a few months. Specifically, Deuteronomy involves a series of sermons and the death and burial of Moses.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Deuteronomy has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Law. The Jewish canon places it in the Torah, the first of the five books of Moses (called the Pentateuch = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

THEME

There are several aspects to consider when determining a theme for the book of Deuteronomy. Included within these pages are legal issues and sermonic exhortations.

As to the Law, “Deuteronomy has been called “five-fifths of the Law” since it completes the five books of Moses. The Jewish people have also called it *Mishneh Hattorah*, “repetition of the Law,” which is translated in the Septuagint as *To Deuteronomion Touto*, “This Second Law.” Deuteronomy, however, is not a second law but an adaptation and expansion of much of the original law given on Mount Sinai.”³

As to sermonic exhortations, “Beware lest you forget” is a key theme in Deuteronomy. Moses emphasizes the dangers of forgetfulness because they lead to arrogance and disobedience. The Israelites must remember two things: (1) when they prosper, it is God who has caused it, and (2) when they disobey God, He will discipline them as He did when the previous generation failed to believe Him at Kadesh-barnea. Deuteronomy is a call to obedience as a condition to blessing, God has always been faithful to His covenant and He now extends it to the next generation.”⁴

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary agrees with these two themes, but also adds that the book can be viewed as “a covenant-treaty in both form and content (29:1; 31:9-13, 24-26), including the narratives of the adoption of that agreement and the exhortations to not only adopt the covenant-treaty but also to adhere to the stipulations of it. It may also be approached as a compendium of the directives of the Lord given through Moses to prepare the people for the conquest, settlement, and occupation of Canaan.”⁵

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The events revolving around Deuteronomy are the same as the book of Numbers. Historically, Israel has moved away from Egyptian threats and bondage during the 40 years of wandering through the wilderness. However, new military and political powers were looming on the horizon. The land of Canaan was occupied by many distinct nations and kings. Most of them will be a formidable challenge for Israel to overcome. Among them are the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) and Lot (Moab) – relatives of the Israelites. Two significant kingdoms are settled on the eastern side of the Jordan River: King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan. On the western side is the fortress of Jericho and in a fortress later to be called Jerusalem are the Jebusites. Along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea are the Philistines. – all of which will prove to be a challenge to Israel as they travel toward the promised land.

OUTLINE

- A. Reviewing Israel’s Journey, 1-3
 - a. From Egypt to Kadesh-barnea, 1
 - b. From Kadesh to Moab, 2
 - c. In Moab, 3
- B. Rehearsing Israel’s Law, 4-26
 - a. Obedience and the Cities of Refuge, 4:1-43
 - b. Ten Commandments, 4:44 – 5:33
 - c. Loving the Lord, 6
 - d. Destroying the Canaanites, 7

- e. How God has Worked in the Past, 8-11
- f. Rules for the Sanctuary, 12
- g. Rules for False Prophets, 13
- h. Rules for Goods and Tithes, 14
- i. Rules for Sabbatical Years, 15
- j. Rules for Feasts, 16:1-17
- k. Rules for Leaders, 16:18 – 18:22
 - 1. Judges, 16:18 – 17:13
 - 2. Kings, 17:14-20
 - 3. Levites, 18:1-18
 - 4. False Diviners, 18:9-14
 - 5. Messiah, 18:15-19
 - 6. Prophets, 18:20-22
- l. Rules for Relationships, 19 – 26
 - 1. Cities of Refuge, 19
 - 2. Warfare, 20
 - 3. Manslaughter and Marriage rules, 21-22
 - 4. The People and Protection Rules, 23-25
 - 5. First Fruits, 26
- C. Ratifying of Israel's Covenants, 27 – 30
 - a. Preparations, 27
 - b. Blessings, 28:1-14
 - c. Curses, 28:15-68
 - d. Palestinian Covenant, 29 – 30
- D. Moses' Last Days, 31 – 34
 - a. His Address, 31
 - b. His Song, 32
 - c. His Testimony, 33
 - d. His Death, 34

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Joshua Victory

Mt. Sinai to Monarchy
1405 BC – 1370 BC

AUTHOR

Practically every book referenced for the authorship of Joshua has made comment to the fact that naming Joshua as the actual author is a difficult point to support. We do not have biblical references outside the book to link Joshua's name to the record, but we do have evidence that points toward the conclusion that Joshua is perhaps the best choice among the possibilities as the author. Here are a few of these evidences. "The author of the book of Joshua is not explicitly identified, but the following facts are known about its authorship: (1) The general tenor of the book indicates that the author was an eyewitness of most of the events, which are described with great vividness and minuteness of detail, and occasionally in the first person. (2) The unity of style in the organization of the book indicates that one author wrote the bulk of the work. (3) Joshua is specifically identified as the author of some writings. He wrote the words of a covenant which he shared with Israel "in the book of the law of God (24:26), which was born of his farewell charge in chapter 24. Also, Joshua was responsible for the land survey of Canaan, which he caused to have recorded in a book (18:9). (4) Some small parts of the book could not have been written by Joshua. Such sections include the references to his death (24:29-30) and to the faithfulness of Israel during the years after his death (24:31). It is possible that these sections were added by Eleazar the priest, and that the note of Eleazar's death (24:33) was in turn recorded by Phinehas, his son."¹

It would seem reasonable to conclude that Joshua was the author of the book. "Intimate biographical details are given from the very first chapter that only Joshua himself could have known."²

DATE OF WRITING

MacArthur notes that the writing of the book of Joshua predates the reign of David by simple comparison of Joshua 15:63 which states that the Jebusites were not driven out of the city of Jerusalem at the time of the writing, and 2 Samuel 5:5-9 which records the taking of Jerusalem. Therefore, a time between 1405 BC and 1385 BC, the book was most likely written.³ However, the 1405 BC date represents the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan River. The death of Joshua occurred in the year 1380 BC. A 1375 BC date might be better for the final compilation of this book which would also represent the events that followed Joshua's death, as recorded in the final chapters.

Other factors support this date. First of all, the Canaan cities are referred to by their ancient names [Baalath for Kirjath-jearim (15:9), Kirjath-sannah for Debir (15:49) and Kirjath-arba for Hebron (15:13)]. Secondly, Sidon was the great city of Phoenicia. In the 12th century, Tyre became their great city. Thirdly, the Gibeonites were still the servants of Israel according to Joshua 9:27 (“until this day”). This relationship seems to have changed in the days of Saul’s reign (2 Samuel 21:1-9).

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Joshua comprises approximately 30 years (from 1405 BC to 1370 BC). The first seven years are spent in the wars which brought Israel into the land God had given them. The 20 or so years that followed were spent in the process of dividing the land and sending each tribe into their inheritance to ‘mop up’ the remaining enemy in the territory.

We are told that Joshua lived to be 110 years old. Assuming his age to be comparable to Caleb’s, we would take Joshua’s age at the time of the entrance into the promised land to be near 85 years. Leading the army for the next 7 years brings him close to 92 years old at the time of the land division. Joshua appropriately stated in 23:2, "I am old, advanced in years."

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Joshua has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books (Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther). The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (the Prophets), the first of the ‘Former Prophets’ (Joshua, Judges, Samuel & Kings). The title of ‘prophet’ did not have to connote the act of predicting the future, but was seen as a recorder of history. It has been suggested that the Jewish classification has a descending concept to it, the greatest and foremost writing is the Law of Moses, followed by the historical writings of the Prophets, with the remaining ‘nonprophets’ comprising the works of wisemen, kings, and princes.

THEME

A two-fold theme is developed in the book of Joshua. One highlights the faithfulness of God and the other, the failure of the people of Israel. “A keynote feature is God’s faithfulness to fulfill His promise of giving the land to Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 12:7; 15:18-21; 17:8). By His leading (cf. 5:14-6:2), they inhabited the territories E and W of the Jordan, and so the word “possess” appears nearly 20 times. Related to this theme is Israel’s failure to press their conquest to every part of the land (13:1). Judges 1-2 later describes the tragic results from this sin.”⁴

Another has suggested that the theme of the book “concerns the irresistible power of God’s people in overcoming the world and taking permanent possession of their promised inheritance, provided only they maintain a perfect trust in God’s strength and permit no sin of disobedience to break their covenant relationship with Him.”⁵

Irving Jensen gives the following comment that puts the book of Joshua into its place according to God’s dealings with Israel. “Joshua’s narrative about winning the rest of the land of Canaan resumes the history of Israel at the point where Deuteronomy ends. The

sequence of the Pentateuch books is this: In Genesis, God brings Israel to birth, and promises to give it the land of Canaan. In Exodus, He delivers His people from oppression in a foreign land (Egypt), and starts them on their way to the promised land, giving them laws to live by (as recorded both in Exodus and Leviticus). Numbers records the journey of Israel through the wilderness up to the gate of Canaan, while Deuteronomy describes the final preparations for entering the land. At this point Joshua picks up the story, describing the conquest of the land and the division of its territories to the tribes of Israel. In a real sense, Joshua is the climax of a progressive history as well as the commencement of a new experience for Israel. Thus, its historical nexus gives it a strategic place in the Old Testament Scriptures.”⁶

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

As Israel enters the promised land, their attention is moved from the powers of Egypt to the many tribal nations of the Canaanite. The following information from Easton’s 1897 Bible Dictionary gives a brief background of the enemies Joshua faced. Exodus 33:2 states, “And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite”. Deuteronomy 20:16-18 adds, “Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God.”

Canaanite: the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. Migrating from their original home, they seem to have reached the Persian Gulf, and to have there sojourned for some time. They thence “spread to the west, across the mountain chain of Lebanon to the very edge of the Mediterranean Sea, occupying all the land which later became Palestine, also to the north-west as far as the mountain chain of Taurus. This group was very numerous, and broken up into a great many peoples, as we can judge from the list of nations (Genesis 10), the ‘sons of Canaan.’ ” Six different tribes are mentioned in Exodus 3:8, 17; Exodus 23:23; Exodus 33:2; Exodus 34:11. In Exodus 13:5 the “Perizzites” are omitted. The “Girgashites” are mentioned in addition to the foregoing in Deut. 7:1; Joshua 3:10.

The “Canaanites,” as distinguished from the Amalekites, the Anakim, and the Rephaim, were “dwellers in the lowlands” (Numbers 13:29), the great plains and valleys, the richest and most important parts of Palestine. Tyre and Sidon, their famous cities, were the centres of great commercial activity; and hence the name “Canaanite” came to signify a “trader” or “merchant” (Job 41:6; Proverbs 31:24, lit. “Canaanites;” comp. Zeph. 1:11; Ezekiel 17:4). The name “Canaanite” is also sometimes used to designate the non-Israelite inhabitants of the land in general (Genesis 12:6; Numbers 21:3; Judges 1:10).

The Israelites, when they were led to the Promised Land, were commanded to utterly destroy the descendants of Canaan then possessing it (Exodus 23:23; Numbers 33:52, 53; Deut. 20:16-17). This was to be done “little by little,” lest the beasts of the field should increase (Exodus 23:29; Deut. 7:22-23). The history of these wars of conquest is given in

the Book of Joshua. The extermination of these tribes, however, was never fully carried out. Jerusalem was not taken till the time of David (2 Samuel 5:6-7). In the days of Solomon bond-service was exacted from the fragments of the tribes still remaining in the land (1 Kings 9:20-21). Even after the return from captivity survivors of five of the Canaanitish tribes were still found in the land.

Amorite: highlanders, or hillmen, the name given to the descendants of one of the sons of Canaan (Genesis 14:7), called Amurra or Amurri in the Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions. On the early Babylonian monuments all Syria, including Palestine, is known as “the land of the Amorites.” The southern slopes of the mountains of Judea are called the “mount of the Amorites” (Deut. 1:7, 19-20). They seem to have originally occupied the land stretching from the heights west of the Dead Sea (Genesis 14:7) to Hebron (Genesis 14:13. Comp. Genesis 13:8; Deut. 3:8; Deut. 4:46-48), embracing “all Gilead and all Bashan” (Deut. 3:10), with the Jordan valley on the east of the river (Deut. 4:49), the land of the “two kings of the Amorites,” Sihon and Og (Deut. 31:4; Joshua 2:10; Joshua 9:10). The five kings of the Amorites were defeated with great slaughter by Joshua (Joshua 10:10). They were again defeated at the waters of Merom by Joshua, who smote them till there were none remaining (Joshua 11:8). It is mentioned as a surprising circumstance that in the days of Samuel there was peace between them and the Israelites (1 Samuel 7:14). The supposed discrepancy to exist between Deut. 1:44 and Numbers 14:45 is explained by the circumstance that the terms “Amorites” and “Amalekites” are used synonymously for the “Canaanites.” In the same way we explain the fact that the “Hivites” of Genesis 34:2 are the “Amorites” of Genesis 48:22. Comp. Joshua 10:6; Joshua 11:19 with 2 Samuel 21:2; also Numbers 14:45 with Deut. 1:44. The Amorites were warlike mountaineers. They were supposed to have been men of great stature; their king, Og, is described by Moses as the last “of the remnant of the giants” (Deut. 3:11). Both Sihon and Og were independent kings.

Sihon: The whole country on the east of Jordan, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, was possessed by the Amorites, whose king, Sihon, refused to permit the Israelites to pass through his territory, and put his army in array against them. The Israelites went forth against him to battle, and gained a complete victory.

Og: the king of Bashan, who was defeated by Moses in a pitched battle at Edrei, was slain along with his sons (Deut. 1:4), and whose kingdom was given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 21:32-35; Deut. 3:1-13).

Hittite: Palestine and Syria appear to have been originally inhabited by three different tribes. (1.) The Semites, living on the east of the isthmus of Suez. They were nomadic and pastoral tribes. (2.) The Phoenicians, who were merchants and traders; and (3.) the Hittites, who were the warlike element of this confederation of tribes. They inhabited the whole region between the Euphrates and Damascus, their chief cities being Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Kadesh. These Hittites seem to have risen to great power as a nation, as for a long time they were formidable rivals of the Egyptian and Assyrian empires. In the book of Joshua they always appear as the dominant race to the north of Galilee.

Somewhere about the twenty-third century B.C. the Syrian confederation, led probably by the Hittites, arched against Lower Egypt, which they took possession of, making Zoan their capital. Their rulers were the Hyksos, or shepherd kings. They were at length finally driven out of Egypt. Rameses II. sought vengeance against the “vile Kheta,” as he called them, and encountered and defeated them in the great battle of Kadesh, four centuries after Abraham.

They are first referred to in Scripture in the history of Abraham, who bought from Ephron the Hittite the field and the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 15:20; Genesis 23:3-18). They were then settled at Kirjath-arba. From this tribe Esau took his first two wives (Genesis 26:34; Genesis 36:2).

They are afterwards mentioned in the usual way among the inhabitants of the Promised Land (Exodus 23:28). They were closely allied to the Amorites, and are frequently mentioned along with them as inhabiting the mountains of Palestine. When the spies entered the land they seem to have occupied with the Amorites the mountain region of Judah (Numbers 13:29). They took part with the other Canaanites against the Israelites (Joshua 9:1; Joshua 11:3).

After this there are few references to them in Scripture. Mention is made of “Ahimelech the Hittite” (1 Samuel 26:6), and of “Uriah the Hittite,” one of David's chief officers (2 Samuel 23:39; 1 Chron. 11:41). In the days of Solomon they were a powerful confederation in the north of Syria, and were ruled by “kings.” They are met with after the Exile still a distinct people (Ezra 9:1; comp. Neh. 13:23-28).

Perizzite: dwellers in the open country, the Canaanitish nation inhabiting the fertile regions south and south-west of Carmel. “They were the graziers, farmers, and peasants of the time.” They were to be driven out of the land by the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 15:20; Exodus 3:8, 17; Exodus 23:23; Exodus 33:2; Exodus 34:11). They are afterwards named among the conquered tribes (Joshua 24:11). Still lingering in the land, however, they were reduced to servitude by Solomon (1 Kings 9:20).

Hivite: one of the original tribes scattered over Palestine, from Hermon to Gibeon in the south. The name is interpreted as “midlanders” or “villagers” (Genesis 10:17; 1 Chron. 1:15). They were probably a branch of the Hittites. At the time of Jacob's return to Canaan, Hamor the Hivite was the “prince of the land” (Genesis 24:2-28).

They are next mentioned during the Conquest (Joshua 9:7; Joshua 11:19). They principally inhabited the northern confines of Western Palestine (Joshua 11:3; Judges 3:3). A remnant of them still existed in the time of Solomon (1 Kings 9:20).

Jebusite: the name of the original inhabitants of Jebus, mentioned frequently among the seven nations doomed to destruction (Genesis 10:16; Genesis 15:21; Exodus 3:8, 17; Exodus 13:5, etc.). At the time of the arrival of the Israelites in Palestine they were ruled by Adonizedek (Joshua 10:1, 23). They were defeated by Joshua, and their king was slain; but they were not entirely driven out of Jebus till the time of David, who made it the capital of his kingdom instead of Hebron. The site on which the temple was afterwards built belonged to Araunah, a Jebusite, from whom it was purchased by David, who refused to accept it as a free gift (2 Samuel 24:16-25; 1 Chron. 21:24-25).

Philistines: a tribe allied to the Phoenicians. They were a branch of the primitive race which spread over the whole district of Lebanon and the valley of the Jordan, and Crete and other Mediterranean islands. Some suppose them to have been a branch of the Rephaim (2 Samuel 21:16-22). In the time of Abraham they inhabited the south-west of Judea, Abimelech of Gerar being their king (Genesis 21:32, 34; Genesis 26:1). They are, however, not noticed among the Canaanitish tribes mentioned in the Pentateuch. They are spoken of by Amos (Amos 9:7) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 47:4) as from Caphtor, i.e., probably Crete, or, as some think, the Delta of Egypt. In the whole record from Exodus to Samuel they are represented as inhabiting the tract of country which lay between Judea and Egypt (Exodus 13:17; Exodus 15:14-15; Joshua 13:3; 1 Samuel 4).

This powerful tribe made frequent incursions against the Hebrews. There was almost perpetual war between them. They sometimes held the tribes, especially the southern tribes, in degrading servitude (Judges 15:11; 1 Samuel 13:19-22); at other times they were defeated with great slaughter (1 Samuel 14:1-47; 1 Samuel 17). These hostilities did not cease till the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:8), when they were entirely subdued. They still, however, occupied their territory, and always showed their old hatred to Israel (Ezekiel 25:15-17). They were finally conquered by the Romans.

The Philistines are called Pulsata or Pulista on the Egyptian monuments; the land of the Philistines (Philistia) being termed Palastu and Pilista in the Assyrian inscriptions. They occupied the five cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, in the south-western corner of Canaan, which belonged to Egypt up to the closing days of the Nineteenth Dynasty. The occupation took place during the reign of Rameses III. of the Twentieth Dynasty. The Philistines had formed part of the great naval confederacy which attacked Egypt, but were eventually repulsed by that Pharaoh, who, however, could not dislodge them from their settlements in Palestine. As they did not enter Palestine till the time of the Exodus, the use of the name Philistines in Genesis 26:1 must be proleptic. Indeed the country was properly Gerar, as in Genesis 20.

They are called Allophyli, "foreigners," in the Septuagint, and in the Books of Samuel they are spoken of as uncircumcised. It would therefore appear that they were not of the Semitic race, though after their establishment in Canaan they adopted the Semitic language of the country. We learn from the Old Testament that they came from Caphtor, usually supposed to be Crete. From Philistia the name of the land of the Philistines came to be extended to the whole of "Palestine." Many scholars identify the Philistines with the Pelethites of 2 Samuel 8:18.⁷

OUTLINE

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 - b. Military Movements, 2-4
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 - c. Religious Communities, 20-21
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 - d. Conditions for Settlement, 22-24
 - i. For the Eastern Tribes, 22
 - ii. For the Rulers, 23
 - iii. For the People, 24

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⁴ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 303.

⁵ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, p. 285.

⁶ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, p. 137.

⁷ From Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary, Database c1996 NavPress Software, WORDsearch Bible Study Software. Copyright 1987-2000, iExalt, Inc. All rights reserved.

Judges

Defeat

Mt. Sinai to Monarchy
1380 BC – 1050 BC

AUTHOR

As with the Book of Joshua, the author of Judges is not mentioned by name. Without this information, we come to conclusions based on internal and external evidence. One of the most prominent possibilities for the author of Judges is Samuel the prophet. “It is clear from two verses (18:31; 20:27) that the book was written after the ark was removed from Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:3-11). The repeated phrase “In those days there was no king in Israel” (17:6; 18:1; 21:25; cf. 19:1) shows that Judges was also written after the commencement of Saul’s reign but before the divided kingdom. The fact that the Jebusites were dwelling Jerusalem “to this day” (1:21) means that it was written before 1004 B.C. when David dispossessed the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:5-9).”¹

The prophetic ministry of the writer helps to mark the author: “The book was written during the time of Samuel; and it is likely that Samuel compiled this book from oral and written source material. His prophetic ministry clearly fits the moral commentary of Judges, and the consistent style and orderly scheme of Judges point to a single compiler.”²

DATE OF WRITING

One of the first date markers to consider is the recording of the death of Samson, the last main character of the book. His death occurred in 1051 B.C. and is recorded in the book. Therefore the date of writing must be beyond that time.

The writing of the book also is set between the dates of 1043 B.C. (the start of Saul’s reign) and 1004 B.C. (when David conquered Jerusalem). “It is clear from two verses (18:31; 20:27) that the book was written after the ark was removed from Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:3-11). The repeated phrase “In those days there was no king in Israel” (17:6; 18:1; 21:25; cf. 19:1) shows that Judges was also written after the commencement of Saul’s reign but before the divided kingdom. The fact that the Jebusites were dwelling Jerusalem “to this day” (1:21) means that it was written before 1004 B.C. when David dispossessed the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:5-9). Thus, the book was written during the time of Samuel... Yet, Chapter 18, verse 30 contains a phrase that poses a problem to this early date of composition: “until the day of the captivity of the land.” If this refers to the 722 B.C. Assyrian captivity of Israel it could have been inserted by a later editor. It is more likely a reference to the Philistine captivity of the land during the time of the judges. This event is described as “captivity” in Psalm 78:61.”³

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Judges covers about 330 years – from the final days of Joshua to the beginning of the ministry of Samuel the prophet. It would be logical to include Samuel as among the judges (even though the book does not include him as one). However, the transition from the rule of judges to the rule of kings takes place during the life of Samuel. Key dates according to Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament are as follows:

- The judgeship of Othniel: 1373 BC – 1334 BC.
- The migration of the tribe of Dan: 1370 BC.
- The near extermination of the tribe of Benjamin: 1360 BC.
- The judgeship of Ehud: 1316 BC – 1237 BC.
- The judgeship of Shamgar: 1265 BC – 1252 BC
- The judgeship of Deborah & Barak: 1237 BC – 1198 BC.
- The judgeship of Gideon: 1191 BC – 1151 BC.
- The judgeship of Abimelech: 1151 BC – 1149 BC.
- The judgeship of Tola: 1149 BC – 1126 BC.
- The judgeship of Jair: 1126 BC – 1105 BC.
- The marriage of Ruth & Boaz: 1120 BC.
- The judgeship of Eli: 1107 BC – 1067 BC.
- The judgeship of Jephthah: 1087 BC – 1081 BC.
- The judgeship of Ibzan: 1081 BC – 1075 BC.
- The judgeship of Elon: 1075 BC – 1065 BC.
- The judgeship of Abdon: 1065 BC – 1058 BC.
- The judgeship of Samson: 1069 BC – 1049 BC.
- The judgeship of Samuel: 1067 BC – 1020 BC.⁴

*all of these dates are close approximates.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Judges has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books (Joshua, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther). The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (the Prophets), the second of the ‘Former Prophets’ (Joshua, Judges, Samuel & Kings). The nature of the term ‘prophet’ is discussed in the material of Joshua.

THEME

The fact that failure and sin are so prevalent in the book makes it easy to see them in light of a theme. “The basic theme of the book is Israel’s failure as a theocracy to keep true to the covenant even under the leadership of men chosen of God to deliver them from oppression by a pagan world.”⁵

“Like the other historical books of the Bible, Judges presents the historical facts in a very selective and thematic way. For example, chapters 17-21 actually preceded most of chapters 3-16, but these chapters appear at the end of the book to illustrate the moral conditions that were prevailing during the period. Judges gives a geographical survey of apostasy to illustrate its spread and a chronological survey to illustrate its growing intensity. The book reaches a climax in chapters 17-21 with the last verse as a fitting summary. Theologically, Judges makes a clear contrast between the idolatry, immorality,

and violence of Israel and Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and gracious deliverance of the people. In His patient love, God forgave the people every single time they repented. Israel often acted in foolishness, ingratitude, stubbornness, and rebellion, and this led to defeat. Sin always leads to suffering, and repentance always leads to deliverance."⁶

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The principle powers of the days of the judges are given as the Mesopotamians, Moabites, Philistines, Canaanites, Midianites, and the Ammonites. The majority of the powers in the day of Joshua had been subdued, but not entirely eliminated. The nation (and individual tribes) of the Canaanites and the Philistines are discussed in the material of Joshua.

Moabites: the designation of a tribe descended from Moab, the son of Lot (Genesis 19:37). From Zoar, the cradle of this tribe, on the south-eastern border of the Dead Sea, they gradually spread over the region on the east of Jordan. Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the Oppression, enumerates Moab (Muab) among his conquests. Shortly before the Exodus, the warlike Amorites crossed the Jordan under Sihon their king and drove the Moabites (Numbers 21:26-30) out of the region between the Arnon and the Jabbok, and occupied it, making Heshbon their capital. They were then confined to the territory to the south of the Arnon.

On their journey the Israelites did not pass through Moab, but through the "wilderness" to the east (Deut. 2:8; Judges 11:18), at length reaching the country to the north of the Arnon. Here they remained for some time till they had conquered Bashan. The Moabites were alarmed, and their king, Balak, sought aid from the Midianites (Numbers 22:2-4). It was while they were here that the visit of Balaam (q.v.) to Balak took place.

After the Conquest, the Moabites maintained hostile relations with the Israelites, and frequently harassed them in war (Judges 3:12-30; 1 Samuel 14). The story of Ruth, however, shows the existence of friendly relations between Moab and Bethlehem. By his descent from Ruth, David may be said to have had Moabite blood in his veins. Yet there was war between David and the Moabites (2 Samuel 8:2; 2 Samuel 23:20; 1 Chron. 18:2), from whom he took great spoil (2 Samuel 8:2, 11-12; 1 Chron. 11:22; 1 Chron. 18:11).

During the one hundred and fifty years which followed the defeat of the Moabites, after the death of Ahab, they regained, apparently, much of their former prosperity. At this time Isaiah (Isaiah 15:1) delivered his "burden of Moab," predicting the coming of judgment on that land (comp. 2 Kings 17:3; 2 Kings 18:9; 1 Chron. 5:25-26). Between the time of Isaiah and the commencement of the Babylonian captivity we have very seldom any reference to Moab (Jeremiah 25:21; Jeremiah 27:3; Jeremiah 40:11; Zeph. 2:8-10).

After the Return, it was Sanballat, a Moabite, who took chief part in seeking to prevent the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:19; Neh. 4:1; Neh. 6:1).

Midianites: an Arabian tribe descended from Midian. They inhabited principally the desert north of the peninsula of Arabia. The peninsula of Sinai was the pasture-ground for their flocks. They were virtually the rulers of Arabia, being the dominant tribe. Like all

Arabians, they were a nomad people. They early engaged in commercial pursuits. It was to one of their caravans that Joseph was sold (Genesis 37:28, 36). The next notice of them is in connection with Moses' flight from Egypt (Exodus 2:15-21). Here in Midian Moses became the servant and afterwards the son-in-law of Reuel or Jethro, the priest. After the Exodus, the Midianites were friendly to the Israelites so long as they traversed only their outlying pasture-ground on the west of the Arabah; but when, having passed the southern end of Edom, they entered into the land of Midian proper, they joined with Balak, the king of Moab, in a conspiracy against them (Numbers 22:4-7). Balaam, who had been sent for to curse Israel, having utterly failed to do so, was dismissed by the king of Moab; nevertheless he still tarried among the Midianites, and induced them to enter into correspondence with the Israelites, so as to bring them into association with them in the licentious orgies connected with the worship of Baal-Peor. This crafty counsel prevailed. The Israelites took part in the heathen festival, and so brought upon themselves a curse indeed. Their apostasy brought upon them a severe punishment. A plague broke out amongst them, and more than twenty-four thousand of the people perished (Numbers 25:9). But the Midianites were not to be left unpunished. A terrible vengeance was denounced against them. A thousand warriors from each tribe, under the leadership of Phinehas, went forth against them. The Midianites were utterly routed. Their cities were consumed by fire, five of their kings were put to death, and the whole nation was destroyed (Joshua 13:21-22). Balaam also perished by the sword, receiving the "wages of his unrighteousness" (Numbers 31:8; 2 Peter 2:15). The whole of the country on the east of Jordan, now conquered by the Israelites, was divided between the two tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Some two hundred and fifty years after this the Midianites had regained their ancient power, and in confederation with the Amalekites and the "children of the east" they made war against their old enemies the Israelites, whom for seven years they oppressed and held in subjection. They were at length assailed by Gideon in that ever-memorable battle in the great plain of Esdraelon, and utterly destroyed (Judges 6:1-Judges 7:25). Frequent allusions are afterwards made to this great victory (Psalm 83:10, 12; Isaiah 9:4; Isaiah 10:6). They now wholly pass away from the page of history both sacred and profane.

Ammonites: the usual name of the descendants of Ammon, the son of Lot (Genesis 19:38). From the very beginning (Deut. 2:16-20) of their history till they are lost sight of (Judges 5:2), this tribe is closely associated with the Moabites (Judges 10:11; 2 Chron. 20:1; Zeph. 2:8). Both of these tribes hired Balaam to curse Israel (Deut. 23:4). The Ammonites were probably more of a predatory tribe, moving from place to place, while the Moabites were more settled. They inhabited the country east of the Jordan and north of Moab and the Dead Sea, from which they had expelled the Zamzummims or Zuzims (Deut. 2:20; Genesis 14:5). They are known as the Beni-ammi (Genesis 19:38), Ammi or Ammon being worshipped as their chief god. They were of Semitic origin, and closely related to the Hebrews in blood and language. They showed no kindness to the Israelites when passing through their territory, and therefore they were prohibited from "entering the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation" (Deut. 23:3). They afterwards became hostile to Israel (Judges 3:13). Jephthah waged war against them, and "took twenty cities with a very great slaughter" (Judges 11:33). They were again signally defeated by Saul (1 Samuel 11:11). David also defeated them and their allies the Syrians

(2 Samuel 10:6-14), and took their chief city, Rabbah, with much spoil (2 Samuel 10:14; 2 Samuel 12:26-31). The subsequent events of their history are noted in 2 Chron. 20:25; 2 Chron. 26:8; Jeremiah 49:1; Ezekiel 25:3, 6. One of Solomon's wives was Naamah, an Ammonite. She was the mother of Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:31; 2 Chron. 12:13).

The prophets predicted fearful judgments against the Ammonites because of their hostility to Israel (Zeph. 2:8; Jeremiah 49:1-6; Ezekiel 25:1-5, 10; Amos 1:13-15).

The national idol worshipped by this people was Molech or Milcom, at whose altar they offered human sacrifices (1 Kings 11:5, 7). The high places built for this idol by Solomon, at the instigation of his Ammonitish wives, were not destroyed till the time of Josiah (2 Kings 23:13).

Mesopotamians: residents of the country between the two rivers (Heb. Aram-naharaim; i.e., "Syria of the two rivers"), the name given by the Greeks and Romans to the region between the Euphrates and the Tigris (Genesis 24:10; Deut. 23:4; Judges 3:8, 10). In the Old Testament it is mentioned also under the name "Padan-aram;" i.e., the plain of Aram, or Syria (Genesis 25:20). The northern portion of this fertile plateau was the original home of the ancestors of the Hebrews (Genesis 11; Acts 7:2). From this region Isaac obtained his wife Rebecca (Genesis 24:10, 15), and here also Jacob sojourned (Genesis 28:2-7) and obtained his wives, and here most of his sons were born (Genesis 35:26; Genesis 46:15). The petty, independent tribes of this region, each under its own prince, were warlike, and used chariots in battle. They maintained their independence till after the time of David, when they fell under the dominion of Assyria, and were absorbed into the empire (2 Kings 19:13).⁷

OUTLINE

- A. The Failures of Israel, 1-2
 - a. Military Problems, 1
 - b. Spiritual Problems, 2
- B. The Deliverers of Israel, 3-16
 - a. Othniel, 3:1-7
 - b. Ehud and Shamgar, 3:8-31
 - c. Deborah and Barak, 4-5
 - d. Gideon, 6-8
 - e. Abimelech, 9
 - f. Tolah, Jair and Jephthah, 10-12:7
 - g. Ibsam, Elon and Abdon, 12:8-15
 - h. Samson, 13-16
- C. Results of Apostasy, 17-21
 - a. Religious Failures, 17-18
 - b. Moral Failures, 19
 - c. Political Failures, 20-21

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Ruth

Redeemer

Mt. Sinai to Monarchy
1100 BC approximately

AUTHOR

As with the Book of Joshua and Judges, the author of Ruth is not mentioned by name. Without this information, we are forced to come to conclusions based on internal and external evidence. One of the most prominent possibilities for the author of Ruth is Samuel the prophet.

The possibility of Samuel being the author comes from an argument that includes the fact that there is a logical likeness between the books of Judges, Ruth, and Samuel. As one writer comments, “The similarity of the language of Ruth to that of Judges and Samuel was probably responsible for linking it to Samuel. There is nothing in the Book of Ruth itself that helps us to identify the author. All we can say is that he was a literary artist and a skillful teacher.”¹

Another bit of evidence will come from the dating of the book. “If he (Samuel) was the author, the book would have been written near the time when David was anointed king of Israel. One of the reasons, then, for Samuel’s writing the Book of Ruth could have been to justify David’s claim to the throne (through Ruth and Boaz, his great-grandparents).”²

Jewish tradition, i.e., the Jewish Talmud, has long attributed that Samuel was the author of the book.³ Yet some would claim that this cannot be true. As one writer put it, “The author of Ruth is not given anywhere in the book, nor is he known from any other biblical passage. Talmudic tradition attributes it to Samuel but this is unlikely since David appears in Ruth (4:17, 22), and Samuel died before David’s coronation (1 Sam. 25:1). Ruth was probably written during David’s reign since Solomon’s name is not included in the genealogy.”⁴

To answer this charge, it may be noted that Samuel was the prophet that anointed David as king, and logically could have included such information at the end of the book. Adding to this, Barber states, “Before we dismiss Samuel’s involvement too quickly, let us recall that the events of Ruth are set in the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1), and that Samuel was both a prophet and a judge. The book of Judges closes with an “appendix” (Judg. 17-21) in which we are given a glimpse of the spiritual and moral conditions of that era. Chapters 17 and 18 describe Israel’s spiritual apostasy and show how rife was her infidelity. Chapter 19 through 21 describe the nadir of the people’s moral degradation, recording their unbridled desire for revenge. Both stories concern the village of “Bethlehem in Judah” (Judges 17:7-9; 19:2, 18), and much of the contents of

Ruth is enacted in this city. It should not surprise us, therefore, if the author of Judges also wrote the book of Ruth.”

Another note to consider, “In the interest of an objective investigation and evaluation of the facts, let it be remembered that David is not spoken of as being king in 4:22; Samuel did anoint him to be king in the place of Saul even though it was more than ten years before he ascended the throne (1 Sam. 16:12-14).”⁵ In addition to this, Barber writes, “Further evidence that must be weighed comes from 1 and 2 Samuel. They contain no particulars respecting the ancestry of David, even though a genealogy was frequently given for Hebrew kings. What could better explain the omission of David’s genealogy in 1 Samuel than the fact that such data had already been given in the book of Ruth?”⁶

DATE OF WRITING

The dating of the Book of Ruth has provided two suggestions: one argues for an early date, approximately 1000 B.C., and the other for a date that follows the seventy year captivity of Israel (post-exilic), approximately 450 B.C. This study will consider only the earlier date as most likely.

Several factors must be considered to draw the conclusion that the book was written closer to the year 1000 B.C. First of all, “It was not written prior to the time of David, since he is mentioned in 4:22. Since David is mentioned, but David’s son Solomon is not mentioned, it has led some to assume that it was written before Solomon’s time. Samuel could have written the book. If he did, a date of about 1000 B.C. would be given.”⁷

In addition to this, “Arguments for an early date include familiarity with ancient customs characteristic of the period of the judges and the use of some identifiable archaic language. The style is markedly different from those books known to be postexilic.”⁸ One writer, pulling information from many sources, concluded “there seems to be no compelling reason for not assigning the writing of this period following David’s anointing by Samuel, or early in his reign in Hebron. Thus, we would date the events of chapter 1 as possibly transpiring between 1198-1185 B.C. (during the Midianite oppression that lasted from 1198 – 1191). The written record could easily have been made between 1025 – 1005 B.C., if not by Samuel, then perhaps by Nathan or someone attached to David’s court.”⁹

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Ruth 1:1 sets for us the era in which the history of Ruth is to be placed. “Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land...” As already noted in the book of Judges, the judges ruled in Israel between 1375 to 1050 BC. The last two verses of the book (4:21-22) states, “and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, [22] and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.” Using the dates of David’s reign to help mark time (David reigned from 1011 to 971 BC). It is believed that David had lived for seventy years (1041 – 971 BC). Since we do not have the years of life span given to us for Boaz, Obed, and Jesse, we base the rest of our information on speculation. Supposing that each of them lived a similar number of 70 years, and each of them had their son by the time they were 30 years of age, then we would put the approximate years for Jesse as 1071 – 1001 BC, Obed as 1101 to 1031 BC, and Boaz as 1131 – 1061 BC. Obviously, there is much room for adjusting these numbers. Jensen

suggests that Ruth and Boaz were married around the year 1120 BC (and since Boaz was an older man at this time), so we would want to set his dates closer to 1160 – 1090 BC.

All of this is simply to suggest that the time of Ruth in the history of the judges was closer to the end rather than the beginning of the 330 years. The judges near the time of Ruth were Gideon, Tola and Jair. The enemy would have been the Midianites. This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that the Midianites were known to steal crops from the Israelites and Ruth begins with the fact that there was a famine in the land. A move to Moab would have been logical in light of the fact that the Midianites and Moabites were usually partners in warfare and the likelihood that Moab would have had food and Israel would have a famine seems to show us the Midianite influence behind the famine.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Ruth has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history. The Jewish canon places it in the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) under the classification as Megilloth (5 Scrolls). A portion of the Megilloth was to be read at the annual Jewish feasts or memorials: These 5 scrolls were:

Song of Solomon (read at Passover – 14th of Nisan [Mar/Apr])

Ruth (read at the Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after Passover, 6th of Sivan [May/June])

Ecclesiastes (read at the Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after Passover, Sivan [May/June])

Lamentations (read at the memorial of the destruction of Jerusalem, 9th of Ab [July/August])

Esther (read at the Festival of Purim – 14th & 15th of Adar [Feb/Mar])

THEME

It is interesting to note the great number of themes suggested for such a small book in the Old Testament. These include an illustration of godliness, especially in the lives of Ruth and Naomi, redemption, the kingly rights of David, saintliness and obedience, and the Kinsman-Redeemer type of Christ.

The Illustration of Godliness

“Chapters 17-21 form an appendix to the Book of Judges, offering two illustrations of unrighteousness during the time of the judges. Ruth serves as a third illustration of life during this time, but it is an illustration of godliness. It is a positive picture of real faith and obedience (1:16-17; 3:10) that leads to blessing (4:13, 17). Ruth also teaches that Gentiles could believe in the true God (three out of the four women mentioned in Christ’s genealogy in Matthew 1 were Gentiles – Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth). Ruth explains how a gentile woman could become a member of the royal lineage of David and shows the divine origin of the Davidic dynasty (4:18-22).”¹⁰

“Driver’s observation has led several writers to believe that the central theme or purpose of the book of Ruth is the exemplary conduct of the leading characters: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Some students of Scripture point out that the story begins and ends with Naomi (1:6ff.; 4:14-17) and believe that she is the central figure. Others regard the

theme as being a story of two women. Still others see the book as descriptive of ideal widowhood. Bettan sees the all-embracing theme of the book as the law of humankindness that transcends national boundaries. Leland Ryken takes this theme even further and shows how Ruth's love for Naomi led to her marriage to Boaz so that she could fulfill her duty to her mother-in-law."¹¹

Redemption

The theme of Ruth is redemption, especially as it relates to the Kinsman-Redeemer. It reveals Yahweh's gracious character and sovereign care for His people (2:12). It stresses God's providential rewards for faithfulness. Not all was lost during this chaotic period – there was always a faithful Remnant of those who did what was right in the sight of the Lord."¹²

The Kingly Rights of David

Keil and Delitzsch believe that the central theme is the link between the past and the future. They state with confidence, "The meaning and tendency of the whole narrative is brought clearly to light. The genealogical proof of the descent of David from Perez through Boaz and the Moabitess, Ruth (chapter. 4:18-22) forms not only the end, but the starting-point, of the history contained in the book."¹³

Saintliness and Obedience

"G. Cambell Morgan [claims] that there are two permanent values to be found in this story: (1) the secrets of saintship, for God is the sufficiency of trusting souls, and (2) the values of saintship, in that trusting souls are the instruments of God."¹⁴ Barber adds, "There are many lessons to be gleaned from the story of Ruth. We believe, however, that the central theme of the book and the literary purpose that best fits the content is the grace of God and the blessings of obedience to that grace."¹⁵

Kinsman-Redeemer Type of Christ

It was C.I.Scofield who simply remarked that the theme of Ruth is the Kinsman-Redeemer.¹⁶ Types of Christ and the church are abundantly seen in the pages of this book. "The kinsman-redeemer (Boaz) is the prominent messianic type. Ruth, then, is the type of the Church, the Bride of Christ. Some Bible students view Naomi as a prominent type of Israel"¹⁷

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Much of what can be said about the historical events and world powers in the time of Ruth has been discussed in the study of the book of Judges. As stated above, Ruth is believed to have taken place during the difficult times of Midianite oppression, somewhere around 1180 – 1100 BC. That the Israelites were undergoing a famine indicates clearly from Deuteronomy 28 – 29 that they were not right with the Lord, a typical condition for the people during the era of the judges.

OUTLINE

- A. Ruth's Decision, 1
- B. Ruth's Devotion, 2
- C. Ruth's Request, 3
- D. Ruth's Redemption, 4

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1 Samuel

King

Monarchy to Captivity

1105 BC – 1011 BC

AUTHOR

The title of this book has caused some interesting debate concerning the author. Was the book written by Samuel, or was the title given to represent the main character, much like the book of Ruth? There are several candidates for authorship, but the prevailing opinion is that there is not one better idea than another. Therefore, many will list the author as anonymous.

Samuel is listed as the most likely candidate. The Jewish Talmud states that Samuel wrote part of the book, specifically chapters 1-24.¹ There is evidence that “Samuel did write a book (10:25), and written records were available. As the head of a company of prophets, Samuel would be a logical candidate for biblical authorship.”² The Open Bible states that “First Chronicles 29:29 refers to “the Book of Samuel the Seer,”³ and “The early part of 1 Samuel could have been written about 1000 B.C., the remainder some thirty to fifty years later. It is likely that Samuel wrote only those sections that deal with the history of Israel prior to his retirement from public office.”⁴ The obvious opposition to this idea is that “Samuel cannot be the writer because his death is recorded in 1 Sam. 25:1, before the events associated with David’s reign even took place.”⁵

A combination of Samuel, Nathan and Gad is a popular conclusion of those who seek to identify the author. “First Chronicles 29:29 refers to “the Book of Samuel the Seer,” “the Book of Nathan the Prophet,” and “the Book of Gad the Seer.” All three men evidently contributed to these two books, and it is very possible that a single compiler, perhaps a member of the prophetic school, used these chronicles to put together the Book of Samuel. This is also suggested by the unity of plan and purpose and by the smooth transitions between sections.”⁶ As Benware writes, “The idea of there being several authors does not detract from the unity of the books or from the doctrine of inspiration.”⁷ This, too, tradition supports. “The Jewish Talmud states that Samuel wrote part of the book (1 Samuel 1-24) and that Nathan and Gad composed the rest (cf. 1 Chronicles 29:29).”⁸

Another interesting possibility is given in the Open Bible. “One suggestion is that Abiathar wrote much of 1 and 2 Samuel, especially those parts that treat the court life of David. Abiathar was intimately associated with the great king of Israel in his exile. Also, he came from a priestly family and had access to the art of writing. Another suggestion is that one of the sons of the prophets from one of the schools founded by Samuel carried on the history of Israel begun by his master.”⁹

After gathering the opinions of many, it would appear that the best choice would be the combination of all of the prophets listed above. Each may have had a hand in the process; each has good reason to be considered. Nevertheless, we list the book as anonymous due to the uncertainty of the facts.

DATE OF WRITING

Generally speaking, “A date of 975 B.C. is given for these books [1 and 2 Samuel].”¹⁰ As some promote the authorship of Samuel, they are initially locked into the dates of his life for the written record. “If Samuel wrote the material in the first twenty-four chapters, he did so soon before his death (c. 1015 B.C.). He was born around 1105 B.C., and ministered as a judge and prophet in Israel between about 1067 and 1015 B.C.”¹¹ But since the 2nd book of Samuel includes the final days of David, a date following 971 B.C. has to be considered. The division of the kingdom is referenced in 1 Samuel 27:6, which would push the date even further back beyond 931 B.C. The next key date in the history of Israel would be 722 B.C. (the Assyrian captivity of Israel). Since that is not mentioned in the text, it is presumed that the final writing of the book lays somewhere between 931 and 722 B.C.

MacArthur sums up this conclusion in the following statement. “The books of Samuel contain no clear indication of the date of composition. That the author wrote after the division of the kingdom between Israel and Judah in 931 B.C. is clear, due to the many references to Israel and Judah as distinct entities (1 Sam. 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:5; 11:11; 12:8; 19:42-43; 24:1,9). Also, the statement concerning Ziklag’s belonging “to the kings of Judah to this day” in 1 Sam. 27:6 gives clear evidence of a post-Solomonic date of writing. With consideration to the fact that Samuel had a part in the writing of these books, it is not too far fetched to suggest that the writing and the final composition have many years between them.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of 1 Samuel comprises about 90 years of Israel’s history. The book begins near the end of Eli’s judging the people. Samuel is born and grows up under the direction of Eli. He also takes over the role as judge when Eli dies. It is estimated that Samuel will judge for 47 years (1067 – 1020 BC). During that time, Saul will be crowned as king (1043 BC). The transition from judge to king takes several years, yet failure on the part of King Saul will bring about the anointing of a second king during Saul’s reign. Samuel would not live to see David on the throne, but God gave him the privilege of knowing that David was God’s choice for the position.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of 1 Samuel has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets), the third of the four books in the division of the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings).

THEME

There are pronounced developments in the history of the nation of Israel that can account for the theme of the book. Never before have they had a king of their own. The great transition from the judges to the kings parallels to some degree, the transition from a theocracy to a monarchy. Samuel bemoaned this development, but God told him to let it happen. Through these events God would show the nation yet another aspect of Who He is.

As to a theme, the Open Bible declares, “The basic message of the books of Samuel is, God rules in the lives of men and nations. In judgment and in blessing God works toward His appointed goal – the preparation of a people for the coming of the Messiah, “a people for His own possession” who would be an instrument of His redemptive purposes, a “light of the nations.”¹²

MacArthur states that there are four predominant theological themes in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

“The first is the **Davidic Covenant**. The books are literarily framed by two references to the “anointed” king in the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:10) and the song of David (2 Sam. 22:51). This is a reference to the Messiah, the King who will triumph over the nations who are opposed to God. According to the Lord’s promise, this Messiah will come through the line of David and establish David’s throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). The events of David’s life recorded in Samuel foreshadow the actions of David’s greater Son (i.e., Christ) in the future.

A second theme is **the sovereignty of God**, clearly seen in these books. One example is the birth of Samuel in response to Hannah’s prayer (1 Sam. 9:17; 16:12, 13). Also, in relation to David, it is particularly evident that nothing can frustrate God’s plan to have him rule over Israel (1 Sam. 24:20).

Third, **the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering men for divinely appointed tasks** is evident. The Spirit of the Lord came upon both Saul and David after their anointing as king (1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13). The power of the Holy Spirit brought forth prophecy (1 Sam. 10:6) and victory in battle (1 Sam. 11:6).

Fourth, the books of Samuel demonstrate **the personal and national effects of sin**. The sins of Eli and his sons resulted in their deaths (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25; 3:10-14; 4:17,18). The lack of reverence for the ark of the covenant led to the death of a number of Israelites (1 Sam 6:19; 2 Sam. 6:6,7). Saul’s disobedience resulted in the Lord’s judgment, and he was rejected as king over Israel (1 Sam. 13:9, 13,14; 15:8,9, 20-23). Although David was forgiven for his sin of adultery and murder after his confession (2 Sam. 12:13), he still suffered the inevitable and devastating consequences of his sin (2 Sam. 12:14).¹³

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The book of 1 Samuel introduces to the Old Testament the kings of Israel. Four hundred and sixty years are going to pass with a king (or kings) ruling in the land. The first king, Saul is to reign for 40 years with the majority of those years in hard conflict with the Philistines to the west (14:52) and the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Amalekites to the east (14:47-48). His most significant battles include his victory over Nahash in the battle of Jabesh-gilead (chapter 11) and his defeat (and sin) of the Amalekites and King Agag in chapter 15.

Significant events and names for 1 Samuel are:

The judgeship of Eli: 1107 – 1067 BC

The judgeship of Samuel: 1067 – 1020 BC

The reign of Saul: 1043 – 1011 BC

The introduction of David.

OUTLINE

- A. The Times of the Judges, 1-7
 - a. Samuel's Birth, 1
 - b. Eli's Failure, 2
 - c. Samuel's Call, 3
 - d. Israel's Failures, 4-6
 - i. The war with the Philistines, 4
 - ii. The Ark and the Philistines, 5
 - iii. The Return of the Ark, 6
 - e. Samuel's Victories, 7
- B. Israel's First King: Saul, 8-15
 - a. Israel Rejects Samuel and God, 8
 - b. Saul is Chosen, 9
 - c. Saul's Coronation, 10-12
 - d. Saul's Failure as King, 13-15
 - i. Sinful Offering, 13
 - ii. Rash Vows, 14
 - iii. Partial Obedience, 15
- C. Israel's Second King Introduced: David, 16-31
 - a. David Anointed, 16
 - b. David's Military Success, 17
 - c. David's Acceptance by Israel, 18
 - d. Saul's Jealousy, 18
 - e. David on the Run, 19-27
 - i. Protected by Jonathan, Michal, and Samuel, 19
 - ii. Protected by Jonathan, Ahimelech, and Achish, 21
 - iii. Protected by his men, chased by Saul, 22-26
 - iv. Protected in Philistia, 27
 - f. Saul's Last Days, 28-31
 - i. Visits a Witch, 28
 - ii. David and the Philistines, 29

- iii. David and the Amalekites, 30
- iv. Philistines defeat Saul, 31

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2 Samuel

David

Monarchy to Captivity

1011 BC – 971 BC

AUTHOR

Much of what is said about 1 Samuel is applicable for 2 Samuel as well. As there is evidence that these two books were 1 unit in the Hebrew canon, we are led to believe that it would take a committee of authors to span the history of 130 years. Logically, it is believed that Samuel was responsible for the majority of 1 Samuel, and that Nathan, Gad, or Abiathar are responsible for the contents of 2 Samuel.

DATE OF WRITING

The date for the record of 2 Samuel alone would range between the beginning of Solomon's kingdom in 971 B.C. (King David's death marking the end of the book), and the year 722 B.C. MacArthur sums up this conclusion in the following statement. "The books of Samuel contain no clear indication of the date of composition. That the author wrote after the division of the kingdom between Israel and Judah in 931 B.C. is clear, due to the many references to Israel and Judah as distinct entities (1 Sam. 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:5; 11:11; 12:8; 19:42-43; 24:1,9). Also, the statement concerning Ziklag's belonging "to the kings of Judah to this day" in 1 Sam. 27:6 gives clear evidence of a post-Solomonic date of writing. There is no such clarity concerning how late the date of writing could be. However, 1 and 2 Samuel are included in the Former Prophets in the Hebrew canon, along with Joshua, Judges, and 1 and 2 Kings. If the Former Prophets were composed as a unit, then Samuel would have been written during the Babylonian captivity (ca. 560-540 B.C.) since 2 Kings concludes during the exile (2 Kin. 25:27-30). However, since Samuel has a different literary style than Kings, it was most likely penned before the Exile during the period of the divided kingdom (ca. 931-722 B.C.) and later made an integral part of the Former Prophets."¹

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of 2 Samuel covers the 40 years of David's reign as king. The years are 1011 – 971 BC. We are not given enough data to determine the years of the sin of David with Bathsheba, though there is some indication that it was close to the time that his older children were adults. David is believed to have lived to the age of 70 years old. That would mean that he was king at the age of 30. He would have conquered the Jebusites and captured Jerusalem early in his reign and would have escaped Jerusalem and Absalom's rebellion when he was a much older man.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of 2 Samuel has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets), the third of the four books in the division of the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings). 1 & 2 Samuel were considered one book, as was the books of 1 & 2 Kings.

THEME

The theme of 1 Samuel is identified by the impact of a new kingdom. The theme of 2 Samuel relates to the life of one of the greatest kings to sit upon that throne, King David. “The Book of Second Samuel offers a very candid portrait of the strengths and weaknesses of David’s forty-year reign. God is no respecter of persons, and the heroes of the Bible like David are not glorified to the neglect of their sin. This balanced presentation of the life of Israel’s greatest king reveals the origin of a perpetual dynasty (7:16). Several spiritual truths are reinforced and illustrated in the life of David. The most obvious of these is the cause and effect principle stressed in every book since Genesis: obedience (1-7) brings God’s blessings (8-10), and disobedience (11) leads to God’s judgment (12-24). The consequences of sin cannot be avoided; “sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:15), in this case, many.”²

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The enemies of Israel changed little during the times of 1 & 2 Samuel. Though David was a powerful king and most of the enemies were subdued during the first part of his reign, we are mindful that disobedience has its punishment. Thus, David’s peace was punctured with old enemies and new. Among those who have plagued Israel before, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites return to fight against Israel. However, a new enemy arises from an unexpected location – David’s own son, Absalom, leads a revolt that nearly takes the life of the king.

David will reign on the throne for 40 years (1011 – 971 BC), the first 7 ½ years as the king of Judah and the final 32 ½ as king over all Israel. It should be noted that Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, was made king of Israel for two years following the death of Saul.

OUTLINE

- A. David’s Triumphs, 1-10
 - a. Political Success, 1-5
 - i. His Coronation, 1
 - ii. Kingdom of Judah, 2
 - iii. Civil War, 2-4
 - iv. Kingdom of Israel, 5
 - b. Spiritual Success, 6-7
 - i. Ark brought to Jerusalem, 6
 - ii. David’s Covenant, 7
 - c. Military Success, 8-10
 - i. Philistia, Moab, and Edom, 8

- ii. Mephibosheth, 9
- iii. Ammon, 10
- B. David's Transgressions 11
- C. David's Troubles, 12-24
 - a. In His Family, 12-13
 - i. Death of a Baby, 12
 - ii. Incest of Amnon, 13
 - b. In His Kingdom, 13-24
 - i. Rebellion of Absalom, 14-18
 - 1. The Return of Absalom, 14
 - 2. The Rebellion of Absalom, 15
 - 3. The Rule of Absalom, 16
 - 4. The Death of Absalom, 17-18
 - ii. Problems and Revolutions, 19-20
 - iii. Famine, 21
 - iv. The Song of David, 22
 - v. David's Mighty Men, 23
 - vi. Sinful Census and Plague, 24

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¹ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 374.

² Talk Thru the Bible, p. 78-79.

1 Chronicles

Davidic Covenant

Monarchy to Captivity

1011 BC – 971 BC

AUTHOR

As with several of the Old Testament books, 1 and 2 Chronicles does not name its author. Internal evidence leads us to believe that Ezra may be the best option due to style, purpose, and opportunity.

Style: The first thing to note is the similarity of the Book of Ezra and the Books of Chronicles. “Relationships between the books of Chronicles and Ezra provide the most important single clue for fixing the date and also the authorship of the former volume. Since Chronicles appears to be the work of an individual writer, who was a Levitical leader, some identification with Ezra the priest and scribe (Ezra 7:1-6) appears possible from the outset. This conclusion is furthered, moreover, by the personal qualities that the writer displays for “the author...was an ecclesiastical official of knowledge, insight, wisdom, courage, organizing ability, and determination to put through his plan” (Myers, Chronicles, 1:Lxxxvi). The literary styles of the books are similar, and their contents have much in common: the frequent lists and genealogies, their focus on ritual, and joint devotion to the law of Moses. Most significant of all, the closing verses of 2 Chronicles (36:22-23) are repeated as the opening verses of Ezra (1:1-3a).”¹

Purpose: Ezra lived in a time when Israel had to regroup from 70 years of captivity. Included in their healing process was a need to attach them to the covenants and care of God. Their fathers had failed. Now a new generation was in the process of rebuilding the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem; in reality, rebuilding their lives and their relationship with God. As a result, Ezra had a particular ministry to them that brought them back to where they had fallen. “It is quite possible that the Talmudic tradition (Baba Bathra, 15a) is correct in assigning the authorship to Ezra. As the chief architect of the spiritual and moral revival of the Second Commonwealth, he would have had every incentive to produce a historical survey of this sort. As a Levite from the priestly line, his viewpoint would have been in perfect agreement with that of the author of this work, and he would be very apt to lay the stress just where the Chronicler has. It is pertinent to note that there was embodied in 2 Macc. 2:13-15 a tradition that Governor Nehemiah owned a considerable library: “He, founding a library, gathered together the books about the kings and prophets, and the books of David and letters of the kings about sacred gifts.” If Nehemiah did possess such a sizable collection of reference works, it might very well be that his close collaborator, Ezra, would have had ready access to these reference works and used them in the compilation of Chronicles.”² In light of his task, it would seem

fitting for Ezra to have access to the historical data that would unite a people with their God.

Opportunity: Along with the records of Nehemiah, it is believed that Ezra also worked from the records of several prophets prior to the fall of Jerusalem. “If Ezra the scribe (Ezra 7:6) was the writer of Chronicles, his “scribism” may account for the detailed acknowledgments of historical sources – the writings of such early prophets as Samuel, Nathan³, Gad (1 Chr. 29:29), Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah (2 Chr. 9:29; 12:15), Jehu, the son of Hanani (20:34), and such later ones as Isaiah (32:32).”

Jewish Tradition: Added to the information listed above, “Jewish tradition affirms that Ezra wrote Chronicles, along with the book that bears his name; and in recent scholarship it was the archaeologist W.F. Albright who particularly reemphasized this conclusion. North now states that “the unity of Ezra with Chronicles as the concept of a single author is today upheld by as unanimous a consensus as can be found anywhere in exegesis.”⁴

There are not other options given as author other than Ezra, and no reason to doubt that he could have been the one to have penned the books.

DATE OF WRITING

Following the evidence that Ezra was the author of the book of 1 Chronicles, the best time to place the writing of the book would be within the years 500 to 400 BC. The evidence of the writing of the Chronicles during the lifetime of Ezra and Nehemiah is both from tradition and from internal factors. As written in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, “The placing of the work of the Chronicles at the close of the Hebrew Scriptures is in itself of the nature of testimony. The men who placed it there testify thereby to their belief that these are the latest writings of the Old Testament aggregate. We are familiar with the testimony of Babha’ Bathra’ to the effect that most of the later books of the Old Testament were due to the men of the Great Synagogue and to Ezra, but that Nehemiah completed the Books of Chronicles. We cannot avoid including the Chronicles among the 22 books which Josephus says were written before the death of Artaxerxes Longimanus (Apion, I, 8). Of course the limit of time here really intended by Josephus is not the death of Artaxerxes, but the lifetime of men who were contemporary with him — that of Nehemiah, for example. We have already noted the testimony concerning Nehemiah’s library (2 Macc 2:13-15). The time when the library was being gathered was the most likely time for it to be used as the Chronicler has used it. Add the recapitulation in Ecclesiasticus (44 through 49), which mentions Nehemiah latest in its list of Old Testament worthies.

Internal marks, also, justify the conclusion that the work of the Chronicler was complete before Nehemiah died. The abundant presence of Persian words and facts, with the absence of Greek words and facts, seems conclusive to the effect that the work was done before the conquests of Alexander rendered the Greek influence paramount. In some of the sections (e.g. Ezra 7:28 ff; Nehemiah passim) Ezra and Nehemiah speak in the first person. The whole work makes the impression of being written up to date. The latest situation in Chronicles is the same with that in Nehemiah (1 Chronicles 9; compare Nehemiah 11:3 through 12:26). The latest event mentioned is the differentiating of the Samaritan schism. A certain enrollment was made (Nehemiah 12:22-26) in the reign of Darius, up to the high-priesthood of Johanan (elsewhere called Jonathan and John), but

including Jaddua the son of Johanan in the high-priestly succession. Ezra and Nehemiah were still in office (Nehemiah 12:26). This enrollment naturally connects itself with the expulsion of Jaddua's brother Manasseh for marrying into the family of Sanballat (Nehemiah 13:28; Josephus, Ant, XI, 7-8). Jaddua belongs to the fifth generation from Jeshua, who was high priest 538 BC. Josephus says that Sanballat held a commission from Darius. He mentions a certain Bagoas, "general of another Artaxerxes' army," as in relations with the high priest John."⁵

There is much support in the claim that this book was written by Ezra around the year 450 B.C. "For those, therefore, who accept the historicity of the events recorded in Ezra – from the decree of Cyrus in 538 down to Ezra's reform in 458-457 B.C. – and the validity of Ezra's autobiographical writing within the next few years, the date of composition for both books as one consecutive history must be about 450 B.C. and the place, Jerusalem."⁶

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The events and time span of 1 Chronicles is the same as 2 Samuel in the fact that they both are the written history of the life of David. The only significant difference is the inclusion of the family trees that trace the life of David back to the life of Adam. For additional information, refer back to the material given in 2 Samuel.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of 1 Chronicles has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon also places it in the category of history, but their 'historical' books only consisted of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles (both 1 & 2 Chronicles known as 1 volume).

THEME

To the casual reader, there may be questions in their mind as to the purpose of the Old Testament in repeating history and listing genealogy. Much of what is found in 1 and 2 Chronicles can be found in the other books of 1 and 2 Samuel or 1 and 2 Kings. But to the student of the Word, they can see that the theme makes the difference. Chronicles is not a mere repetition of the facts, but it is a detailed woven history of God's working in the promise of the Davidic Covenant.

"During that period of history, the ancient world was in the hands of the powerful Persian Empire. All that remained of the great Israelite kingdom under David and Solomon was the small province of Judah. The Davidic kingship had been replaced by a provincial governor appointed by the Persian king. The Temple, once destroyed, had been rebuilt, but not with the splendor of the former Temple of Solomon. By anyone's standards, the fifth century was hardly a golden age for the people of God. Their future as a kingdom and a distinct people of God, in fact, seemed bleaker at that moment than perhaps ever before. To make matters worse, it followed on the heels of the excitement of the return from exile and the anticipation of the coming messianic kingdom that accompanied the return. To their own generation, the books of Chronicles were a vivid reminder of the hope that rested in the faithfulness of God. They were reminders that the Lord had made a promise to the world and to the house of David. The promise was of

peace and prosperity, and the channel of the fulfillment of the promise was the covenant people of God, Israel. The books, in that setting, were a call for trust and obedience on the part of God's people: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14, KJV)."⁷

Clearly, the books were written as an encouragement to Israel "that God was not through with them" and as "a warning that future apostasy or idolatry would again be dealt with severely."⁸ It also provided the spiritual perspective on history that Israel needed to see, especially in light of the captivity and return to the land. The book of Chronicles is a spiritual commentary on history.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

As with the information concerning the date of the historical content of 1 Chronicles, it must also be stated here that the historical events of this book are the same that are mentioned in 2 Samuel. For such information, refer back to the material written in 2 Samuel.

OUTLINE

- A. The Royal Family, 1-9
 - a. Genealogy
 - i. Adam to Jacob, 1
 - ii. Jacob to David, 2
 - iii. David to Captivity, 3
 - iv. The Twelve Tribes, 4-8
 - 1. Judah and Simeon, 4
 - 2. Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, 5
 - 3. Levi, 6
 - 4. Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Asher, 7
 - 5. Benjamin, 8
 - v. Jerusalem and the Family of Saul, 9
- B. The Reign of David, 10-29
 - a. Becoming King, 10-12
 - i. Saul's Death, 10
 - ii. David's Kingdom, 11
 - b. Spiritual Influence, 13-17
 - i. The Ark brought to Jerusalem, 14-16
 - ii. The Plans for the Temple, 17
 - c. Military Influence, 18-20
 - d. Temple Organization, 21-27
 - i. Sinful Census, 21
 - ii. Temple Preparations, 22
 - iii. Levites, 23-24
 - iv. Musicians, 25
 - v. Guards, 26
 - vi. Civil Leaders, 27
 - e. David's Last Days, 28-29

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² A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 450.

³ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 374.

⁴ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 4, 1 & 2 Chronicles, p. 305-306.

⁵ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Orr, James, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, Inc.) 1999.

⁶ Ibid, p. 306.

⁷ First and Second Chronicles, Everyman's Bible Commentary, p 13-14.

⁸ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, p. 122.

Psalms

Worship

Monarchy to Captivity
Majority written around 1000 BC

AUTHOR

To identify the author of the Book of Psalms is similar to declaring an author of a hymnbook. There are so many contributors to the project that one name may be most prominent, but cannot be given the status of the author of the whole.

There are 150 different psalms within the book of Psalms. Most of them are identifiable, but there are still a significant amount of anonymous pieces. The names we can place with certain chapters include David (author of 75 psalms), Asaph (12 psalms), Korah (11 psalms), and Solomon, Moses, Heman and Ethan with all fewer than a couple of psalms each. “The remaining 48 psalms remain anonymous in their authorship, although Ezra is thought to be the author of some.”¹

Generally speaking, “the book of Psalms is commonly spoken of as David’s because he wrote the larger number of individual psalms (seventy-three are ascribed to him in their titles). He was known as ‘the sweet psalmist of Israel’ (2 Sam 23:1), and had an extraordinary combination of talents.”²

This gift of music was a driving force in David’s collection and production of temple songs as well as temple instruments. But he was not alone in his desire. A few other men in OT history (those who also loved the worship of the True God in His Temple) have contributed to the collection of the Book of Psalms. “The five books were compiled over several centuries. As individual psalms were written, some were used in Israel’s worship. A number of small collections were independently made, like the pilgrimage songs and groups of Davidic psalms (1-41, 51-70, 138-145). These smaller anthologies were gradually collected into the five books. The last stage was the uniting and editing of the five books themselves. David (1 Chr. 15:16), Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29:30; Prov. 25:1), and Ezra (Neh. 8) were involved in various stages of collecting the psalms.”³

DATE OF WRITING

There is a similar dilemma in choosing the date of this book as with choosing the author. “In identifying the authors, it is clear that the great majority of the psalms were written during the era of the united monarchy (the foundational books of 2 Samuel and 1 Kings). Technically, the psalms cover a thousand years of history from Moses (1500 B.C.) to the post-exile times (500 B.C.). But the vast majority were written in the hundred-year period from 1030 –930 B.C.”⁴

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Psalms has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of poetry. Some even call it the section of wisdom literature. The Jewish canon places it in the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) among the poetical books including Proverbs and Job.

THEME

Even with the variety of psalms within the Book of Psalms, along with the variety of emotions and experiences, it is not too difficult to develop a theme for the book. As MacArthur writes, “The basic theme of Psalms is living real life in the real world, where two dimensions operate simultaneously: 1) a horizontal or temporal reality, and 2) a vertical or transcendent reality. Without denying the pain of the earthly dimension, the people of God are to live joyfully and dependently on the Person and promises standing behind the heavenly/eternal dimension. All cycles of human troubles and triumphs provide occasions for expressing human complaints, confidence, prayers, or praise, to Israel’s sovereign Lord.”⁵

As it can easily be seen, the book does have the perspective of man on the events of his life. Yet it also has a look up in the direction of God, the giver and sustainer of this life. Therefore, some have desired a theme that reflects worship in response to the circumstances of life. “The common theme is worship – God is worthy of all praise because of who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. His goodness extends through all time and eternity. The psalms present a very personal response to the person and work of God as they reflect on His program for His people. There is a keen desire to see His program fulfilled and His name extolled. Many of the psalms survey the Word of God and the attributes of God, especially during difficult times. This kind of faith produces confidence in His power in spite of circumstances.”⁶

OUTLINE

In outlining the Book of Psalms, I have noticed that few commentators go in much depth to mark the characteristics of the book. Indeed, there is very little we can do with such a variety of chapters. However, there is a flow which follows a series of benedictions (whether they are meant to be there or not), perhaps supplied by the final compiler who felt it necessary to divide the book in logical arrangements. The outline given is divided according to those benedictions.

- A. Book 1: Songs of Adoration, 1-41
- B. Book 2: Songs of Deliverance, 42-72
- C. Book 3: Songs of Sanctuary, 73-89
- D. Book 4: Songs of Unrest, 90-106
- E. Book 5: Songs of Praise, 107-150

Jensen⁷ has produced an outline with the same divisions; but his work stands out in the way he identifies each section.

- 1. Book One: Adoring Worship.
 - a. The likeness of Genesis
- 2. Book Two: Wondering Worship.
 - a. The likeness of Exodus

3. Book Three: Ceaseless Worship
 - a. The likeness of Leviticus
4. Book Four: Submissive Worship
 - a. The likeness of Numbers
5. Book Five: Perfected Worship
 - a. The likeness of Deuteronomy

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² Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 273.

³ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 152-153.

⁴ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, Benware, Paul N., Moody Press, 1988, p. 151.

⁵ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 741.

⁶ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 153.

⁷ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, p. 280.

1 Kings

Division

Monarchy to Captivity
971 BC – 851 BC

AUTHOR

One of the most prominent opinions concerning the authorship of 1 and 2 Kings is that Jeremiah the prophet wrote it. According to Jewish tradition, the books of the Nebiim (the Prophets) were written by those who had personally filled the office of prophet.¹ There are several factors to consider that support this conclusion.

First of all, “The author was clearly a prophet/historian as seen in the prophetic exposé of apostasy. Both First and Second Kings emphasize God’s righteous judgment on idolatry and immorality.”² This is especially portrayed in the fact that the author wrote “as an eyewitness of the Jewish nation’s final demise, [and] was concerned to show the divine reasons for that fall. In so doing he utilized many sources, weaving the details together into an integrated whole that graphically portrayed Israel’s covenant failure. Despite the lack of dogmatic certainty, a reasonable case can be made for Jeremic authorship affirms the likelihood that “the prophets kept the records throughout the generations of the Hebrew Kingdoms.”³

Secondly, in the case of Jeremiah, it is important to note that he had access to the throne room and to historical records. “Since he was descended from the priestly line of Abiathar, and since in all probability his father, Hilkiah, was active in communicating both the traditional facts and the teaching of Israel’s past, it is very likely that Jeremiah had access to historical and theological source materials. Furthermore he would have had more ready entrée to the royal annals than any other prophet. Certainly no other prophet was so intimately involved in the final stages of Judah’s history.”⁴

In addition to this, there is a striking resemblance between the style of the books of Kings and the book of Jeremiah. Perhaps the most convincing piece of evidence is the fact that “section 24:18-25:30 [2 Kings] is almost the same as Jeremiah 52”.⁵ Also, 2 Kings 25:22-26 seems to be drawn from Jeremiah 40-44, indicating “a bridge to the later historical notice concerning Jehoiachin.”⁶

Furthermore, it would appear that whoever wrote the book, did so before the Babylonian captivity. “The phrase “to this day” in First Kings 8:8 and 12:19 indicates a time of authorship prior to the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.).”⁷ There are several factors that would stand against this piece of evidence, especially that “some commentators have pointed to his recording Jehoiachin’s release from captivity in Babylon in support of this conclusion since this event seems to them to have been specially significant for the Jews in captivity.”⁸ John MacArthur discusses the same point in his study Bible. “Jewish tradition proposed that Jeremiah wrote Kings, though

this is unlikely because the final event recorded in the book (2 Kin. 25:27-30) occurred in Babylon in 561 B.C. Jeremiah never went to Babylon, but to Egypt (Jer. 43:1-7), and would have been at least 86 years old by 561 B.C. Actually, the identity of the unnamed author remains unknown. Since the ministry of prophets is emphasized in Kings, it seems that the author was most likely an unnamed prophet of the Lord who lived in exile with Israel in Babylon.”⁹ To answer this dilemma, other commentators believe that Jeremiah wrote all but the concluding chapters of 2 Kings. As recorded in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, “Certainly the contents of all but the last appendix (2 King 25:27-30) could have been written by Jeremiah. Perhaps this was added by Baruch or one of the prophets within the Jeremianic tradition.”¹⁰

Still others argue against Jeremiah because of the “author’s failure to use the familiar names for the kings of Judah as employed by Jeremiah argues for caution in too readily following the traditional identification of Jeremiah as the author. However the distinction in the employment of royal names between the books of Jeremiah and Kings may be one of formality, the official names being deemed more proper for an objective history.”¹¹

Archer adds one more point that bears merit. “One very strong consideration in favor of this conjecture [Jeremiah authorship] is that there is no mention whatever of Jeremiah himself in the chapters dealing with Josiah and his successors. Apart from modesty on the part of the author, it is hard to account for the failure to mention so important a factor in Judah’s history as was the ministry of Jeremiah, her last great prophet.”¹²

DATE OF WRITING

The dating of the book of Kings is not difficult and not found to be an issue of debate. According to the Open Bible, “1 Kings covers the historical period 970-852 B.C.; 2 Kings presents material from 852 – 560 B.C. 2 Kings closes with the release of Jehoiachin from prison in the thirty-seventh year of his imprisonment – about 560 B.C. The book could not have been completed before this date, nor later than 538 B.C. the year of the return from Babylon, since it says nothing of that event. As this book is a unit and not the product of several hands of successive dates, it is to be dated in the period between 560 – 538 B.C.”¹³

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Many significant events occurred in the first 50 years of the time covered by 1 Kings. Prominent in the book is the fact that Solomon began his 40 year reign in 971 BC. Four years into his reign, the Temple began to be constructed in 966 BC and was finished 7 years later (959 BC). It would be another 28 years until a major event would change the complexity of the Jewish world and the history of the Old Testament.

The year would be 931 BC. The new king, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, made a grave mistake in his authority over the Israelites. Ten of the 12 tribes of Israel would abandon the throne of David and establish the new northern kingdom, Israel. The division would last until both kingdoms are carried away into captivity. Israel (the northern kingdom) will endure from 931 – 722 BC, a total of 209 years. Judah (the southern kingdom) will last longer (931 – 586 BC), a total of 345 years.

Significant men during the time of 1 Kings

Solomon: reigns 40 years (971-931 BC)

Rehoboam: reigns 17 years (931-913 BC)

Asa: reigns 41 years (911-870 BC)
 Jehoshaphat: reigns 25 years (873-848 BC)
 Northern king, Jereboam: reigns 22 years (931-910 BC)
 Northern king, Ahab: reigns 22 years (874-853 BC)
 Elijah begins his ministry to Israel during the reign of Ahab.
 Obadiah writes his prophecy to Edom around 850 BC.
 Rezon is king of Syria (Aram) from 940-915 BC.
 Ben-Hadad I reigns in Syria from 900-860 BC.
 Ben-Hadad II reigns from 860-841 BC.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of 1 Kings has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the listing of the Former Prophets. Joshua, Judges and Samuel makes up the rest of the Former Prophets.

THEME

There is emphasis throughout the books of 1 and 2 Kings on the rulers of Judah and Israel. 1 Kings highlights the reign of Solomon as the only united monarchy for the remainder of the history covered. The bulk of the two books pertain to a divided kingdom. Division certainly qualifies as a good term to describe the theme. This division and the events to follow were directly attributed to the relationship between the nation of Israel and the Lord. Therefore, it is stated that the theme would be: “God blesses the king and the nation when they keep the Covenant. His judgment falls with inevitable certainty on those who disobey His Law.”¹⁴

In regards to 1st Kings alone, the book “was written to give an account of the reigns of the kings from Solomon to Jehoshaphat (Judah) and Ahaziah (Israel). The two books of Kings as a whole trace the monarchy from the point of its greatest prosperity under Solomon to its demise and destruction in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Theologically, First Kings provides a prophetically-oriented evaluation of the spiritual and moral causes that led to political and economic effects in the two kingdoms. The material is too selective to be considered a biography of the kings. For example, Omri was one of Israel’s most important rulers from a political point of view, but because of his moral corruption, his achievements are dismissed in eight verses. The lives of these kings are used to teach several basic principles: (1) Man cannot properly rule himself without conscious dependence on the help of God; (2) the kings had great responsibility as God’s administrators, because the circumstances of the nation depended in large part upon their faithfulness to Yahweh; (3) the kings were illustrations of the people as a whole – just as they disregarded God’s prophets, so did the people; and (4) observance of God’s law produces blessing, but apostasy is rewarded by judgment.”¹⁵

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The first 40 years of the book of 1 Kings is lived without any significant conflicts with Israel’s neighbors. Even Egypt and Syria cooperate with Solomon’s rule, each nation trading freely with each other. However, at the time of Israel’s breakup during

Rehoboam's reign, a new enemy emerges from within Israel's borders. Northern brothers now fight with southern brothers. Israel verses Judah. Much like a seesaw, the kingdoms fight with one another – as one kingdom strengthens itself, the other becomes weaker. First, Israel seemed to be stronger under the rule of Jeroboam and Baasha. Later, it would be Asa and Jehoshaphat (Judean kings) who would dominate the other army. This will continue until the emergence of an outside power that begins to pick away at northern Israel. Ben-Hadad I, king of Syria began his attacks against Omri. The Syrians become even stronger against the kingdom of his son, Ahab. On the horizon is the growing kingdom of Assyria – soon to be the dominant force in the middle east. Omri is noted as a victor over the nation of Moab, and through a treaty with the Phoenicians, brought together princess Jezebel and prince Ahab in marriage.

OUTLINE

- A. A Kingdom United, 1-11
 - a. Establishing Solomon's Reign, 1-2
 - b. Solomon's Successes, 3-9
 - i. His Wisdom, 3
 - ii. His Administration, 4
 - iii. The Temple, 5-8
 - 1. Preparing for the Temple, 5
 - 2. Constructing the Temple, 6-7
 - 3. Dedicating the Temple, 8
 - iv. His Covenant from God, 9
 - c. Solomon's Failures, 10-11
 - i. Visitors and Wealth, 10
 - ii. Wives and Concubines, 11
- B. A Kingdom Divided, 12-22
 - a. The Cause, 12
 - b. Jeroboam and Rehoboam, 12-14
 - c. Abijam and Asa, 15
 - d. Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, 15-16
 - e. Ahab and Elijah, 16-22
 - i. Ahab's Reign, 16
 - ii. Elijah's drought, 17
 - iii. Elijah and the Prophets of Baal, 18
 - iv. Elijah and Elisha, 19
 - v. Ahab's victories, 20
 - vi. Ahab and Naboth's Vineyard, 21
 - vii. Ahab's Death, 22
 - f. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah, 22

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- ¹⁵ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 85.

Song of Solomon

Love

Monarchy to Captivity

971 BC

AUTHOR

The Song of Solomon has long been regarded as the work of King Solomon, the son of David. “Although the first verse of chapter 1 can also be read: ‘The Song of Songs which is about or concerning Solomon,’ the traditional view has been to regard King Solomon as the author of the Song. Since the contents of the book are fully in harmony with the great gifts of wisdom which we know Solomon possessed (1 Kin. 4:32-33), there is no sufficient ground to deviate from this historic position.”¹

There are certain facts within the book itself that supports Solomonic authorship. “The author shows a noteworthy interest in natural history, corresponding to the historical notices about Solomon’s encyclopedic knowledge in this field (1 Kings 4:33). Thus the flora mentioned in Canticles include twenty-one varieties of plant life (such as henna flowers in 1:14, rose of Sharon, lily of the valley in 2:1, apple trees, pomegranates, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, and mandrakes). Among the fauna are no less than fifteen species of animals (roes, hinds, harts, doves, foxes, goats, ewes, etc.). There is also prominent mention of Pharaoh’s cavalry in 1:9, which accords with the statement in 1 Kings 10:28, where the cavalry appears as an important item in Solomon’s army as well as in his trade relations. The book shows many evidences of royal luxury and the abundance of costly imported products, such as spikenard in 1:12; myrrh in 1:13; frankincense in 3:6; palanquins in 3:9; cosmetic powders, silver, gold, purple, ivory, and beryl. The geographical references unmistakably favor a date prior to 930 B.C. The author mentions quite indiscriminately the localities to be found in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms: Engedi, Hermon, Carmel, Lebanon, Heshbon, Jerusalem. These are spoken of as if they all belonged to the same political realm.”²

Uniting this information along with the first verse that ascribes the book to Solomon, it is sufficient to declare Solomon as the writer of this book.

DATE OF WRITING

As mentioned in the section dealing with authorship, there is ample evidence to place the writing of the book in the 900’s B.C, during the reign of Solomon. “Solomon, who reigned over the united kingdom 40 years (971-931 B.C.), appears 7 times by name in this book (1:1,5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11,12). In view of his writing skills, musical giftedness (1 Kin. 4:32), and the authorial, not dedicatory, sense of 1:1, this piece of Scripture could have been penned at any time during Solomon’s reign.”³ For a more detailed guess at the

date, Jewish tradition has suggested that “Solomon wrote Song of Solomon in his youthful years, Proverbs in his middle years, and Ecclesiastes in his last years. With this in mind, we may suggest that the writing date of the Song of Solomon would be closer to 971 B.C. than 931 B.C.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of the Song of Solomon has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of poetry or wisdom literature. The Jewish canon places it in the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) in the section of the Megilloth (5 scrolls). These scrolls are read at various times during the Jewish year. Interestingly enough, the Song of Solomon was to be the only book read during the Passover memorial.

Megilloth (5 Scrolls) – read at the annual Jewish feasts/memorials
 Song of Solomon (Passover – 14th of Nisan [Mar/Apr])
 Ruth (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after
 Passover, 6th of Sivan [May/June])
 Lamentations (Memorial of the destruction of Jerusalem, 9th of
 Ab [July/August])
 Ecclesiastes (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days
 after Passover, Sivan [May/June])
 Esther (Festival of Purim – 14th & 15th of Adar [Feb/Mar])

THEME

The theme of the Song of Solomon without a doubt must be classified as a love relationship. Regardless of the avenue of interpretation love is the emphasis. Allegory scholars would see it as the love between Christ and His church. The Jews would see it as the love between God and His people.

The Dramatist and the Literalists emphasize the love between a man and a woman. Even those who view the book as a type, must conclude that the bond between Christ and the Church is a bond of love.

MacArthur writes more specifically on the theme of the book. “In contrast to the two distorted extremes of ascetic abstinence and lustful perversion outside of marriage, Solomon’s ancient love song exalts the purity of marital affection and romance. It parallels and enhances other portions of Scripture which portray God’s plan for marriage, including the beauty and sanctity of sexual intimacy between husband and wife. The Song rightfully stands alongside other classic Scripture passages which expand on this theme, e.g., Gen. 2:24; Ps. 45; Prov. 5:1-23; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; 13:1-8; Eph. 5:18-33; Col. 3:18,19; and 1 Pet. 3:1-7. Hebrews 13:4 captures the heart of this song, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”⁴

OUTLINE

- A. The Engagement Period, 1-2
- B. The Marriage Ceremony, 3
- C. The Honeymoon Days, 4
- D. The Maturation Period, 5-8
 - a. The Struggles, 5-7:10
 - b. The Growth, 7:11-8

The Song of Solomon is not difficult to outline. Some have been able to weave the theme within the outline, as MacArthur demonstrates in the outline that he gives in his study Bible using “Leaving, Cleaving, and Weaving” from Genesis 2:24.

- I. The Courtship: “Leaving” (1:2-3:5)
 - a. the Lover’s Remembrances (1:2-2:7)
 - b. the Lover’s Expression of Reciprocal Love (2:8-3:5)
- II. The Wedding: “Cleaving” (3:6-5:1)
 - a. The kingly bridegroom (3:6-11)
 - b. The Wedding and First Night Together (4:1-5:1a)
 - c. God’s Approval (5:1b)
- III. The Marriage: “Weaving” (5:2-8:14)
 - a. The first major disagreement (5:2-6:3)
 - b. The Restoration (6:4-8:4)
 - c. Growing in Grace (8:5-14)

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⁴ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, p. 940-941.

Proverbs

Wisdom

Monarchy to Captivity

951 BC

AUTHOR

It is not uncommon to find that the name of Solomon is promoted as the principle author of the Book of Proverbs. There are other names brought into the discussion, especially those named in the book (e.g., Agur and Lemuel). Others have attributed the final compilation of the book to the work of Hezekiah.

One of the significant issues in the authorship question involves the divisions of the book. “The authorship and date of Proverbs cannot be considered apart from understanding the book’s structure. The book is comprised of eight sections written at various times and including several authors or editors. The heading “The Proverbs of Solomon” in 1:1 introduces chapters 1-9 (sections I and II). ...According to 10:1, Section III (10:1-22:16) is also the work of Solomon. Section IV (22:17-24:34) is called the “sayings of the wise” (22:17; 23:23). The identity of these wise men is uncertain...The proverbs of Section V (chaps 25-29) were written by Solomon but were compiled by men of Hezekiah (25:1)...Sections VI (chap. 30) and VII (31:1-9), were written by Agur and King Lemuel, respectively. Those men were non-Israelites, perhaps Arabians; their identities and origins are obscure. Section VIII (31:10-31) may be the continuation of the words ascribed to Lemuel (31:1) but its construction as a separate acrostic poem and its stylistic distinction from 31:1-9 mark it off as an independent piece. If it is, its authorship is not known.”¹

Beyond this, most of what is added to the question is a matter of speculation. “One commentator has suggested this possibility of the three books being written at different stages of his career: Song of Solomon – written when he was young, and in love; Proverbs – written during middle age, when his intellectual powers were at their peak; Ecclesiastes – written in old age, when he was disappointed and disillusioned with the carnality of much of his life.”²

DATE OF WRITING

If most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon, as is logical from the information at hand, then the dating must be given between 950-900 B.C. to match the years of his reign. This is generally not debated.

However, the compiling of the book in the days of Hezekiah must put the dating of the final collection around the year 700 B.C. during the reign of Hezekiah. Little else is discussed by the commentator and most conservative scholars have no issue to debate

with this information. It is my belief that the majority of Solomon's contribution to this book took place when his life showed a greater tendency toward the things of the Lord and before his wives drew his heart away. Therefore, I give the date to be about 951 BC, the middle of the reign of Solomon.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Proverbs has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of poetry or wisdom literature. The Jewish canon places it in the poetical books of the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) along with Psalms and Job.

THEME

The theme of the Book of Proverbs is easy to see. It is full of wise sayings based on the wisdom of God. But these sayings are not without basis. As Benware states, "Proverbs gives wisdom on all areas of human experience. Wisdom is not simply a matter of the intellect – it is viewing life and self from God's perspective, which is the only true and valid perspective. A wise person is able to deal with life's issues and problems with the advantage of God's viewpoint."³

Wisdom is viewed in a variety of ways in our world. There is the wisdom of the far east religions and the wisdom of the classroom in Europe. The wisdom of Proverbs goes beyond worldly wisdom primarily because, "Proverbs contains a gold mine of biblical theology, reflecting themes of Scripture brought to the level of practical righteousness (1:3), by addressing man's ethical choices, calling into question how he thinks, lives, and manages his daily life in light of divine truth. More specifically, Proverbs calls man to live as the Creator intended him to live when He made man (Ps. 90:1,2,12). The recurring promise of Proverbs is that generally the wise (the righteous who obey God: live longer (9:11), prosper (2:20-22), experience joy (3:13-18) and the goodness of God temporally (12:21), while fools suffer shame (3:35) and death (10:21). On the other hand, it must be remembered that this general principle is balanced by the reality that the wicked sometimes prosper (Ps. 73:3,12), though only temporarily (Ps. 73:17-19). Job illustrates that there are occasions when the godly wise are struck with disaster and suffering.....The two major themes which are interwoven and overlapping throughout Proverbs are wisdom and folly. Wisdom, which includes knowledge, understanding, instruction, discretion, and obedience, is built on fear of the Lord and the Word of God. Folly is everything opposite to wisdom."⁴

The simplest way to begin wisdom is to fear the Lord (1:7). This admonition is repeated in a number of verses that highlight the "fear of the Lord" within the book.

Proverbs 1:7 (NASB)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:29

Because they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of the LORD.

Proverbs 2:5

Then you will discern the fear of the LORD,
And discover the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 3:7

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Proverbs 8:13

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way,
And the perverted mouth, I hate.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 10:27

The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Proverbs 14:26-27

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,
And his children will have refuge.
²⁷The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
That one may avoid the snares of death.

Proverbs 15:16

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD,
Than great treasure and turmoil with it.

Proverbs 15:33

The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom,
And before honor *comes* humility.

Proverbs 16:6

By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for,
And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

Proverbs 19:23

The fear of the LORD *leads* to life,
So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

Proverbs 22:4

The reward of humility *and* the fear of the LORD
Are riches, honor and life.

Proverbs 23:17

Do not let your heart envy sinners,
But *live* in the fear of the LORD always.

Proverbs 24:21

My son, fear the LORD and the king;
Do not associate with those who are given to change;⁵

OUTLINE

- A. Wisdom for Good Beginnings, 1-9
 - a. Avoiding Bad Company, 1
 - b. Avoiding the Adulteress, 2
 - c. Trusting God, 3
 - d. Gaining Wisdom, 4
 - e. Avoiding Lust, 5
 - f. Avoiding Laziness and Adultery, 6
 - g. Avoiding the Harlot, 7
 - h. The Difference Between Wisdom and Folly, 8-9
- B. Wisdom for Righteous Living, 10-29
 - a. Righteous Living versus Wicked Living, 10-15
 - b. Godly Living, 16-22
 - c. Godly Practices, 22-23
 - d. Godly People, 24
 - e. Godly Relationships, 25-26
 - f. Godly Actions, 27-29
- C. Wisdom from Agur, 30
- D. Wisdom From Lemuel, 31

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⁵ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

Ecclesiastes

Vanity

Monarchy to Captivity

931 BC

AUTHOR

It is not without evidence and the support of tradition that Solomon is the best candidate for the role as author of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Indeed, there are no other names mentioned to rival the support of Solomon.

Archer records the following facts. “The author of this work identifies himself as the son of David, king in Jerusalem. While he does not specify that his name is Solomon, it is fair to assume that the direct successor of David is meant rather than some later descendant. This assumption is confirmed by numerous internal evidences, such as the references to his unrivaled wisdom (1:16), his unequaled wealth (2:8), his large retinue of servants (2:7), his opportunities for carnal pleasure (2:3), and his extensive building activities (2:4-6). No other descendant of David measures up to these specifications but Solomon himself. It has therefore been the traditional view, accepted by Jewish and Christian scholars alike, that Solomon, the son of David, wrote the book in its entirety.”¹ MacArthur also stresses that “The autobiographical profile of the book’s writer unmistakably points to Solomon.”²

Some have offered alternatives to this conclusion by suggesting that Solomon’s work was edited or that an anonymous author wrote about Solomon. For example, “Jewish talmudic tradition attributes the book to Solomon but suggests that Hezekiah’s scribes may have edited the text (see Prov. 25:1). Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes is the standard Christian position, although some scholars, along with the Talmud, believe the work was later edited during the time of Hezekiah or possibly Ezra.”³

Also, the Open Bible states, “The book seems to claim Solomon as its author; however, today most scholars say that Solomon was not the author, but rather that the work is a product of postexilic times. They usually assume, however, that the central figure in the book is Solomon, and that the unknown author used him as a literary device to convey his message. He did not intend to deceive his original readers, and undoubtedly no one was deceived.”⁴ To add to this information, it is said, “...commentators of all schools till recently emphasized that the Hebrew belongs to a time considerably later than that of Solomon.”⁵

However, the support within the text carries more weight than the speculation of the modern scholars. It is not uncommon that the OT text is being re-evaluated by the scholars of the recent and present days. Their opinion from the last generation or so should be measured against the opinion of the last three thousand years and the authority

of the Word of God. Sufficient evidence is within the pages to support Solomon as the author of the book.

DATE OF WRITING

Logically, if Solomon is declared the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, than the date of its composition must be during his lifetime. Scofield suggests a date in the 10th century B.C.⁶ A more specific date is given by Benware. “It is probably best to assume that Solomon wrote this book toward the end of his life, after he had experienced so very much. Solomon had begun his reign walking with the Lord and ruling with great wisdom. But Solomon sinned by turning from the Lord to serve idols, and so experienced life apart from the true God. After he repented and turned back to the Lord, Solomon could reflect insightfully on his failure and his foolishness. He understood experientially the emptiness of living away from the Lord. Since Solomon died in 931 B.C., a date shortly before that would be assigned to this book.”⁷

As there are other opinions concerning the authorship of the book, there are also other opinions concerning the date of its composition. Those who favor an author other than Solomon, suggest that we consider a date during the time of Hezekiah or Ezra. Ezra is especially tempting to those who believe that the literary forms in the book are postexilic. However, these literary forms are considered “unique, and cannot be used in dating this book. The phrase “all who were before me in Jerusalem” (1:16) has been used to suggest a date after Solomon’s time, but there were many kings and wise men in Jerusalem before the time of Solomon.”⁸

Following the belief that Ecclesiastes was written around 935 B.C. Jewish tradition has suggested that “Solomon wrote Song of Solomon in his youthful years, Proverbs in his middle years, and Ecclesiastes in his last years. The book may be expressing regret for his folly and wasted time due to carnality and idolatry.”⁹

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Ecclesiastes has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of poetry or wisdom literature. The Jewish canon places it in the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) as one of the Megilloth (5 scrolls). It was to be read annually at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

- Megilloth (5 Scrolls) – read at the annual Jewish feasts/memorials
 - Song of Solomon (Passover – 14th of Nisan [Mar/Apr])
 - Ruth (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after Passover, 6th of Sivan [May/June])
 - Lamentations (Memorial of the destruction of Jerusalem, 9th of Ab [July/August])
 - Ecclesiastes (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after Passover, Sivan [May/June])
 - Esther (Festival of Purim – 14th & 15th of Adar [Feb/Mar])

THEME

On the one hand, the Book of Ecclesiastes is presented as a teacher would present a lecture in the classroom. The message is based on experience. On the other hand, it could also be viewed as one who has been searching for significance in life and his memoirs are recorded for us to view. Scofield states that the theme of the book is “man’s reasoning. Ecclesiastes is the book of man “under the sun” reasoning about life. The philosophy it sets forth, which makes no claim to revelation but which inspiration records for our instruction, represents the world-view of one of the wisest men, who knew that there is a holy God and that He will bring everything into judgment.”¹⁰ As the “Teacher”, Solomon presents the futility of life, expressing a desire that the student not follow in his footsteps.

The element of searching is also dominant throughout the book. “Ecclesiastes reports the results of a diligent quest for purpose, meaning, and satisfaction in human life. The Preacher poignantly sees the emptiness and futility of power, popularity, prestige, and pleasure apart from God. The word *vanity* appears thirty-seven times to express the many things that cannot be understood about life. All earthly goals and ambitions when pursued as ends in themselves, lead to dissatisfaction and frustration. Life “under the sun” (used twenty-nine times) seems to be filled with inequities, uncertainties, changes in fortune, and violations of justice. But Ecclesiastes does not give an answer of atheism or skepticism; God is referred to throughout. In fact, it claims that the search for man’s *summum bonum* must end in God. Satisfaction in life can only be found by looking beyond this world. Ecclesiastes gives an analysis of negative themes but it also develops the positive theme of overcoming the vanities of life by fearing a God who is good, just, and sovereign (12:13-14). Wisdom involves seeing life from a divine perspective and trusting God in the face of apparent futility and lack of purpose. Life is a daily gift from God and it should be enjoyed as much as possible. Our comprehension is indeed limited, but there are many things we can understand. Qoheleth recognized that God will ultimately judge all people. Therefore, he exhorted: “Fear God and keep His commandments” (12:13).”¹¹

Both of these ideas are united in the theme suggested by Benware. “Ecclesiastes records man’s struggle to find meaning and fulfillment in life. The basic theme is that life is empty and meaningless apart from a right relationship with God. Unless a man comes to know the Creator, nothing in the creation can bring him peace and satisfaction. Everything will be “vain” (1:2; 12:8). All of man’s pursuits will eventually leave him discontent and empty.”¹²

OUTLINE

- A. Vanity Defined, 1-1:11
- B. Vanity Demonstrated, 1-6
 - a. Futility of Life and Wisdom, 1
 - b. Futility of Pleasure and Wealth, 2
 - c. God’s Plan for Life, 3
 - d. Futility of Oppression, Work, and Success, 4
 - e. Futility of False Worship and Riches, 5-6
- C. Vanity and Decisions, 7-12
 - a. Good Advice, 7

- b. God's Provisions, 8-9
- c. Uncertainties of Life, 10
- d. Aging Life, 11
- e. Concluding remarks concerning Wisdom, 12

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2 Kings

Captivity

Monarchy to Captivity
853 BC – 560 BC

AUTHOR

It has been stated in the material on 1 Kings that Jeremiah could be the best option for the author of 1 and 2 Kings. The books were considered one volume in the Jewish Scriptures and have all the characteristics of a single author. For more information, see the introductory material in 1 Kings.

DATE OF WRITING

This same information is found in 1 Kings: The dating of the book of Kings is not difficult and not found to be an issue of debate. According to the Open Bible, “1 Kings covers the historical period 970-852 B.C.; 2 Kings presents material from 852 – 560 B.C. 2 Kings closes with the release of Jehoiachin from prison in the thirty-seventh year of his imprisonment – about 560 B.C. The book could not have been completed before this date, nor later than 538 B.C. the year of the return from Babylon, since it says nothing of that event. As this book is a unit and not the product of several hands of successive dates, it is to be dated in the period between 560 – 538 B.C.”¹

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Significant to the events of 2 kings are the dates of 722 BC and 586 BC. The first date is the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrian army. The second date represents the final destruction of Jerusalem under the army of Babylon. Much of the Old Testament prophecy was recorded during these years, including Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Nahum, Joel, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah. Important men, such as Ezekiel and Daniel were coming on the scene in the Lord’s work. This period of time (853-560 BC) would include the reigns of good kings Joash (835–796 BC), Hezekiah (715–686 BC), and Josiah (640–609 BC). Israel would see the kingdoms of Jehu (841-798 BC) and Jereboam II (793-753 BC). The ministry of Elijah closes about the same time that 2 Kings begins. Elisha was the principle prophet during the first part of 2 Kings.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of 2 Kings has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the

listing of the Former Prophets. Joshua, Judges and Samuel makes up the rest of the Former Prophets.

THEME

There is emphasis throughout the books of 1 and 2 Kings on the rulers of Judah and Israel. 1 Kings highlights the reign of Solomon as the only united monarchy for the remainder of the history covered. The bulk of the two books pertain to a divided kingdom. Division certainly qualifies as a good term to describe the theme. This division and the events to follow were directly attributed to the relationship between the nation of Israel and the Lord. Therefore, it is stated that the theme would be: “God blesses the king and the nation when they keep the Covenant. His judgment falls with inevitable certainty on those who disobey His Law.”²

It’s important to note that “the two books of Kings were artificially divided in the middle of the reign of King Ahaziah of Israel. Because both books were originally one, they share the same theme and purpose. They record the pivotal events in the careers of the kings of Israel and Judah and show how disobedient and rebellion against God led to the failure and overthrow of the monarchy. Kings was written selectively, not exhaustively, from a prophetic viewpoint to teach that the decline and collapse of the two kingdoms occurred because of failure on the part of the rulers and people to heed the warnings of God’s messengers. The spiritual climate of the nation determined its political and economic conditions.”³

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Though there are several nations that spring up as enemies of Israel and Judah during the time of 2 Kings, two are most important to discuss. Syria is known to have had much to do with the northern kingdom of Israel during the earlier part of 2 Kings. However, a stronger nation has come, the Assyrians, who dominated Syria and Israel. In the year 722 BC, the Assyrian army defeated King Hoshea and the Israelite army, scattering them outside the land. They were unable to reunite and claim their territory back. Assyria, though, was not through. They continued their march toward the southern kingdom of Judah and made it to the walls of Jerusalem before the Lord provided Hezekiah, Isaiah, and the people of the southern kingdom with help, destroying 186,000 Assyrian troops in a single night. The results were devastating to the Assyrians. They would no longer be a significant force in the land of the Bible. The Lord intended to bring their savagery upon their own heads. Nineveh fell in 612 BC to the strength of the Babylonian army. The story of the Babylonian kingdom is given as follows: “In B.C. 729, Babylonia was conquered by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III.; but on the death of Shalmaneser IV. it was seized by the Kalda or “Chaldean” prince Merodach-baladan (2 Kings 20:12-19), who held it till B.C. 709, when he was driven out by Sargon.

Under Sennacherib, Babylonia revolted from Assyria several times, with the help of the Elamites, and after one of these revolts Babylon was destroyed by Sennacherib, B.C. 689. It was rebuilt by Esarhaddon, who made it his residence during part of the year, and it was to Babylon that Manasseh was brought a prisoner (2 Chron. 33:11). After the death of Esarhaddon, Saul-sumyukin, the viceroy of Babylonia, revolted against his brother the Assyrian king, and the revolt was suppressed with difficulty.

When Nineveh was destroyed, B.C. 606, Nabopolassar, the viceroy of Babylonia, who seems to have been of Chaldean descent, made himself independent. His son Nebuchadrezzar (Nabu-kudur-uzur), after defeating the Egyptians at Carchemish, succeeded him as king, B.C. 604, and founded the Babylonian empire. He strongly fortified Babylon, and adorned it with palaces and other buildings. His son, Evil-merodach, who succeeded him in B.C. 561, was murdered after a reign of two years. The last monarch of the Babylonian empire was Nabonidus (Nabu-nahid), B.C. 555-538, whose eldest son, Belshazzar (Bilu-sar-uzur), is mentioned in several inscriptions. Babylon was captured by Cyrus, B.C. 538, and though it revolted more than once in later years, it never succeeded in maintaining its independence."⁴

The Babylonian army pressed its strength against Judah on several occasions. Between the dates of 605 BC to 586 BC, Babylon would strike three times at the southern kingdom until it was eventually destroyed in 586 BC.

OUTLINE

- A. A Kingdom Divided, 1-17
 - a. Ahaziah, 1
 - b. Jehoram and Elisha, 2-8
 - i. Elijah and Elisha, 2
 - ii. Battle with Moab, 3
 - iii. Elisha's Ministries, 4
 - 1. to a widow, 4:1-7
 - 2. to the Shunammite Woman, 4:8-37
 - 3. at Gilgal, 4:38-44
 - iv. Naaman the Leper, 5
 - v. Elisha and Syria, 6-8
 - c. Jehoram of Judah, 8:16-24
 - d. Ahaziah of Judah, 8:25-29
 - e. Jehu, 9-10
 - i. Anointed by Elisha, 9
 - ii. Destroyed Baal Worshipers, 10
 - f. Queen Athaliah, 11
 - g. Joash, 11-12
 - h. Jehoahaz and Jehoash, 13
 - i. Amaziah and Jereboam II, 14
 - j. Azariah, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Jotham, 15
 - k. Ahaz, 16
 - l. Hoshea and the End of the Northern Kingdom, 17
- B. Judah, The Surviving Kingdom, 18-25
 - a. Hezekiah, 18-20
 - i. Reforms, 18
 - ii. Saved from Sennacherib's Army, 18-19
 - iii. Illness and Foolishness, 20
 - b. Manasseh and Amon, 21
 - c. Josiah and Jehoahaz, 22-23
 - d. Jehoiakim, 23-24

- e. Jehoiachin, 24
- f. Zedekiah and the End of the Southern Kingdom, 24-25

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¹ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 313.

² The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, p. 314.

³ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 93.

⁴ Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary, Database c1996 NavPress Software, WORDsearch Bible Study Software. Copyright 1987-2000, iExalt, Inc. All rights reserved.

Obadiah

Edom's Judgment

Monarchy to Captivity 840 BC

AUTHOR

That the book of Obadiah was written by a man who had that name is testified to by the very first verse. "The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom - We have heard a report from the LORD, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, "Arise and let us go against her for battle."¹ There is no additional information to work with. Benware states, "The author gives no other information about himself, his background, or the time in which he lived. His name is a common one in the Old Testament; about a dozen individuals are so named. All attempts to identify this author with one of the dozen Obadiah's found in the text of the Old Testament have failed."²

Speculation leads us to consider these "Obadiah's" with a desire to identify which one, if any, could be the author. "Four of the better prospects are: (1) the officer in Ahab's palace who hid God's prophets in a cave (1 Kin. 18:3); (2) one of the officials sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach the law in the cities of Judah (2 Chr. 17:7); (3) one of the overseers who took part in repairing the temple under Josiah (2 Chr. 34:12; or (4) a priest in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 10:5)."³ Options 1,2, and 3 have more merit than 4 for those who believe the book to have been written prior to the exile. Yet, in consideration of the evidence given in the date of the writing, I am comfortable with the assumption that Obadiah could have been the officer in Ahab's palace or the official sent out by Jehoshaphat. Either one would fit the timing of the book. However, there must also be room for the fact that Obadiah was an individual who had no ties with any of the options above.

DATE OF WRITING

It is to be noted that dating the book of Obadiah is one of the greatest conflicts concerning the book. I believe that it is best to place the date of the book in the 800's B.C.

If the date is to be accepted as 845 B.C., the following information relates to it. "The key to establishing the date of Obadiah is found in verses 10-14 of the book. These verses reveal that an attack was made on the city of Jerusalem, an attack in which the Edomites participated or at least encouraged the attackers. The Old Testament records seven times when Jerusalem was attacked. The second of these attacks (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-17) in the days of King Jehoram best fits the events described in Obadiah. At that time, the Philistines and the Arabians attacked Jerusalem. Instead of helping

“brother Jacob,” the Edomites assisted the enemies of Judah. This event took place about 845 B.C. Evidence for this early date for Obadiah is found in the writings of Jeremiah, Amos, and Joel. These three prophets show an acquaintance with Obadiah’s message, indicating that Obadiah ante-dates these other prophets (e.g., Jer. 49:7-22; Joel 3:19).”⁵

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

There are no significant happenings in the book of Obadiah to mark the exact timing of the book. However, if the date suggested in the early parts of this study are to be taken as the time this book was written, then the historical content of this book involves the reign of Jehoram (853-841 BC) in Judah and Ahaziah (853-852 BC) and Jeram (Jehoram) (853-841 BC) in Israel. The prophet Elijah was also ministering at this time.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Obadiah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

The Book of Obadiah can be stated as having two themes, both of which are united in the actions of the Edomites. There are clear statements of judgment upon the Edomites, as well as future restoration for Israel.

Wilkinson states, “The major theme of Obadiah is a declaration of Edom’s coming doom because of its arrogance and cruelty to Judah: “I will make you small among the nations” (2); “the pride of your heart has deceived you” (3); “how you will be cut off!” (5); “How Esau shall be searched out!” (6); “your mighty men O Teman, shall be dismayed” (9); “shame shall cover you” (10); “you shall be cut off forever” (10); “as you have done, it shall be done to you: (15). Even the last few verses which primarily deal with Israel, speak of Edom’s downfall (17-21). The secondary theme of Obadiah is the future restoration of Israel and faithfulness of Yahweh to His covenant promises. God’s justice will ultimately prevail.”¹⁰

The root to this prophetic book is found in Genesis 12:1-3. “Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives And from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Edom, descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau, chose to “curse” Israel and received the punishment prophesied concerning all those who make this decision. Yet this judgment had its positive aspect for Israel. “Obadiah’s blessing includes the near fulfillment of Edom’s demise (vv. 1-15 under the assault of the Philistines and Arabians (2 Chr. 21:8-20 and the far fulfillment of the nation’s judgment in the first century A.D. and Israel’s final possession of Edom (vv.15-21).”¹¹

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

It is clear from the content of the book of Obadiah that Edom was an issue during the days in which Obadiah wrote. It would appear that the Philistines and Arabians were also difficult nations to contend with at that time too. In the scheme of the Old Testament kings, more difficult days and more fierce opponents will come. But since Judah has already known the pains of war and enemies, there is evidence from these things that they have not faithfully served the Lord, and He is using enemies like the Edomites to get their attention. Yet, the whole point of Obadiah is that Edom also is accountable for their actions before God.

OUTLINE

- A. Judgment Passed on Edom, 1-9
- B. Judgment Explained for Edom, 10-14
- C. Judgment Realized in Edom, 15-21

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, Benware, Paul N., Moody Press, 1988, p. 178.

³ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 251.

⁵ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, p. 178

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¹¹ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1289.

Amos

Judgment for Israel

Monarchy to Captivity 760 BC

AUTHOR

The Book of Amos begins with a statement concerning its author. “The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” (1:1)¹ There is no reason to doubt that **Amos** is the author of the book. No work that I consulted had any opposition to it and there was no mention that it was questioned in past years.

As to the identity of the author, Archer writes, “Since the name of his father is not given, it may be assumed that Amos was of humble birth. His native town was Tekoa, situated five miles southeast of Bethlehem in the Judean highlands. By profession Amos was both a herdsman and a cultivator of sycamore figs. He may possibly have tended cattle (as is implied by the term *boqer*, “herdsman,” in 7:14). Certainly he raised sheep, for he speaks of himself as a *noqed* (cf. In 1:1), that is, a shepherd of a small, speckled variety of sheep called *naqod*.”²

With no other suggestions made for the identity of the author, Amos will be credited with this book.

DATE OF WRITING

Amos does us a favor in stating in the initial verse vital information for dating the book. “The date of the prophet Amos can approximately be fixed from the statement in the first verse that his activity fell “in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Both these monarchs had long reigns, that of Uzziah extending from 779 to 740 BC and that of Jeroboam II from 783 to 743 BC. If we look at the years when they were concurrently reigning, and bear in mind that, toward the end of Uzziah’s reign, Jotham acted as co-regent, we may safely place the date of Amos at about the year 760 BC. In a country in which earthquakes are not uncommon the one here mentioned must have been of unusual severity, for the memory of it was long preserved (Zechariah 14:5). How long he exercised his ministry we are not told. In all probability the book is the deposit of a series of addresses delivered from time to time till his plain speaking drew upon him the resentment of the authorities, and he was ordered to leave the country (Amos 7:10 ff). We can only conjecture that, some time afterward, he withdrew to his native place and put down in writing a condensed record of the discourses he had delivered.”³

Other factors help in the setting of the date. “Amos anticipates the 722 B.C. Assyrian captivity of Israel (7:11) and indicates that at the time of writing, Jeroboam II was not yet dead. Thus, Amos prophesied in Beth-el about 755 B.C. Astronomical calculations indicate that a solar eclipse took place in Israel on June 15, 763 B.C. This event was probably fresh in the minds of Amos’ hearers (8:9).”⁴

Also, “Josephus connects the quake with the events of 2 Chronicles 26:16-20 (Antiquities of the Jews 9. 10. 4). Archeological excavations at Hazor and Samaria have uncovered evidence of a violent earthquake in Israel about 760 B.C.”⁵

This has led to what Archer states is the general agreement among Old Testament scholars, the Book of Amos can be dated between 760 and 757 B.C. “toward the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753). This king had enjoyed a brilliant career from the standpoint of military success, for he had accomplished the feat of restoring the boundaries of the Northern Kingdom to the limits with which it had begun in 931 B.C. The result had been a considerable influx of wealth from the booty of war and advantageous trade relations with Damascus and the other principalities to the north and northeast. But along with the increase in wealth, no share of which was granted to the lower classes, there had come a more conspicuous materialism and greed on the part of the rich nobility. They shamelessly victimized the poor and cynically disregarded the rights of those who were socially beneath them. A general disregard for the sanctions of the Seventh Commandment had undermined the sanctity of the family and had rendered offensive their hypocritical attempt to appease God by observance of religious forms.”⁶ The book highlights these characteristics of the time in which Amos lived.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Amos does us a great favor in listing the names of the kings that reigned during his ministry. Verse 1 told us that he received his vision in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel. Uzziah reigned for 52 years (792-740 BC). The last 10 years of his life he was afflicted with leprosy and his son, Jotham reigned with him. Jeroboam (called Jeroboam II) reigned 41 years (793-753 BC). During this time the prophets Hosea, Jonah, and Amos are ministering in Israel. Isaiah ministers during the lifetime of Uzziah.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Amos has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the *Nebiim* (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Ryrie states that Amos is a prophecy that attacks “the social evils of the people as well as their paganized worship.”⁷ Scofield labels it as “judgment on sin.”⁸

Without a doubt, both of these can be harmonized into the theme that MacArthur states in his study Bible. “Amos addresses Israel’s two primary sins: 1) an absence of true worship, and 2) a lack of justice. In the midst of their ritualistic performance of

worship, they were not pursuing the Lord with their hearts (4:4,5; 5:4-6) nor following His standard of justice with their neighbors (5:10-13; 6:12). This apostasy, evidenced by continual, willful rejection of the prophetic message of Amos, is promised divine judgment. Because of His covenant, however, the Lord will not abandon Israel altogether, but will bring future restoration to the righteous remnant (9:7-15).”⁹

One of the key phrases within the book is found repeated 8 times in the first 2 chapters, “Thus says the Lord, ‘for three transgressions... and for four...’” (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). The Lord does not ignore sin; and the catalog of sin in which the people of Israel have committed is given in the book. This is expressed clearly by Wilkinson. “The basic theme of Amos is the coming judgment of Israel because of the holiness of Yahweh and the sinfulness of His covenant people. Amos unflinchingly and relentlessly visualizes the causes and course of Israel’s quickly approaching doom. God is gracious and patient, but His justice and righteousness will not allow sin to go unpunished indefinitely. The sins of Israel are heaped as high as heaven: empty ritualism, oppression of the poor, idolatry, deceit, self-righteousness, arrogance, greed, materialism, callousness. The people have repeatedly broken every aspect of their covenant relationship with God. Nevertheless, God’s mercy and love are evident in His offer of deliverance if the people will only turn back to Him. God graciously sent Amos as a reformer to warn the people of Israel of their fate if they refuse to repent. But they rejected his plea, and the course of judgment could not be altered.”¹⁰

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

During the early 700’s BC Syria was the principle power in the region around Israel. Things will change quickly as the Assyrians begin their attacks against Syria and Israel, leading to the defeat of Israel in 722 BC. This event will occur about 40 years after the prophecy of Amos. Yet, the time in which Amos wrote was a time of great success for Jeroboam II, both militarily and economically. Uzziah on his own part had known the success of battle, defeating the Philistines and Arabians and subjugating the Ammonites to tribute. Neither king knew the bitterness of defeat. The result of the sins of the people would have its consequences a short while after their reigns were over.

OUTLINE

- A. Amos declares Judgment, 1-2
 - a. For Damascus, 1:3-5
 - b. For Gaza, 1:6-8
 - c. For Tyre, 1:9-10
 - d. For Edom, 1:11-12
 - e. For Ammon, 1:13-15
 - f. For Moab, 2:1-3
 - g. For Judah, 2:4-5
 - h. For Israel, 2:6-16
- B. Amos Preaches to Israel, 3-6
 - a. Israel in the Present, 3
 - b. Israel in the Past, 4
 - c. Israel in the Future, 5-6

C. Amos Sees Visions, 7-9:10

- a. Locusts, 7:1-3
- b. Fire, 7:4-6
- c. Plumbline, 7:7-9
- d. The Priests of Bethel, 7:10-17
- e. Ripe Fruit, 8
- f. Judgment, 9:1-10

D. Amos Announces Future Restoration, 9:11-15

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⁸ The New Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield, C.I., editor, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 932.

⁹ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1275.

¹⁰ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 246.

Hosea

Faithfulness

Monarchy to Captivity

725 BC

AUTHOR

It is stated in the very first verse of the Book of Hosea that Hosea is its author. “The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beerī, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. (1:1)¹ Little else is known about him. Benware suggests that “He was probably from the Northern Kingdom, as there are numerous geographical notations in the message (e.g. 4:15; 5:1; 6:8).”²

DATE OF WRITING

In some cases, the dating of a Biblical book is difficult because there are no indications within the text concerning the time of its writing. However, Hosea gives us vital information to work with when he names the kings who reigned during his ministry. Working from this information, we are confident to state that the ministry of Hosea as prophet ranged from 754 to 714 B.C. The book’s writing seems to be a compilation of the sermons given over the years of that ministry. It is very likely that the final work can be dated near 725 B.C.

ISBE records the following information to support this date. “All that we are told directly as to the time when Hosea prophesied is the statement in the first verse that the word of the Lord came to him “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.” It is quite evident that his ministry did not extend over the combined reigns of all these kings; for, from the beginning of the reign of Uzziah to the beginning of that of Hezekiah, according to the now usually received chronology (Kautzsch, *Literature of the Old Testament, English Translation*), there is a period of 52 years, and Jeroboam came to his throne a few years before the accession of Uzziah. When we examine the book itself for more precise indications of date, we find that the prophet threatens in God’s name that in “a little while” He will “avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.” Now Jeroboam was the great-grandson of Jehu, and his son Zechariah, who succeeded him, reigned only six months and was the last of the line of Jehu. We may, therefore, place the beginning of Hosea’s ministry a short time before the death of Jeroboam which took place 743 BC. As to the other limit, it is to be observed that, though the downfall of “the kingdom of the house of Israel” is threatened (Hos 1:4), the catastrophe had not occurred when the prophet ceased his ministry. The date of that event is fixed in the year 722 BC, and it is

said to have happened in the 6th year of King Hezekiah. This does not give too long a time for Hosea's activity, and it leaves the accuracy of the superscription unchallenged, whoever may have written it. If it is the work of a later editor, it may be that Hosea's ministry ceased before the reign of Hezekiah, though he may have lived on into that king's reign. It should be added, however, that there seems to be no reference to another event which might have been expected to find an echo in the book, namely, the conspiracy in the reign of Ahaz (735 BC) by Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus against the kingdom of Judah (2 Ki 16:5; Isa 7:1). Briefly we may say that, though there is uncertainty as to the precise dates of the beginning and end of his activity, he began his work before the middle of the 8th century, and that he saw the rise and fall of several kings. He would thus be a younger contemporary of Amos whose activity seems to have been confined to the reign of Jeroboam."³

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

As already stated, Hosea's prophecy occurs during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Those years compiled include 792 – 686 BC. He stated that Jeroboam II was the king of Israel (793- 753 BC). Since his letter was written to Israel, we can focus upon the reign of Jeroboam exclusively to understand the background to this book. The facts given in the study of Amos are considered to be characteristic of Hosea's time as well – a time of success in battle and economics, as well as a time of idolatry.

Significant men who also ministered during Hosea's day include Jonah and Amos in Israel and Isaiah and Micah in Judah.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Hosea has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the *Nebiim* (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Hosea is a message of judgment and a message of hope, illustrated by the relationship between the prophet and his adulterous wife. The sin of Israel forsaking the Lord is met with the statement of 14:1 "Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God."

Scofield calls it a theme of Redeeming Love. "The theme of the opening chapters of Hosea's prophecy is the unfaithfulness of Israel, set forth in terms of the marriage relationship, a familiar figure of speech depicting God's relation to His chosen people (Ex. 34:15-16; Lev. 17:7; 20:5-6; Dt. 32:16, 21; Isa 54:5). Israel's forsaking of the Lord was brought home to Hosea in the adulterous acts of his own wife, so that his personal experiences became an allegory of God's experience with Israel. She was not only unfaithful, but her sin also took its character from the exalted relationship into which she had been brought."⁴

MacArthur adds, "The Lord's true love for His people is unending and will tolerate no rival. Hosea's message contains much condemnation, both national and individual, but at

the same time, he poignantly portrays the love of God toward His people with passionate emotion. Hosea was instructed by God to marry a certain woman, and experience with her a domestic life which was a dramatization of the sin and unfaithfulness of Israel. The marital life of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, provide the rich metaphor which clarifies the themes of the book: sin, judgment, and forgiving love.”⁵

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The events revolving around Hosea are the same as the book of Amos. During the early 700’s BC Syria was the principle power in the region around Israel. Things will change quickly as the Assyrians begin their attacks against Syria and Israel, leading to the defeat of Israel in 722 BC. This event will occur about 40 years after the prophecy of Amos. Yet, the time in which Amos wrote was a time of great success for Jeroboam II, both militarily and economically. On the other side in Judah, Uzziah had known the success of battle, defeating the Philistines and Arabians and subjugating the Ammonites to tribute. Neither king knew the bitterness of defeat. The result of the sins of the people would have its consequences a short while after their reigns were over.

OUTLINE

- A. An Adulterous Wife, 1-3
 - a. Marriage and Children, 1
 - b. Spiritual Applications, 2
 - c. Restoration of the Relationship, 3
- B. An Adulterous Nation, 4-14
 - a. The Sins of Israel, 4-5
 - b. Lack of Repentance, 6-8
 - c. Judgments, 9-10
 - d. Restorations 11-14

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⁵ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1251.

Jonah

Salvation of Nineveh

Monarchy to Captivity 780 BC

AUTHOR

The very first verse of the Book of Jonah identifies the author as Jonah. “The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai...”¹ According to Perowne, “There is no reason to doubt that Jonah was himself the author of the book which bears his name. There is nothing inconsistent with that view in the contents of the book. No other satisfactory theory of authorship has been suggested. The candour of the writer, supposing him to be relating his own history, finds a parallel in the case of other inspired writers both in the Old and New Testaments. The graphic style of the book harmonizes with the vigorous and resolute character of Jonah as portrayed in its pages.”²

Several reasons are given as to why Jonah is the author of the book. First of all, the autobiographical nature of the book supports it. “...the autobiographical information revealed within its pages clearly points to Jonah as the author. The firsthand accounts of such unusual events and experiences would be best recounted from the hand of Jonah himself. Nor should the introductory verse suggest otherwise, since other prophets such as Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah have similar openings.”³

Secondly, tradition has ascribed the book of Jonah. “The traditional view is that Jonah wrote this book about himself. The fact that the narrative does not use the first person pronoun does not preclude this. Hebrew authors (e.g., Moses) often wrote autobiography in the style of third-person biography.”⁴

Unless one is willing to deny the literal aspects of the book, Jonah is the only realistic option for authorship. Indeed, there are no other names given as alternatives.

Crucial to the dating of the book is the identification of the author. Scripture is not silent about Jonah. Reference to him places the reality and the time of his existence in a solid place. “The only information about Jonah in the Old Testament outside of the Book of Jonah is found in 2 Kings 14:25. From this passage we can see that Jonah’s ministry overlapped the reign of Jereboam II. This places Jonah in the first half of the eighth century B.C. Jonah was from Gath-Hepher, a town in the Galilean region. As we see in 2 Kings 14, he prophesied to Israel, the northern kingdom. There is no indication whether he was a court prophet, such as Isaiah, or more of a renegade prophet, as Amos was.”⁷

DATE OF WRITING

Generally, the date offered as the time of the writing of Jonah is sometime during the lifetime of the author himself. “Since Jonah ministered for the Lord during the reign of Israel’s king Jereboam II, his message is dated 780 B.C.”¹¹

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The information found in the study of Amos or Hosea would correspond with the background of Jonah as well.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Jonah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

The theme of God’s mercy is mentioned in practically every commentary that deals with the book of Jonah, from Scofield¹⁶ to Archer. “The theme of this prophecy (which is really a biography rather than a sermonic discourse) is that God’s mercy and compassion extend even to the heathen nations on condition of their repentance. It is therefore Israel’s obligation to bear witness to them of the true faith; and a neglect of this task may bring the nation, like Jonah himself, to the deep waters of affliction and chastisement.”¹⁷

Another aspect of this theme can be seen in the stress on the sovereignty of God in the midst of the events of the book. He is seen as the instigator of the storm, the fish, the plant and the worm. He is also the One who dispensed mercy, even though a reluctant prophet sought to thwart it. Wilkinson states, “Jonah reveals the power of God in nature (1-2; 4) and the mercy of God in human affairs (3-4). The prophet learned that “salvation is of the Lord” (2:9), and God’s gracious offer extends to all who repent and turn to Him. Jewish nationalism blinded God’s covenant people to an understanding of His concern for the Gentiles. Jonah wanted God to show no mercy to the Ninevites, but he later learned how selfish and unmerciful his position was.”¹⁸

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The events revolving around Jonah are the same as the books of Amos and Hosea. However, since Jonah wrote exclusively concerning the nation of Assyria, it would be important to list the kings of that era. Adad-Nirari III reigned in Assyria from 810 to 784 BC. Shalmaneser IV reigned from 783 – 773 BC. Ashurdan III ruled from 772 – 755 BC. Ashur-Nirari V ruled from 754 to 746 BC. The king who responded to Jonah’s message and called for repentance is not named in the book. It is believed that one of the first three mentioned above is the king in question though Ashurdan III is the most likely candidate.

The power of the Assyrians would be felt by Israel and Syria during the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC). The fall of Israel will be accomplished by Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) and Sargon II (722-705 BC).

OUTLINE

- A. Jonah's First Call, 1-2
 - a. Jonah runs, 1:1-3
 - b. Jonah punished, 1:4-17
 - c. Jonah prays, 2:1-9
 - d. Jonah delivered, 2:10
- B. Jonah's Second Call, 3-4
 - a. Jonah preaches, 3:1-4
 - b. Nineveh repents, 3:5-10
 - c. Jonah complains, 4:1-3
 - d. Jonah rebuked, 4:4-11

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, The Books of Obadiah and Jonah, Perowne, T.T., University Press, 1905, p. 45.

³ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1292.

⁴ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 399.

⁷ Jonah, Bible Study Commentary, Walton, John H., Lamplighter Books (Zondervan), 1982, p. 63

¹⁶ The New Scofield Reference Bible, p. 941.

¹⁷ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction p. 341-342.

¹⁸ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 257.

Nahum

Judgment of Nineveh

Monarchy to Captivity

660 BC

AUTHOR

The Book of Nahum begins, “The oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”¹ Since the Bible says nothing else concerning this man, there is only speculation concerning his identity. However, there are no debates over Nahum’s authorship and no options given as an alternative.

Concerning the man, “Little is known of Nahum himself, the author according to 1:1. He is identified as “the Elkoshite”. Since the sixteenth century, an Arab tradition has identified Elkosh with Al Qosh, a village near modern Mosul in Iraq. Ancient writers – including Jerome and Eusebius – however, understood the prophet’s home to be somewhere in Galilee. Many have speculated that NT Capernaum (“Town of Nahum”) was home to him, but there is no proof of this.”² Wilkinson states that Elkosh “was a city of southern Judah (later called Elkesei) between Jerusalem and Gaza. This would make Nahum a prophet of the southern kingdom and may explain his interest in the triumph of Judah (1:15; 2:2).”³

DATE OF WRITING

When it comes to dating the book of Nahum there is a difference of opinion with the scholars. At least it can be said that each of these ideas fit within the same century, but differ to the point of about 60 years. The pivotal date is the fall of Thebes in 663 B.C. MacArthur writes, “Nahum’s mention of the fall of No Amon, also called Thebes (3:8-10), in 663 B.C. (at the hands of Ashurbanipal) appears to be fresh in their minds and there is no mention of the rekindling that occurred ten years later, suggesting a mid-seventh century B.C. date during the reign of Manasseh (ca. 695 – 642 B.C.; 2 Kin. 21:1-18).”⁴ More exact are the comments of Johnson as he quotes from another in the Bible Knowledge Commentary. “Walter A. Maier suggests that Nahum gave his prophecy soon after Thebes fell, between 663 and 654 B.C. His arguments include these: 1. The description of Nineveh (1:12; 3:1, 4, 16) does not match the decline of the Assyrian nation under Ashurbanipal’s sons, Ashur-etil-ilani (626-623 B.C.) and Sin-shar-ishkun (623-612 B.C.). 2. When Nahum prophesied, Judah was under the Assyrian yoke (1:13, 15; 2:1, 3). This fits with the reign of Manasseh over Judah (697-642) more than with the reign of Josiah (640-609). 3. The Medes rose in power around 645 B.C. as an independent nation, and the Neo-Babylonian Empire began in 626. If Nahum had written shortly before Nineveh’s fall to those nations in 612, mention of them would be expected.

But since Nahum does not mention the Medes or the Babylonians, he probably wrote his prophecy before 645. 4. More important, however, is the fact that nine years after Thebes was destroyed, it was restored (in 654). Nahum's rhetorical question in 3:8 would have had little or no force if it had been written after 654."⁵

The scholars admit that the perimeters for dating the book fall between 663 and 607 B.C. With the previous comment, the book's writing date is limited between 663 and 654 B.C.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

From the information already discussed concerning the date of the prophecy of Nahum, it can be said that the probability that Manasseh was king of Judah is great. The early part of Manasseh's reign (697 – 642 BC) was full of wickedness. 2 Chronicles 33:11 states that the king of Assyria had captured Manasseh with hooks, tied him with chains and took him to Babylon. We are uncertain as to when this took place, but there is great possibility that the Assyrian king was Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC), for he was reigning at the time of Nahum's message.

Other prophets ministering in Judah near the time of Nahum's ministry were Isaiah and Zephaniah. The northern kingdom of Israel had already fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BC.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Nahum has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

The theme of this book is related closely to the fact that Nineveh had been a recipient of God's mercy in the days of Jonah, but now, approximately 100 years later, the people of Nineveh have reverted back to evil and their judgment is sure.

Wilkinson writes, "Beginning with chapter 1, verse 9, the single thrust of Nahum's prophecy is the retribution of God against the wickedness of Nineveh. Nineveh's judgment is irreversibly decreed by the righteous God who will no longer delay His wrath. Assyria's arrogance and cruelty to other nations will come to a sudden end – her power will be useless against the mighty hand of Yahweh. Chapter 1, verses 2-8, portray the patience, power, holiness, and justice of the living God. He is slow to wrath, but He settles in full. This book concerns the downfall of Assyria, but it was written for the benefit of the surviving kingdom of Judah (Israel had already been swallowed up by Assyria). The people in Judah who trusted in the Lord would be comforted to hear of God's judgment upon the proud and brutal Assyrians (1:15; 2:2)."¹¹

It has always been fascinating to me that this book, written concerning the fall of Nineveh, doesn't seem to have been addressed to them, nor is there any mention that the message was delivered. Since there is no call for repentance, it would appear to me that the book was written to the Jews, highlighting the sin of the Assyrians, their fall, and the

severe judgment of God. Many suggest that this would be a great lift for the people of Judah. I also think that it could be a great lesson for them as well. They were not any closer to God than the Assyrians were. The times of Manasseh were days of great sin, and if God had so chosen to punish the Assyrians for their sin, surely He would do it to Judah as well. In reading this letter, at least Judah had the opportunity to repent before a holy God.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

One name is necessary for understanding the world power at the time of Nahum's prophecy: Assyria. Since the time of Jonah and the repentance of Nineveh around 760 BC, the Old Testament record is full of the conflicts in which the Assyrians came against Judah. Ahaz and Hezekiah knew the fear which they brought. The Assyrian kings Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) and Sargon II (722-705 BC) were principally responsible for these things. Sennacherib (705-681 BC), Esarhaddon (681-669 BC), and Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC) would follow. It is believed that Ashurbanipal would be the king while Nahum received the Lord's vision. Three kings would follow before Assyria would fall to the Babylonians in 609 BC.

OUTLINE

- A. Judgment Decreed, 1
- B. Judgment Described, 2
- C. Judgment Deserved, 3

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7, Nahum, by Armerding, Carl E., Gaebelein, Frank E., General Editor, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985, p. 452.

³ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 267.

⁴ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1309.

⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Nahum, by Johnson, Elliott E., Walvoord, John F., Zuck, Roy B., Editors, Victor Books, 1988, p. 1494, 1496.

¹¹ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 268.

2 Chronicles

Spiritual Perspectives

Monarchy to Captivity
971 - 538 BC

AUTHOR

As with several of the Old Testament books, 1 and 2 Chronicles does not name its author. Internal evidence leads us to believe that Ezra may be the best option due to style, purpose, and opportunity.

Style: The first thing to note is the similarity of the Book of Ezra and the Books of Chronicles. “Relationships between the books of Chronicles and Ezra provide the most important single clue for fixing the date and also the authorship of the former volume. Since Chronicles appears to be the work of an individual writer, who was a Levitical leader, some identification with Ezra the priest and scribe (Ezra 7:1-6) appears possible from the outset. This conclusion is furthered, moreover, by the personal qualities that the writer displays for “the author...was an ecclesiastical official of knowledge, insight, wisdom, courage, organizing ability, and determination to put through his plan” (Myers, Chronicles, 1:Lxxxvi). The literary styles of the books are similar, and their contents have much in common: the frequent lists and genealogies, their focus on ritual, and joint devotion to the law of Moses. Most significant of all, the closing verses of 2 Chronicles (36:22-23) are repeated as the opening verses of Ezra (1:1-3a).”¹

Purpose: Ezra lived in a time when Israel had to regroup from 70 years of captivity. Included in their healing process was a need to attach themselves to the covenants and care of God. Their fathers had failed. Now a new generation was in the process of rebuilding the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem; in reality, rebuilding their lives and their relationship with God. As a result, Ezra had a particular ministry to them that brought them back to where they had fallen. “It is quite possible that the Talmudic tradition (Baba Bathra, 15a) is correct in assigning the authorship to Ezra. As the chief architect of the spiritual and moral revival of the Second Commonwealth, he would have had every incentive to produce a historical survey of this sort. As a Levite from the priestly line, his viewpoint would have been in perfect agreement with that of the author of this work, and he would be very apt to lay the stress just where the Chronicler has. It is pertinent to note that there was embodied in 2 Macc. 2:13-15 a tradition that Governor Nehemiah owned a considerable library: “He, founding a library, gathered together the books about the kings and prophets, and the books of David and letters of the kings about sacred gifts.” If Nehemiah did possess such a sizable collection of reference works, it might very well be that his close collaborator, Ezra, would have had ready access to these reference works and used them in the compilation of Chronicles.”² In light of his task, it

would seem fitting for Ezra to have access to the historical data that would unite a people with their God.

Opportunity: Along with the records of Nehemiah, it is believed that Ezra also worked from the records of several prophets prior to the fall of Jerusalem. “If Ezra the scribe (Ezra 7:6) was the writer of Chronicles, his “scribism” may account for the detailed acknowledgments of historical sources – the writings of such early prophets as Samuel, Nathan³, Gad (1 Chr. 29:29), Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah (2 Chr. 9:29; 12:15), Jehu, the son of Hanani (2 Chr. 20:34), and such later ones as Isaiah (2 Chr. 32:32).”

Jewish Tradition: Added to the information listed above, “Jewish tradition affirms that Ezra wrote Chronicles, along with the book that bears his name; and in recent scholarship it was the archaeologist W.F. Albright who particularly reemphasized this conclusion. North now states that “the unity of Ezra with Chronicles as the concept of a single author is today upheld by as unanimous a consensus as can be found anywhere in exegesis.”⁴

There are no other options given as author other than Ezra, and no reason to doubt that he could have been the one to have penned the books.

DATE OF WRITING

Following the evidence that Ezra was the author of the book of 1 Chronicles, the best time to place the writing of the book of 2 Chronicles would be within the years 500 to 400 BC. The evidence of the writing of the Chronicles during the lifetime of Ezra and Nehemiah is both from tradition and from internal factors. As written in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, “The placing of the work of the Chronicles at the close of the Hebrew Scriptures is in itself of the nature of testimony. The men who placed it there testify thereby to their belief that these are the latest writings of the Old Testament aggregate. We are familiar with the testimony of Babha’ Bathra’ to the effect that most of the later books of the Old Testament were due to the men of the Great Synagogue and to Ezra, but that Nehemiah completed the Books of Chronicles. We cannot avoid including the Chronicles among the 22 books which Josephus says were written before the death of Artaxerxes Longimanus (Apion, I, 8). Of course the limit of time here really intended by Josephus is not the death of Artaxerxes, but the lifetime of men who were contemporary with him — that of Nehemiah, for example. We have already noted the testimony concerning Nehemiah’s library (2 Macc 2:13-15). The time when the library was being gathered was the most likely time for it to be used as the Chronicler has used it. Add the recapitulation in Ecclesiasticus (44 through 49), which mentions Nehemiah latest in its list of Old Testament worthies.”

Internal marks, also, justify the conclusion that the work of the Chronicler was complete before Nehemiah died. The abundant presence of Persian words and facts, with the absence of Greek words and facts, seems conclusive to the effect that the work was done before the conquests of Alexander rendered the Greek influence paramount. In some of the sections (e.g. Ezra 7:28 ff; Nehemiah passim) Ezra and Nehemiah speak in the first person. The whole work makes the impression of being written up to date. The latest situation in Chronicles is the same with that in Nehemiah (1 Chronicles 9; compare Nehemiah 11:3 through 12:26). The latest event mentioned is the differentiating of the Samaritan schism. A certain enrollment was made (Nehemiah 12:22-26) in the reign of Darius, up to the high-priesthood of Johanan (elsewhere called Jonathan and John), but

including Jaddua the son of Johanan in the high-priestly succession. Ezra and Nehemiah were still in office (Nehemiah 12:26). This enrollment naturally connects itself with the expulsion of Jaddua's brother Manasseh for marrying into the family of Sanballat (Nehemiah 13:28; Josephus, Ant, XI, 7-8). Jaddua belongs to the fifth generation from Jeshua, who was high priest 538 BC. Josephus says that Sanballat held a commission from Darius. He mentions a certain Bagoas, "general of another Artaxerxes' army," as in relations with the high priest John."⁵

There is much support in the claim that this book was written by Ezra around the year 450 B.C. "For those, therefore, who accept the historicity of the events recorded in Ezra – from the decree of Cyrus in 538 down to Ezra's reform in 458-457 B.C. – and the validity of Ezra's autobiographical writing within the next few years, the date of composition for both books as one consecutive history must be about 450 B.C. and the place, Jerusalem."⁶

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The dating of 2 Chronicles covers a large segment of Jewish history (385 years), from 971 BC, the beginning of the reign of Solomon to the edict of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (538 BC). It is interesting to note that all the historical material from Adam to the returning of the exiles (in essence, the whole Old Testament history) is covered in the 2 books of 1 and 2 Chronicles.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of 2 Chronicles has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of history along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon also places it in the category of history, but their 'historical' books only consisted of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles (both 1 & 2 Chronicles known as 1 volume).

THEME

In reality, there are no differences between 1 and 2 Chronicles in regard to the theme, especially since they were written as a single book in the Hebrew canon. As stated concerning 1 Chronicles, to the casual reader, there may be questions in their mind as to the purpose of the Old Testament in repeating history and listing genealogy. Much of what is found in 1 and 2 Chronicles can be found in the other books of 1 and 2 Samuel or 1 and 2 Kings. But to the student of the Word, they can see that the theme makes the difference. Chronicles is not a mere repetition of the facts, but it is a detailed woven history of God's working in the promise of the Davidic Covenant.

"During that period of history, the ancient world was in the hands of the powerful Persian Empire. All that remained of the great Israelite kingdom under David and Solomon was the small province of Judah. The Davidic kingship had been replaced by a provincial governor appointed by the Persian king. The Temple, once destroyed, had been rebuilt, but not with the splendor of the former Temple of Solomon. By anyone's standards, the fifth century was hardly a golden age for the people of God. Their future as a kingdom and a distinct people of God, in fact, seemed bleaker at that moment than perhaps ever before. To make matters worse, it followed on the heels of the excitement of the return from exile and the anticipation of the coming Messianic kingdom that

accompanied the return. To their own generation, the books of Chronicles were a vivid reminder of the hope that rested in the faithfulness of God. They were reminders that the Lord had made a promise to the world and to the house of David. The promise was of peace and prosperity, and the channel of the fulfillment of the promise was the covenant people of God, Israel. The books, in that setting, were a call for trust and obedience on the part of God's people: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14, KJV)."⁷

Clearly, the books were written as an encouragement to Israel "that God was not through with them" and as "a warning that future apostasy or idolatry would again be dealt with severely."⁸ It also provided the spiritual perspective on history that Israel needed to see, especially in light of the captivity and return to the land.

Wilkinson adds, "The Book of Second Chronicles provides a topical history of the end of the united kingdom (Solomon) and the kingdom of Judah. Chronicles is more than historical annals; it is a divine editorial on the spiritual characteristics of the Davidic dynasty. This is why it focuses on the southern rather than the northern kingdom. Most of the kings failed to realize that apart from its true mission as a covenant nation called to bring others to Yahweh, Judah had no calling, no destiny, and no hope of becoming great on its own. Only what was done in accordance with God's will had any lasting value. Chronicles concentrates on the kings who were concerned with maintaining the proper service of God and the times of spiritual reform. But growing apostasy inevitably led to judgment."⁹

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The most significant event of the time span 2 Chronicles covers is the construction of the temple in the days of Solomon. Four years into his reign, the Temple began to be constructed in 966 BC and was finished 7 years later (959 BC). It would be another 28 years until a major event would change the complexity of the Jewish world and the history of the Old Testament.

The significant year was 931 BC. The new king, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, made a grave mistake in his authority over the Israelites. Ten of the 12 tribes of Israel abandoned the throne of David and established the new northern kingdom, Israel. The division lasted until both kingdoms were carried away into captivity. Israel (the northern kingdom) endured from 931 – 722 BC, a total of 209 years. Judah (the southern kingdom) lasted longer (931 – 586 BC), a total of 345 years.

The book of 2 Chronicles also testified to the fall of both Israel (though hardly the focus of the Judean centered book) and the fall of Judah. Syria was known as the power between the years 900 – 841 BC. They were soon conquered by the Assyrian army, who also defeated Israel (722 BC) and nearly defeated Judah in the days of Hezekiah. Babylon soon overshadowed Assyria, defeating their army in 612 BC and the kingdom in Judah in 586 BC. However, Babylon did not retain its power. The Medes and the Persians brought about the fall of Babylon in 539 BC and under the edict of Cyrus in 538 BC, the Jews began their journey back to the land God had given them.

OUTLINE

- A. King Solomon, 1-9
 - a. The Kingdom Established, 1
 - b. The Temple Constructed, 2-7
 - i. Preparations, 2
 - ii. Construction, 3
 - iii. Dedication, 5-7
 - c. Solomon's Reign, 8-9
 - i. His fame, 8
 - ii. His wealth, 9
- B. The Kings of Judah, 10-36
 - a. Rehoboam, 10-12
 - b. Abijah, 13
 - c. Asa, 14-16
 - d. Jehoshaphat, 17-20
 - e. Jehoram, 21
 - f. Ahaziah, 22
 - g. Athaliah, 22-23
 - h. Joash, 23-24
 - i. Amaziah, 25
 - j. Uzziah, 26
 - k. Jotham, 27
 - l. Ahaz, 28
 - m. Hezekiah, 29-32
 - n. Manasseh and Amon, 33
 - o. Josiah, 34-35
 - p. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, 36
- C. After Captivity: The Return, 36:22-23

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³ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 374.

⁴ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 4, 1 & 2 Chronicles, p. 305-306.

⁵ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Orr, James, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, Inc.) 1999.

⁶ Ibid, p. 306.

⁷ First and Second Chronicles, Everyman's Bible Commentary, p 13-14.

⁸ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, p. 122.

⁹ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 109-110.

Joel

The Day of the Lord

Monarchy to Captivity 830 BC

AUTHOR

At the very beginning of the book the writer identifies himself as Joel. “The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.”¹ There is no reason to doubt that Joel is the author. As to the identity of the prophet Joel, the fact that there are several other “Joels” mentioned in the Bible, and that his only identity within the book is found in verse 1, we are left with only supposition as to who he is. However, “His frequent references to Zion and the house of the Lord (1:9, 13-14; 2:15-17, 23, 32; 3:1, 5-6, 16-17, 20-21) suggest that he probably lived not far from Jerusalem. Because of his statement about the priesthood (1:13-14; 2:17), some think Joel was a priest as well as a prophet. In any case, Joel was a clear, concise, and uncompromising preacher of repentance.”²

DATE OF WRITING

The task of assigning a date to the Book of Joel has been one of the issues concerning the writing. Basically, three time periods are given as possibilities for Joel to have written the book (830 BC, 587 BC, 500 BC). The first (and most likely) makes it one of the earliest books written at 830 B.C. The second sets a date close to the end of the kingdom of Judah, but prior to the exile in 586 B.C. This may set Joel among the last of the pre-exile writing prophets. A third view suggests that the book was written after the exile and closer to the year 500 B.C. The last two suggestions have difficulties that render the 830 BC date the most appropriate.

Evidence for the 830 B.C. date is given as follows. “Since Joel does not date his ministry by the reign of any king, exact dating is somewhat difficult. But a general date can be established by comparing Joel with Amos. Evidently Joel’s prophecy was given and widely received by the time Amos came along. Amos’s prophecy can be dated with some exactness (cf. Amos 1:1, 760 B.C.). By comparing Joel and Amos, it becomes apparent that Amos took the keynote of his prophecy from the closing words of Joel’s prophecy. The whole force of Amos’s thought depends on Joel’s words being recognized by his hearers (cf. Amos 1:2 and Joel 3:16; also Amos 9:13 and Joel 3:18). As a result of this comparison, Joel is dated somewhere around 830 B.C., thus making him one of the earliest prophets.”³

Also, “commentators who believe Joel was written in the ninth century B.C. answer the above arguments in this way: (1) Joel’s failure to mention the northern kingdom is an argument from silence. His prophecy was directed to Judah, not Israel. (2) Other early

prophets omit references to a king (Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, and Habakkuk). This also fits the political situation during 841-835 B.C. when Athaliah usurped the throne upon the death of her husband Ahaziah. Joash, the legitimate heir to the throne, was a minor and protected by the high priest Jehoida. When Athaliah was removed from power in 835, Joash came to the throne but ruled under the regency of Jehoiada. Thus, the prominence of the priests and lack of reference to a king in Joel fit this historical context. (3) It is true that Joel does not refer to Assyria or Babylon, but the countries Joel mentions are more crucial. They include Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom – countries prominent in the ninth century but not later. Assyria and Babylon are not mentioned because they had not yet reached a position of power. Also, if Joel were postexilic, a reference to Persia would be expected. (4) Chapter 3, verse 2, does not refer to the Babylonian captivity but to an event that has not yet occurred. (5) Greeks are mentioned in Assyrian records from the eighth century B.C. It is just an assumption to state that the Hebrews had no knowledge of the Greeks at an early time.

Evidence also points to a sharing of material between Joel and Amos (cf. Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18 and Amos 9:13). The context of the books suggests that Amos, an eighth-century prophet, borrowed from Joel. Also, Joel's style is more like that of Hosea and Amos than of the postexilic writers. The evidence seems to favor a date of about 835 B.C. for Joel. Since Joel does not mention idolatry, it may have been written after the purge of Baal worship and other forms of idolatry in the early reign of Joash under Jehoiada the priest. As an early prophet of Judah, Joel would have been a contemporary of Elisha in Israel."⁴ I am inclined to follow the 830 B.C. date for the writing of the Book of Joel. As written above, I believe there is enough evidence to support such a date.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The political situation during the time of Joel (841-835 B.C.) is highlighted by Athaliah, who usurped the throne upon the death of her husband Ahaziah. Joash, the legitimate heir to the throne, was a minor and protected by the high priest Jehoida. When Athaliah was removed from power in 835, Joash came to the throne but ruled under the regency of Jehoiada. Thus, the prominence of the priests and lack of reference to a king in Joel fit this historical context. The only other significant prophet who ministered during these days was Elisha to the northern kingdom of Israel.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Joel has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the *Nebiim* (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Many would agree with the Scofield Study Bible in its claim that the theme of the Book of Joel is "The Day of the Lord."⁵ Wilkinson states, "The key theme of Joel is the day of the Lord in retrospect and prospect. The terrible locust plague that recently

occurred in Judah was used by Joel to illustrate the coming Day of Judgment when God directly intervenes in human history to vindicate His righteousness.”⁶

Beside these thoughts, MacArthur adds that the Day of the Lord “permeates all parts of Joel’s message, making it the most sustained treatment in the entire OT (1:15; 2:1; 2:11; 2:31; 3:14). The phrase is employed 19 times by 8 different OT authors. The phrase does not have reference to a chronological time period, but to a general period of wrath and judgment uniquely belonging to the Lord. It is exclusively the day which unveils His character – mighty, powerful, and holy, thus terrifying His enemies. The Day of the Lord does not always refer to an eschatological event; on occasion it has a near historical fulfillment, as seen in Ezek. 13:5, where it speaks of the Babylonian conquest and destruction of Jerusalem.”⁷

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

It is too early in the history of the Judean kings for there to be mention of Assyria or Babylon. However, the countries Joel mentions are Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom – countries prominent in the ninth century but not later. Syria was known to be a problem during the ministry of Elisha, but most of their dealings were with the northern kingdom of Israel.

OUTLINE

- A. Visual Aids for the Day of The Lord, 1
 - a. Locusts, 1:1-12
 - b. Famine, 1:13-20
- B. Prophecies for the Day of The Lord, 2-3
 - a. Immediate Judgment of Judah, 2:1-27
 - b. Future Judgment of Nations, 2:28-3:21

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 240.

³ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Benware, Paul N., Moody Press, 1988, p. 181.

⁴ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 240-241.

⁵ The New Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield, C.I., editor, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 928.

⁶ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 241.

⁷ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1267.

Micah

Judgment and Restoration

Monarchy to Captivity
735 BC – 710 BC

AUTHOR

Though there is debate from the liberal sector concerning the author or authors of this book, the vast majority take the first verse as the authoritative statement that Micah is the author of the book. “The word of the LORD which came *to* Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.” (1:1)¹ Without any valid arguments against Micah or any names given as alternatives, it is best to assume that the text speaks for the author, and that Micah is the writer.

DATE OF WRITING

As simple as it is to state the author of the book, the same first verse of the prophecy states the time of the writing. “The first verse indicates that Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham (739-731 B. C.), Ahaz (731-715 B.C., and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), kings of Judah. Although Micah deals primarily with Judah, he also addressed the northern kingdom of Israel and predicts the fall of Samaria (1:6). Much of his ministry, therefore, took place before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722 B.C. His strong denunciations of idolatry and immorality also suggest that his ministry largely preceded the sweeping religious reforms of Hezekiah. Thus, Micah’s prophecies ranged from about 735 to 710 B.C.”²

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The Open Bible does much to explain the historical times of the book of Micah. “Micah began his work at the time of Jotham (750-731 B.C.) and served through the entire reign of Ahaz (743-715 B.C.) and perhaps through all of that of Hezekiah (715 – 686 B.C.). His writings, which show a close relationship to those of Isaiah, were written during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Both Micah and Isaiah, though addressing primarily Judah, make it clear God’s judgment will also fall on the Northern Kingdom (which occurred in 722 BC). That Micah prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah is further attested by Jer. 26:18, 19. Besides Isaiah, Micah seems to have prophesied during the day of Hosea, and possibly just after the ministries of Amos and Jonah.”⁴

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Micah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the *Nebim* (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Throughout the book of Micah the issues of judgment (due to sin) and restoration (due to repentance) are seen. As an example of this, Micah 6:9-16 highlights the sin and judgment of Israel, while 7:7 highlights hope. Jensen follows the same theme, yet marks the character of God rather than the character of man. “The main theme which runs through the book of Micah is that God will send judgment for Judah’s sin, but pardon is still offered. The message underscores the two divine attributes cited in Romans 11:22a; “Behold then the kindness and severity of God.”⁹

The way in which Micah presents his case is through the motif of a courtroom. “Primarily, Micah proclaimed a message of judgment to a people persistently pursuing evil. Similar to other prophets (Hos. 4:1; Amos 3:1), Micah presented his message in lawsuit/courtroom terminology (1:2; 6:1,2). The prophecy is arranged in 3 oracles or cycles, each beginning with the admonition to “hear” (1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Within each oracle, he moves from doom to hope – doom because they have broken God’s law given at Sinai; hope because of God’s unchanging covenant with their forefathers (7:20). One third of the book targets the sins of the people; another third looks at the punishment of God to come; and another third promises hope for the faithful after the judgment. Thus, the theme of the inevitability of divine judgment for sin is coupled together with God’s immutable commitment to His covenant promises. The combination of God’s 1) absolute consistency in judging sin and 2) unbending commitment to His covenant through the remnant of His people provides the hearers with a clear disclosure of the character of the Sovereign of the universe. Through divine intervention, He will bring about both judgment on sinners and blessing on those who repent.”¹⁰

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The 700’s BC were volatile years in the world and especially in the land of Israel and Judah. Syria, who had been Israel’s primary enemy at the beginning of the century, (and made considerable threats against Ahaz in Judah – even up to 740 BC), was under the authority of Assyria by the time the Assyrians attacked and defeated the kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. The Assyrians were identified in the books of Isaiah, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles as the force that came against Hezekiah in Judah (between the years 715 – 686 BC). Assyria would continue in power throughout the rest of Micah’s ministry.

OUTLINE

- A. A Message of Punishment, 1-2
 - a. Who will be Judged, 1
 - b. Why They will be Judged, 2
- B. A Message of Restoration, 3-5
 - a. The Current Poor Leadership, 3
 - b. The Future Kingdom Promised, 4
 - c. The Future King Promised, 5
- C. A Message of Forgiveness, 6-7
 - a. What is Expected, 6
 - b. What is Promised, 7

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 262-263.

⁴ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 848.

⁹ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 432.

¹⁰ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1298.

Isaiah

Salvation

Monarchy to Captivity
740 BC – 690 BC

AUTHOR

The very first verse in the Book of Isaiah identifies the author as the prophet Isaiah. “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (1:1).¹ Though the scholars have debated for years whether there is one single writer or two writers, I believe there is but one Isaiah and he is the one Scripture identifies as the author of this book.

DATE OF WRITING

Included in the first verse of the book, along with the identification of the author, is pertinent information concerning the time of the ministry of Isaiah. Using the material given, a date can be secured during the lifetime of the prophet. “Isaiah had a long ministry, which began in the year that King Uzziah died (740 B.C.) and continued into the reign of Manasseh (696-642 B.C.). Isaiah probably ministered for about fifty years”.² It is uncertain how Isaiah went about recording his prophecies. “Apparently he did no public preaching after Manasseh ascended the throne in 697 B.C., but confined his message to the written form preserved in chapters 40 through 66.”³ Assuming that the finished record was produced nearer the martyrdom of Isaiah, a date may be given around 680 B.C.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The significant events during the ministry of Isaiah are among the most significant items of the Old Testament. It has been made clear already that Isaiah’s ministry involved the Judean kings Uzziah (792-740 BC), Jotham (750-735 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), Hezekiah (715-686 BC), and Manasseh (697-642 BC). The northern kingdom of Israel would have several serving as king: Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), Zechariah (753 BC), Shallum (752 BC), Menahem (752-742 BC), Pekahiah (742-740), Pekah (752-732 BC), and Hoshea (732-722 BC). Hoshea’s kingdom would end in defeat to the Assyrians. The prophets who were active in Isaiah’s day would include Amos, Jonah, and Hosea to the northern kingdom and Micah and in the southern kingdom.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Isaiah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel). The Jewish canon places it in the The Nebiim (Prophets), along with the other 14 Latter Prophets.

THEME

Following the common thread of the term “salvation” throughout the book has led many to conclude that it must be the theme of the entire work. It is interesting to note: “The basic theme of this book is found in Isaiah’s name: salvation is of the Lord. The word “salvation” appears twenty-six times in Isaiah but only seven times in all the other prophets combined. Chapters 1-39 portray man’s great need for salvation, and chapters 40-66 reveal God’s great provision of salvation. Salvation is of God, not man, and He is seen as the supreme Ruler, the sovereign Lord of history, and the only Savior.”⁴

Scofield’s given theme is “Israel’s Messiah”⁵ as it relates to the issue of salvation especially. There could be no salvation apart from the Messiah. Blending these two thoughts together, Martin writes, “It is difficult on the surface to find a central theme in Isaiah from which all the material flows. Since there are two clearly defined parts, it almost appears that there would be two central themes, one for chapters 1-39 and another for chapters 40-66. It is obvious that part one speaks primarily of judgment, whereas part two emphasizes comfort. But are those mutually exclusive? Is there not a unifying thought that blends those two great themes together? The problem can be stated as follows: What principle governs both judgment and comfort? A full answer can come only from a complete induction of the book. Careful study shows that the judgment is not unrelieved judgment, but that it is more than retribution for sin. It also includes restoration – blessing after the judgment. The term *restoration* describes the change in the whole structure of the cosmos, which is evident throughout the book. Reference is made repeatedly to the Lord’s standard, which has been broken time and again not only by Israel but also by the other nations of the world. The sections dealing with the blessings of the kingdom show a restoration of the Lord’s created order. He did not create the world “as waste” (45:18). The role of the Servant of the Lord will be to deliver justice or order to the world. The Lord promises Israel that it will be restored and smelted, and then Zion will be called a city of righteousness (1:24-26). So the central or dominant theme of the whole book can be expressed as *the Lord’s restoration of His created order*. That is the meaning of the expression so gloriously evident in the prophecy – the Lord’s salvation through the Messiah (the Servant) “to the ends of the earth.”⁶

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Much of what was said about the times of Micah are also true about the times of Isaiah. The 700’s BC were volatile years in the world and especially in the land of Israel and Judah. Syria, who had been Israel’s primary enemy at the beginning of the century, (and made considerable threats against Ahaz in Judah – even up to 740 BC), was under the authority of Assyria by the time the Assyrians attacked and defeated the kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. The Assyrians were identified in the books of Isaiah, 2 Kings, and 2

Chronicles as the force that came against Hezekiah in Judah (between the years 715 – 686 BC). Assyria would continue in power throughout the rest of Isaiah’s ministry.

OUTLINE

A. God’s Judgments, 1-39

a. Against Judah, 1-12

- i. The Need for Rebuke and Restoration, 1
- ii. The Cleaning of the Nation and the Kingdom to Come, 2-4
- iii. Parable of the Vineyard, 5
- iv. Calling Isaiah the Prophet, 6
- v. Coming of Christ, 7-9
 1. Sign of Immanuel, 7
 2. Sign of Maher-shala-hash-baz, 8
 3. Sign of Christ and Judgment of Samaria, 9
- vi. Concerning Assyria, 10
- vii. Concerning the Branch of Jesse, 11
- viii. Praise Hymn, 12

b. Against Nations, 13-27

- i. Babylon, 13-14:23
- ii. Assyria, 14:24-27
- iii. Philistia, 14:28-32
- iv. Moab, 15-16:14
- v. Syria and Israel, 17
- vi. Ethiopia, 18
- vii. Egypt, 19-20
- viii. Babylon, 21:1-10
- ix. Edom, 21:11-12
- x. Arabia, 21:13-17
- xi. Jerusalem, 22
- xii. Tyre, 23
- xiii. Future Judgments upon the World, 24
- xiv. Future Kingdom of the World, 25
- xv. Praise Hymn, 26
- xvi. Israel’s Place in the Kingdom, 27

c. Warnings and Blessings, 28-35

- i. On Samaria, 28
- ii. On Judah, 29-31
- iii. Christ’s Kingdom, 32
- iv. Assyria’s Judgment, 33
- v. Armageddon’s Judgment, 34
- vi. Blessings in the Kingdom, 35

d. Historical Section, 36-39

- i. Sennacherib’s Taunt, 36
- ii. God’s Truth and Assyria’s Threat, 37
- iii. Hezekiah’s Illness, 38
- iv. Hezekiah’s Mistake, 39

B. God’s Comfort, 40-66

- a. The Deliverance, 40-48
 - i. Set Free from Captivity, 40
 - ii. Set Free from Idols, 41
 - iii. God's Servant, 42
 - iv. Israel's Restoration, 43-44
 - v. Cyrus, 45
 - vi. Judging Babylon, 46-48
- b. The Deliverer, 49-57
 - i. The Servant's Call, 49
 - ii. The Servant Contrasted with Israel, 50
 - iii. Encouragement and Exhortation, 51
 - iv. The Servant's Suffering, 52-53
 - v. The Servant's Salvation, 54-57
 - 1. A Song, 54
 - 2. An Invitation, 55
 - 3. A Blessing, 56
 - 4. A Rebuke, 56-57
- c. The Difference, 58-66
 - i. Between Right and Wrong, 58
 - ii. Between Sin and Righteousness, 59
 - iii. The Glory of the Kingdom, 60
 - iv. The Ministry of Peace, 61
 - v. The Redemption of Israel, 62
 - vi. The Blessing of Israel, 63-65
 - vii. The Blessings of the Future, 66

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, Benware, Paul N., Moody Press, 1988, p. 194.

³ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 626.

⁴ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 191.

⁵ The New Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield, C.I., editor, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 713.

⁶ Isaiah: The Glory of the Messiah, p. 19-20.

Zephaniah

Destruction and Deliverance

Monarchy to Captivity
640 BC – 609 BC

AUTHOR

The first verse of the Book of Zephaniah declares that Zephaniah is the author of the book. “The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah” (1:1)¹ However, there are some attempts in identifying this particular Zephaniah. Some believe that he was the descendent of King Hezekiah, others that he couldn’t have been. In step with the first option, Hannah, in the Bible Knowledge Commentary, writes, “Beyond the information given in Zephaniah 1:1, little is known about this prophet. His ancestry is traced back four generations, which is unique among the prophets. This implies he was a man of prominence and even of royalty. As the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Zephaniah was the only known Old Testament prophet with such high social standing. He was thus a distant relative of King Josiah in whose reign he prophesied. Also the prophet may have been a resident of Jerusalem because of his words “from this place” (v. 4) and his familiarity with the city (vv. 10-11).”² It seems logical that Zephaniah’s list was not meant to be understood as an obscure ancestry, but one that his readers would recognize and respect.

Those who do not agree with this opinion state the following. “Zephaniah is stated to be the son of Cushi and the great-grandson of a Hezekiah, who might possibly have been King Hezekiah himself. But certain chronological considerations render this virtually impossible. [And from the footnote]: Manasseh was the oldest surviving son of Hezekiah, and yet he was only twelve at the time of his accession (2 Kings 21:1) in 697 (or, as some prefer, 969). Therefore “Amariah, son of Hezekiah” (Zeph 1:1) was presumably younger than Manasseh, and hence could not have been born earlier than 708 B.C. If he was twenty-five when he fathered Gedaliah, and Gedaliah was twenty-five when Cushi was born, and Cushi was twenty-five when he begot Zephaniah – using twenty-five as a likely age for fatherhood – this would make Zephaniah’s year of birth 634, which would be much too late for a possible ministry in Josiah’s reign (Zeph. 1:1). Even if the four generation spans were only twenty years apiece (a most unlikely eventually,) this would make his birth year 649, or only nine years before the beginning of Josiah’s reign. Since he was a grown man when he prophesied, he could hardly have served in Josiah’s reign.”³

Reconciling these two options is not possible. As written above, I cannot tell exactly how Zephaniah’s age fits into the picture, but the listing of prominent names signifies to me that Zephaniah meant for his readers to attach his name to the great king Hezekiah.

DATE OF WRITING

There isn't much debate over the general time period in which Zephaniah prophesied. After all, he specifically dates his book during the reign of Josiah, who ruled between 640 and 609 B.C. However, those 28 years are divided by a great reform around the year 628 (by some scholars) and 622 (by others). This leaves the question concerning which time bracket is the best option for the writing of the book. Characteristics of each era are presented as evidence for each opinion. Good scholars are found on either side.

Prior to the Reformation (635-625 B.C.)

MacArthur writes, "The prophet himself dates his message during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.). The moral and spiritual conditions detailed in the book (cf. 1:4-6; 3:1-7) seem to place the prophecy prior to Josiah's reforms, when Judah was still languishing in idolatry and wickedness. It was in 628 B.C. that Josiah tore down all the altars to Baal, burned the bones of false prophets, and broke the carved idols (2 Chr. 34:3-7); and in 622 B.C. the Book of the Law was found (2 Chr. 34:8-35:19). Consequently, Zephaniah most likely prophesied from 635-625 B.C., and was a contemporary of Jeremiah."⁴

Jensen believes that the lack of record within the book of the reform of Josiah is significant enough to place its writing prior to the reform. "The book of Zephaniah is written (c. 627 B.C.). The prophet probably wrote his book during the early part of Josiah's reign, since there is no reference in the book of Josiah's reform of 622 B.C."⁵

ISBE suggests the following reasons for an early date.

- a.** The youth of the king would make it easy for the royal princes to go to the excesses condemned in Zeph 1:8, 9.
- b.** The idolatrous practices condemned by Zephaniah (1:3-5) are precisely those abolished in 621.
- c.** The temper described in Zeph 1:12 is explicable before 621 and after the death of Josiah in 608, but not between 621 and 608, when religious enthusiasm was widespread.
- d.** Only the earlier part of Josiah's reign furnishes a suitable occasion for the prophecy. Evidently at the time of its delivery an enemy was threatening the borders of Judah and of the surrounding nations. But the only foes of Judah during the latter part of the 7th century meeting all the conditions are the Scythians, who swept over Western Asia about 625 BC. At the time the prophecy was delivered their advance against Egypt seems to have been still in the future, but imminent (Zeph 1:14); hence, the prophet's activity may be placed between 630 and 625, perhaps in 626. If this date is correct, Zephaniah and Jeremiah began their ministries in the same year."⁶

After the Reformation (622-609 B.C.)

Walker begins by writing, "Some commentators suppose that Zephaniah wrote at a time prior to any reformation attempted by Josiah; others assume that the predominance of idolatry had already been broken by the time of Zephaniah's ministry. The reference to the "remnant of Baal" (1:4) is a key passage for many commentators in dating the book. They assume this statement reflects a time when Baalism had already been generally destroyed and only a "remnant" yet remained. But others respond that this is assuming too much. They argue that the point the prophet made was only that eventually

all Baalism would be exterminated and that this had nothing to do with the amount of Baal worship during Zephaniah's ministry. Another reference used to argue for the later date is 1:12: "those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs." Hyatt believes this indicates the disappointment in the reformation of Josiah. The people who had endeavored to live up to the demands of the reforms had seen their dream of a reunited state crushed."⁷

The Bible Knowledge Commentary supports this option as well. "According to 1:1, Zephaniah's ministry was during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.). Scholars differ on whether the prophet ministered before or after the recovery of the Law by Hilkiah and the subsequent religious revival in 622 B.C. (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chron. 34). Probably Zephaniah's prophecy was given after Josiah's revival, for these reasons: (1) Cutting off the remnant of Baal worship (Zeph. 1:4) implied that a religious awakening was in progress. (2) Jeremiah, who prophesied long after 622 (as well as before), described Judah's religious and moral condition much as did Zephaniah (cf. Jer. 8:2; 19:13 with Zeph. 1:5; cf. Jer. 5:2, 7 with Zeph. 1:5b; and cf. Jer. 8:8-9 with Zeph. 3:4). (3) The fact that the king's sons wore foreign apparel (1:8) suggests that they were old enough to make their own choices. (4) Zephaniah's frequent quotations of the Law suggest that he was using the sources discovered by Hilkiah (cf. v. 13 with Deut. 28:30, 39; cf. Zeph. 1:15 with Deut. 4:11; cf. Zeph. 1:17 with Deut. 28:29; and cf. Zeph. 2:2 with Deut. 28:15-62). (5) Zephaniah's message of impending judgment would be appropriate for those who spurned the religious revival under Josiah. Thus his prophecy was given sometime after the time of Josiah's revival in 622, but before the destruction of Nineveh in 612 – which Zephaniah indicated was still in existence then (Zeph. 2:13) as the capital of the Assyrian Empire."⁸

It is apparent to me that the stronger argument of the two is in favor of the 622 to 609 B.C. option. However, it is not vital for the short number of years between the two options to cause great division. Some Old Testament books are argued according to centuries but this one only concerns a matter of some 28 years.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The author does us a favor in stating that his prophecy came during the days of Josiah, King of Judah. Josiah reigned from 640 to 609 BC. He would be the last good king of Judah before its fall to Babylon in 586. The only other prophet active during these days was Nahum, who prophesied to Assyria just before their fall to Babylon. Josiah was known as a king who made great spiritual reforms in the land. Though Josiah was only 8 years old when he became king, 2 Kings 22 states that it wasn't until his 18th year (622 BC) when he called for attention to be given to the Temple, and the Book of the Law was found. The message that accompanied the Law told Josiah that the Lord intended to punish Judah for their sins, but because he had repented before the Lord, God would spare Judah during his reign.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Zephaniah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the *Nebiim* (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah,

Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Most commentators on the theme of Zephaniah cannot get by without mentioning the number of times Zephaniah refers to the Day of the Lord within his prophecies. Scofield states, “A leading theme of Zephaniah is the day of the Lord, a future event that he describes with vivid power. Zephaniah uses the term, “day of the Lord,” more than any other prophet; yet he pleads with Judah to “seek the Lord” that they might be “hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.””⁹

The Bible Knowledge Commentary states basically the same thing. However, there is another aspect to this that must be declared. “The day of the Lord” is an expression used more frequently in this prophecy than in any other Old Testament book. Thus the theme of the book is the impending judgment of God on Judah for its disobedience. A corollary of the judgment motif within Zephaniah and the other prophets is the preservation of the true Remnant by the mercies of the covenant-keeping God. Though judgment was sure, God’s promise to protect His people and fulfill His promises was steadfast and everlasting. The book’s theme is capsuled in Zephaniah 1:7a: “Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near.”¹⁰

The sovereignty of God would certainly be the moving force behind the judgments and promises in the book. Archer highlights this as his theme for the book. “The theme of his message is that Jehovah is still firmly in control of all His world despite any contrary appearances, and that He will prove this in the near future by inflicting terrible chastisement upon disobedient Judah, and complete destruction upon the idolatrous Gentile nations. Only by a timely repentance can this wrath be deferred.”¹¹

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Behind the scenes of the reign of good King Josiah is the fact that God intended to severely punish Judah for their sins. Assyria was the world power from the mid 700’s BC, but another power was flexing its strength during the days of Zephaniah’s prophecy. Babylon began their attacks on Assyria, taking Nineveh around the year 612 BC. Egypt, knowing that Babylon was a serious threat, decided to counterstrike at Carchemish in the year 609 BC. It was at this fateful time that Josiah decided to intervene and Pharaoh-Necho defeated Judah and killed Josiah in battle. Even Jeremiah viewed this disaster as the end of the Lord’s favor toward Judah in their day. Egypt failed in their efforts, and Babylon would attack Judah three times, beginning in 605 BC and concluding in 586 BC with the burning of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

OUTLINE

- A. Day of Wrath for Judah, 1
- B. Day of Wrath for Nations, 2-3
 - a. Call to Repent, 2:1-3
 - b. Philistia, 2:4-7
 - c. Moab and Ammon, 2:8-11
 - d. Ethiopia, 2:12
 - e. Assyria, 2:13-15
 - f. Jerusalem, 3:1-7
 - g. The Nations, 3:8
- C. Day of Deliverance for Remnant, 3
 - a. Gentile Blessings, 3:9-10
 - b. Jewish Blessings, 3:11-20

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Zephaniah, by Hannah, John D., Walvoord, John F., Zuck, Roy B., Editors, Victor Books, 1988, p. 1523.

³ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 394.

⁴ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1324.

⁵ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 443.

⁶ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Orr, James, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, Inc.) 1999.

⁷ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7, Zephaniah, by Walker, Larry Lee., Gaebelein, Frank E., General Editor, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985, p. 538.

⁸ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Zephaniah, p. 1523.

⁹ The New Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield, C.I., editor, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 957.

¹⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Zephaniah, p. 1524.

¹¹ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, p. 393.

Habakkuk

Faith

Monarchy to Captivity 605 BC

AUTHOR

Habakkuk, like many of the minor prophets, identifies himself in the first verse of the book but leaves us guessing about any other information concerning him or his time. The book begins, “The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.” (1:1)¹ There is no other mention of him in the Old Testament.

Among the possibilities, the Open Bible suggests, “It is possible that he not only had the gift of prophecy but that he was one of a professional group of prophets. Certain musical notations in chapter 3 suggest that he may have prophesied in the Temple.”²

MacArthur states, “His simple introduction as “the prophet Habakkuk” may imply that he needed no introduction since he was a well known prophet of his day. It is certain that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zephaniah.”³

Since there are no other valid explanations for the authorship of this book; and since the comment in verse one (taken in its literal form) is sufficient evidence for its claim as author, then Habakkuk is the author of this particular book.

DATE OF WRITING

The majority of those who set dates for the Book of Habakkuk keep their suggestion within the range of 700 to 600 B.C. There are basically three main groups, those who suggest a date around 701 to 697 B.C., those who offer a 640 B.C. date, and those who prefer something around 609 B.C. One radical theory places the book around 330 B.C. There is nothing about that theory worth mentioning.

However, concerning the other three options, the Bible Knowledge Commentary gives the following information. “It is generally accepted that the reference to the Babylonians (Hab. 1:6) places the book within the seventh century B.C. More precise dating of the prophecy has provoked controversy. The dates proposed fall into three time periods: the reign of Manasseh (697-642), the reign of Josiah (640-609), and the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598). Those who date Habakkuk’s prophecy in the reign of Manasseh say that the statement of 1:5, “I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told,” indicates a time before Babylon’s rise as a world power. The date, then, would have to be before the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Neco II of Egypt and Babylon rose to become a formidable nation making its bid for world power, and most likely before 612 B.C., when Babylon overthrew Nineveh. However, if the fulfillment of Habakkuk’s prophecy (v5) is

the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C., the book definitely was not written early in the reign of Manasseh. The prophecy is said to be fulfilled “in your days” (v. 5) and those who heard the prophecy in Manasseh’s early days would probably have died before its fulfillment.

A date in the latter years of Manasseh’s reign or during the reign of Josiah might fit, but Habakkuk’s complaint (vv. 2-4) points to a period in the history of Judah when lawlessness and violence were rampant. The reforms in the later part of Manasseh’s reign (2 Chron. 33:15-16) and the extensive reforms of Josiah (2 Chron. 34) do not fit Habakkuk’s dire description.

It seems far better to understand the disbelief referred to in Habakkuk 1:5 as a reaction to God’s use of such a sinful nation to judge Israel rather than the surprise that a nation as yet unrecognized would emerge in power. That the Babylonians had already attained renown for their power seems evident from the description recorded by Habakkuk in verses 7-11. Thus the most likely date falls between 606 and 604 B.C., sometime around Babylon’s victory at the battle of Carchemish (605).⁵

MacArthur agrees with this idea. “Habakkuk’s bitter lament (1:2-4) may reflect a time period shortly after the death of Josiah (609B.C.), days in which the godly king’s reforms (cf. 2 Kin. 23) were quickly overturned by his successor, Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:13-19).”⁶ To help support this option, the Open Bible gives a great deal of information. “The most satisfactory conclusion seems to be that the prophecy was written at a time when the Chaldeans or Babylonians were restive against the Assyrian power and had, perhaps, even begun. Much later than this would be to assume that the prophecy is not really a prediction of the invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans but a reference to what had already taken place and is merely an explanation of the presence of the Babylonians in the westlands as the instruments of the Lord. The best conclusion seems to be that the prophecy was written toward the end of the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.), preferably after the destruction of Nineveh by the combined forces of the Babylonians, Medians, and Scythians in 612 B.C. This time seems plausible for two reasons. One is that the prophet seems surprised to learn that the Chaldeans are God’s choice to punish disobedient Judah. The other reason is that the rise of Chaldean power would be sufficiently evident that the prophet’s description would have meaning for his hearers. Certainly the book should be dated before 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar first invaded Palestine.”⁷

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Four kings will sit on the throne of Judah after King Josiah’s death in 609 BC. Jehoahaz would reign for 1 month (609 BC). Jehoikim (609-597 BC) would reign for 11 years, seeing 2 of the 3 strikes Babylon will inflict against Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah had many dealings with this wicked king. Jehoiachin would follow for only 3 months in 597 BC. The final king of Judah would be Zedekiah (597-586 BC).

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Habakkuk has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah,

Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Two sections of this book bring to light the great theme woven throughout the entire writing and the whole of Scripture. In 2:4 it states, “Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.” In 3:16-19 it is said by the prophet, “I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise *who* will invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, *though* the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' *feet*, and makes me walk on my high places.”

Undoubtedly, this is a great book on faith. However, that faith is tested in the judgments of their day. Archer states, “The theme of this prophecy concerns the problems of faith in the face of apparent difficulties hindering the fulfillment of God’s promises. These difficulties are grappled with and solved in the light of God’s continuing revelation, and the prophet closes in a psalm of joyous trust.”¹⁴

Wilkinson adds impressive detail to the struggles that forged Habakkuk’s faith. “The circumstances of life sometimes appear to contradict God’s revelation concerning His power and purposes. Habakkuk struggled in his faith when he saw men flagrantly violate God’s law and distort justice on every level without fear of divine intervention. He wanted to know why God was allowing growing iniquity to go unpunished. When God revealed His intention to use Babylon as His rod of judgment, Habakkuk was even more troubled, because that nation was more corrupt than Judah. God’s answer (2:2-20) satisfied Habakkuk that he could trust Him even in the worst of circumstances because of His matchless wisdom, goodness, and power. God’s plan is perfect, and nothing is big enough to stand in the way of its ultimate fulfillment. In spite of appearances to the contrary, God is still on the throne as the Lord of history and the Ruler of the nations. Yahweh may be slow to wrath, but all iniquity will eventually be punished. He is the worthiest object of faith, and the righteous man will trust in Him at all times.”¹⁵

The theme is clearly seen; the one who trusts God is also the one who finds his joy and strength in the Lord.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Babylon is the main concern of the prophet Habakkuk. God made it clear that He would use the Babylonians to inflict the punishment on Judah that they deserve. Babylon is known to have grown quickly in domination. The Assyrians would be the first to lose their capital to Babylon in 612 BC when Nineveh fell. The Egyptians would follow in 605 BC at the battle of Carchamish. Judah would see the Babylonians 3 times between the years 605 BC (and the capture of Daniel and his friends) and 586 BC. What Habakkuk had to prophesy came true before his own eyes.

OUTLINE

- A. Habakkuk's Problem, 1-2
 - a. Question 1, 1:1-4
 - b. God's Answer, 1:5-11
 - c. Question 2, 1:12-2:1
 - d. God's Answer, 2:2-20
- B. Habakkuk's Praise, 3
 - a. For Who God Is, 3:1-3
 - b. For What God Does, 3:4-7
 - c. For What God Plans, 3:8-19

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 858.

³ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1316.

⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Habakkuk, by Blue, J. Ronald., Walvoord, John F., Zuck, Roy B., Editors, Victor Books, 1988, p. 1506.

⁶ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1316.

⁷ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, p. 858.

¹⁴ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 395.

¹⁵ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 274.

Jeremiah

Condemnation

Monarchy to Captivity 627 - 580 BC

AUTHOR

As with many of the Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah is identified as the author in the very first verse of the book. “The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin” (1:1).¹ No other principle author is given as an alternative to the authorship of Jeremiah. However, there is some evidence that Jeremiah may have had assistance in the production of the book. “Jeremiah dictated all his prophecies to his secretary Baruch from the beginning of his ministry until the fourth year of Jehoiakim. After this scroll was destroyed by the king, Jeremiah dictated a more complete edition to Baruch (see 36-38), and later sections were also composed. Only chapter 52 was evidently not written by Jeremiah. This supplement is almost identical to Second Kings 24:18-25:30, and it may have been added by Baruch.”²

Yet, as written in the Cambridge Bible, “We cannot, however, think Baruch to have been in any sense the author of the Book. The very words of that chapter, which is so strictly personal to himself (xlv., see especially ver. 5), shew what a gulf he felt to lie between him and his master. This feeling seems to be that which prevented him from venturing upon any thing like an elaborate arrangement of the contents, much less upon an addition of any matter of his own responsibility.”³

In addition, there is enough evidence to suggest that Baruch did not add the final chapter to the book. “The same is shewn by the style, which is so markedly the same throughout the book. Even if we grant (although it seems doubtful) that the 52nd chapter was added by Baruch, this does not constitute an exception to the statement made above, inasmuch as chapter 51 ends with words introduced specially to guard against any identification of the writer of the final one with the prophet. Lastly, if Baruch had felt himself empowered to add on his own authority to the words of Jeremiah, he would surely have given us an account of an event of such deep interest to himself and his readers as the prophet’s death.”⁴

With no other valid considerations, Jeremiah will be cited as the author of this book.

DATE OF WRITING

As with the author, we are helped in Jeremiah 1:2 with information concerning the date of this book. “To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.” Therefore, “Jeremiah was a contemporary of Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. His ministry stretched from

627 to about 580 B.C. Josiah, Judah's last good king (640-609 B.C.) instituted spiritual reforms when the Book of the Law was discovered in 622 B.C. Jeremiah was on good terms with Josiah and lamented when he was killed in 609 B.C. by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. By this time, Babylon had already overthrown Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria (612 B.C.). Jehoahaz was deposed and taken to Egypt by Necho. Jehoiakim (609-597 B.C.) was Judah's next king, but he reigned as an Egyptian vassal until 605 B.C., when Egypt was defeated by Babylon at Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar took Palestine and deported key people like Daniel to Babylon. Judah's King Jehoiakim was not a Babylonian vassal, but he rejected Jeremiah's warnings in 601 B.C. and rebelled against Babylon. Jehoiachin became Judah's next king in 597 B.C., but was replaced by Zedekiah three months later when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and deported Jehoiachin to Babylon. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah; his attempted alliance with Egypt led to Nebuchadnezzar's occupation and overthrow of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Thus, there were three stages in Jeremiah's ministry: (1) From 627 to 605 B.C., he prophesied while Judah was threatened by Assyria and Egypt. (2) From 605 to 586 B.C., he proclaimed God's judgment while Judah was threatened and besieged by Babylon. (3) From 586 to about 580 B.C., he ministered in Jerusalem and Egypt after Judah's downfall."⁵

With such information available to us, it is not difficult to set the final date of the writing of Jeremiah's book near the date of 580 B.C.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Much of the information about the historical content of this book has been expressed in the "Date of Writing" section above.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Jeremiah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel). The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets), along with the other 14 Latter Prophets.

THEME

There is no doubt that the majority of Jeremiah's book deals with sin and judgment. Not only do the prophecies highlight it, but so does the narrative that goes with it. The destruction of Jerusalem caps it with a solemn picture that the wages of sin is indeed death.

Writers have portrayed the theme in a two-fold fashion, judgment for sin and the patience of God. "The main theme of Jeremiah is judgment upon Judah (chaps. 1-29) with restoration in the future messianic kingdom (23:3-8; 30-33). Whereas Isaiah devoted many chapters to a future glory for Israel (Is. 40-66), Jeremiah gave far less space to this subject. Since God's judgment was imminent, he concentrated on current problems as he sought to turn the nation back from the point of no return. A secondary theme is God's willingness to spare and bless the nation only if the people repent. Though this is a frequent emphasis, it is most graphically portrayed at the potter's shop (18:1-11). A further focus is God's plan for Jeremiah's life, both in his proclamation of God's message and in his commitment to fulfill all of His will (1:5-19; 15:19-21). Other

themes include: 1) God's longing for Israel to be tender toward Him, as in the days of first love (2:1-3); 2) Jeremiah's servant tears, as "the weeping prophet" (9:1; 14:17); 3) the close, intimate relationship God had with Israel and that He yearned to keep (13:11); 4) suffering, as in Jeremiah's trials (11:18-23; 20:1-18) and God's sufficiency in all trouble (20:11-13); 5) the vital role that God's Word can play in life (15:16); 6) the place of faith in expecting restoration from the God for whom nothing is too difficult (chap. 32, especially vv. 17, 27); and 7) prayer for the coordination of God's will with God's action in restoring Israel to its land (33:3, 6-18)."⁶

Another has added to these thoughts. "In Jeremiah, God is seen as patient and holy – he has delayed judgment and appealed to his people to repent before it is too late. As the object lesson at the potter's house demonstrated, a ruined vessel could be repaired while still wet (18:1-4), but once dried, a marred vessel was fit only for the garbage heap (19:10-11). God's warning was clear: Judah's time for repentance would soon pass. Because they defied God's words and refused to repent, the Babylonian captivity was inevitable. Jeremiah listed the moral and spiritual causes for their coming catastrophe, but he also proclaimed God's gracious promise of hope and restoration. There will always be a remnant, and God will establish a new covenant."⁷

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

As stated concerning the book of Habakkuk, Babylon is the main concern of the prophet Jeremiah. God made it clear that He would use the Babylonians to inflict the punishment on Judah that they deserve. Babylon is known to have grown quickly in domination. The Assyrians would be the first to lose their capital to Babylon in 612 BC when Nineveh fell. The Egyptians would follow in 605 BC at the battle of Carchamish. Judah would see the Babylonians 3 times between the years 605 BC (and the capture of Daniel and his friends) and 586 BC. What Jeremiah had to prophesy came true before his own eyes. At the end of his life, he is kidnapped by fellow Jews and taken to Egypt against his wishes. Nothing else is known about the prophet after this time.

OUTLINE

- A. Calling Jeremiah, 1
- B. Condemning Judah, 2-25
 - a. Sermon 1, 2
 - b. Sermon 2, 3-6
 - c. Sermon 3, 7-10
 - d. Sermon 4, 11-12
 - e. Sermon 5, 13
 - f. Sermon 6, 14-15
 - g. Sermon 7, 16-17
 - h. Sermon 8, 18-20
 - i. Sermon 9, 21-23
 - j. Sermon 10, 23
 - k. Sermon 11, 24
 - l. Sermon 12, 25
- C. Concerning Jeremiah, 26-29

- a. Responding to His Prophecies, 27
- b. His Advice concerning Babylon, 28-29
- D. Concerning Jerusalem's Future, 30-33
 - a. Restoring the Land, 30
 - b. Restoring the Nation, 31
 - c. Restoring the City, 32
 - d. Restoring the Covenant, 33
- E. Concerning Jerusalem's Destruction, 34-45
 - a. Prophecy of the Fall, 34-36
 - b. Events of the Fall, 37-39
 - c. Events after the Fall, 40-45
- F. Concerning Gentile Nations, 46-51
 - a. Egypt, 46
 - b. Philistia, 47
 - c. Moab, 48
 - d. Ammon, Edom, and Damascus, 49
 - e. Babylon, 50-51
- G. Conclusion: Jerusalem's Fall, 52

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 198.

³ The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Jeremiah and Lamentations, Streane, A.W., University Press, 1888, p. xxxiii.

⁴ Ibid., footnote.

⁵ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 198-199.

⁶ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1060.

⁷ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 199.

Lamentations

Weeping

Monarchy to Captivity

586 BC

AUTHOR

The name associated with the Book of Lamentations is Jeremiah the prophet. This suggestion has been supported for many years even though the Hebrew Scriptures do not affirm it. “That the Book of the Lamentations is the work of Jeremiah the prophet has been the apparently universal belief first of the Jewish and then of the Christian Church from the earliest times until recently. The Hebrew indeed contains no direct assertion of the fact. The earliest extant translation however, that called by the name Septuagint, ascribes it to him in a note prefixed to the first chapter to the following effect, “*And it came to pass after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem made desolate, Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said.*” This evidence brings us back to at least one or two centuries before Christ. Other early authorities also ascribe the Book to Jeremiah, while the Latin Vulgate (4th cent. A.D.) repeats the assertion of the Septuagint, as given above, amplifying however the last words into “*and in bitterness of heart signing and crying said.*”¹

Besides the traditional aspects, there is also internal evidence to support the authorship of Jeremiah. “Several ideas used by Jeremiah in his prophecy reappear in Lamentations (cf. Jer. 30:14 with Lam. 1:2 and cf. Jer. 49:12 with Lam. 4:21). In both books the writer said his eyes flowed with tears (Jer. 9:1, 18; Lam. 1:16; 2:11); and in both the writer was an eyewitness of Jerusalem’s fall to Babylon and pictured the atrocities that befell Jerusalem in her last days (Jer 19:9; Lam. 2:20; 4:10).”²

There are no other significant suggestions as author in the stead of Jeremiah and no great opposition to alter his authorship.

DATE OF WRITING

The freshness of the account of Jerusalem’s destruction has led to the conclusion that the Book of Lamentation must have been written within a relatively short period of time after the fall of the city in 586 B.C. “That the Book could not have been written long after this time is clear from the graphic manner in which the horrors of the siege are portrayed. We know from the history that Jeremiah was well off in comparison with many of his countrymen after the capture of the city, and the favour shewn him by the Chaldeans may well have allowed him the opportunity to writing this Book some time before he went down to Egypt.”⁴

More specifically, “Jeremiah would have penned the poetic dirges after Jerusalem fell of Babylon in 586 B.C. (cf. 1:1-11) but before he was taken to Egypt after Gedaliah’s assassination (ca. 583-582 B.C.; cf. Jer. 43:1-7). The vivid descriptions and deep emotions expressed in the Book of Lamentations argue for a composition shortly after the events occurred, possibly in late 586 B.C. or early 585 B.C.”⁵

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Lamentations is clearly an account of a single event, the fall of Jerusalem. 586 BC is the date for that traumatic day when the Babylonians took the city and burned the Temple. King Zedekiah was defeated and Jeremiah was left to see the horrors of that war.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Lamentations has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Major Prophets along with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The Jewish canon places it in the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) in the Megilloth (5 Scrolls) that were to be read at the annual Jewish feasts or memorial services.

Megilloth (5 Scrolls) – read at the annual Jewish feasts/memorials
 Song of Solomon (Passover – 14th of Nisan [Mar/Apr])
 Ruth (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after
 Passover, 6th of Sivan [May/June])
 Lamentations (Memorial of the destruction of Jerusalem, 9th of
 Ab [July/August])
 Ecclesiastes (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days
 after Passover, Sivan [May/June])
 Esther (Festival of Purim – 14th & 15th of Adar [Feb/Mar])

THEME

The theme of the Book of Lamentations is given away even in its title. It is a song of sorrow; a picture of what was lost and what has led to such loss. “There are three themes that run through the five laments of Jeremiah. The most prominent is the theme of mourning over Jerusalem’s holocaust. The Holy City has been laid waste and desolate – God’s promised judgment for sin has come. In his sorrow, Jeremiah speaks for himself, for the captives, and sometimes for the personified city. The second theme is a confession of sin and acknowledgment of God’s righteous and holy judgment upon Judah. The third theme is least prominent but very important; it is a note of hope in God’s future restoration of His people. Yahweh has poured out His wrath, but in His mercy he will be faithful to His covenant promises. “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (3:22-23).”¹¹ Of all the poetry in Scripture, the book of Lamentations is the highest expression of human emotion. The masterful design of word and rhyme, along with the fact that the entire book is an Hebrew acrostic, shows the skill and beauty of God’s written word.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Babylon is the main concern of the prophet Jeremiah. God made it clear that He would use the Babylonians to inflict the punishment on Judah that they deserve. Babylon is known to have grown quickly in domination. The Assyrians would be the first to lose their capital to Babylon in 612 BC when Nineveh fell. The Egyptians would follow in 605 BC at the battle of Carchamish. Judah would see the Babylonians 3 times between the years 605 BC (and the capture of Daniel and his friends) and 586 BC. What Jeremiah had to prophesy came true before his own eyes. At the end of his life, he is kidnapped by fellow Jews and taken to Egypt against his wishes. Nothing else is known about the prophet after this time.

OUTLINE

- A. Lament 1 – The Destruction of the City, 1
- B. Lament 2 – The Anger of God, 2
- C. Lament 3 – The Mercy of God, 3
- D. Lament 4 – The Siege of Jerusalem, 4
- E. Lament 5 – The Prayer of the People, 5

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² The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Lamentations, by Dyer, Charles H., Walvoord, John F., Zuck, Roy B., Editors, Victor Books, 1988, p. 1207.

⁴ The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, The Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, p. 354.

⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Lamentations, p. 1207.

¹¹ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 208.

Ezekiel

The Glory of God

Captivity

593 BC – 570 BC

AUTHOR

That Ezekiel was the author of the book that bears his name is well attested to in internal and external evidence. Chapter 1:3 states, “the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.”¹ Throughout the book there is additional information that causes us to believe that Ezekiel was the sole author of the book. “The first person singular is used throughout the book, indicating that it is the work of a single personality. The person is identified as Ezekiel (1:3; 24:24), and internal evidence supports the unity and integrity of Ezekiel’s prophetic record. The style, language, and thematic development are consistent through the book; and several distinctive phrases are repeated throughout, such as, “They shall know that I am the Lord,” “son of man,” “the word of the Lord came to me,” and the “glory of the Lord.”²

There are 6 important factors that support the unity of the book and Ezekiel’s authorship of it. These factors are: (1) balanced structure and logical arrangement, (2) autobiographical nature, (3) clear chronological sequence, (4) internal consistency of the message within the structural balance, (5) uniformity of language and style, and (6) consistency of Ezekiel’s personality throughout the book.”⁵

There is no valid reason for questioning the authority of the text that claims Ezekiel as the author, nor are there any alternatives given that serve as rivals against Ezekiel.

DATE OF WRITING

It is to our advantage that Ezekiel “dates” his own writings for us. In the very first chapter he gives us crucial information that sets the time of his prophecies. “The author received his call to prophesy in 593 B.C. (1:2), in Babylon (“the land of the Chaldeans”), during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, which began in 597 B.C. Frequently, Ezekiel dates his prophecies from 597 B.C. (8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1, 29:1; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; 40:1). He also dates the message in 40:1 as 573/72 BC, the 14th year after 586 B.C., i.e., Jerusalem’s final fall. The last dated utterance of Ezekiel was 571/70 B.C. (29:17).”⁶ Given the time to complete his writings, it has been suggested that the prophecy was finished somewhere between 570 and 565 B.C.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

As noted above, Ezekiel's ministry as prophet encompassed the years starting at 593 BC and completing somewhere around 570 BC. Those 23 years are at the beginning of Israel's 70 year captivity in Babylon. Ezekiel obviously was among one of Babylon's earlier captives, either at the time of Daniel's capture (605 BC) or later at 597 BC with the second group captured. Since he brings up this date often, it may seem logical to believe that he came to Babylon with the second series of captives. Judah would eventually fall in the year 586 BC, approximately 11 years after Ezekiel had been taken.

Significant individuals include:

Nabopolassar (626 – 605 BC), Babylonian king

Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562 BC), the principle Babylonian king during Judah's fall and the books of Ezekiel and Daniel.

Belshazzar (553 – 539 BC), co-regent with Nabonidus, the Babylonian ruler at the time of Babylon's fall to the Medes and Persians.

Jehoiakim: Judean king at the time of the first Babylonian attack in 605 BC (Daniel's captivity)

Jehoiachin: Judean king at the time of the second Babylonian attack in 597 BC (Ezekiel's captivity)

Zedekiah: Judea's final king at the time of the third Babylonian attack in 586 BC. The city and Temple were destroyed.

Daniel and Jeremiah are contemporary prophets during Ezekiel's day.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Ezekiel has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel). The Jewish canon places it in the The Nebiim (Prophets), along with the other 14 Latter Prophets.

THEME

It is obvious that Ezekiel's prophecy divides up into two distinct parts. The first section is primarily condemnation (1-32). The second section is comfort (33-48). However, woven within these two parts is an emphasis on the glory of the Lord. As MacArthur writes, "The 'glory of the Lord' is central to Ezekiel, appearing in 1:28; 3:12, 23; 10:4, 18; 11:23; 43:4, 5; 44:4. The book includes graphic descriptions of the disobedience of Israel and Judah, despite God's kindness (chap. 23; cf. Chap. 16). It shows God's desire for Israel to bear fruit which He can bless; however, selfish indulgence had left Judah ready for judgment, like a torched vine (chap. 15). References are plentiful to Israel's idolatry and its consequences, such as Pelatiah dropping dead (11:13), a symbolic illustration of overall disaster for the people".¹¹

Yet, with all the sin of the people, God's holiness and sovereignty are not overshadowed. "These are conveyed by frequent contrast of His bright glory against the despicable backdrop of Judah's sins (1:26-28; often in chaps. 8-11; and 43:1-7). Closely related is God's purpose of glorious triumph so that all may "know that I am the Lord." This divine monogram, God's signature authenticating His acts, is mentioned more than 60 times, usually with a judgment (6:7; 7:4), but occasionally after the promised restoration (34:27; 36:11, 38; 39:28)."¹²

The glory of the future temple and kingdom of the Messiah brings the book back to the theme begun in the first chapter. The glory of the Lord, which departed the Temple in Ezekiel's day (chapter 10) will return to fill the future temple as recorded in chapter 43.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The only nation to note during the days of Ezekiel is the kingdom of Babylon. Even though Judah would hang on for 11 years after Ezekiel's capture in 597 BC, Ezekiel's prophecies originate from the Babylonian territory. The powerful king, Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562 BC), would rule the entire time of Ezekiel's book.

OUTLINE

- A. A Personal Encounter with the Glory of God, 1-3
 - a. Ezekiel's Visions, 1
 - b. Ezekiel's Ministry, 2-3
- B. A Political Encounter with the Glory of God, 4-32
 - a. Judgments of Judah, 4-24
 - i. By Symbols, 4-5
 - ii. By Sermons, 6-7
 - iii. By Visions, 8-11
 - iv. By Signs and Parables, 12-24
 - b. Judgments of Nations, 25-32
 - i. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, 25
 - ii. Tyre, 26-28
 - iii. Egypt, 29-32
- C. A Spiritual Encounter with the Glory of God, 33-48
 - a. Israel's Restoration, 33-39
 - b. The Millennial Kingdom, 40-48
 - i. The Temple, 40-43
 - ii. The Worship, 44-46
 - iii. The Land, 47-48

REFERENCES

¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 213.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1150.

¹¹ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1151.

¹² Ibid.

Daniel

God's Timetable for Israel

Captivity 605 BC – 539 BC

AUTHOR

There is sufficient evidence within the Book of Daniel to identify its author as the prophet with the same name, Daniel. Several times within the book, Daniel identifies himself by name (8:1; 9:2, 20; 10:2). “Daniel claimed to write this book (12:4), and he used the autobiographical first person from chapter 7, verse 2, onward. The Jewish Talmud agrees with this testimony, and Christ attributed a quote from chapter 9, verse 27, to “Daniel the prophet” (Matt. 24:15).”¹

One interesting aspect of this book is that the first 6 chapters were written in the third person. This has led some to believe that these chapters were composed by a close friend or colleague of Daniel. Archer says that “careful examination shows that the author usually writes about himself in the third person, as was the custom among ancient authors of historical memoirs.”² This has been the practice even from the first book that introduces Moses to us (Exodus). There are no other names mentioned as possible authors, the majority of scholars are content with the idea that the title and the author are one and the same Daniel.

DATE OF WRITING

It is not unfair to assume that Daniel wrote about the events that occurred in this book soon after they had happened. The book covers practically the entire life of the prophet and has the evidence of the Babylonian and Persian kings to anchor it in history. Jensen believes that the final acts of the book were events that happen shortly before the writing of them. “Daniel probably wrote his book soon after the last dated event occurred (10:1; 536 B.C.). [Daniel became a captive of Babylon when he was a young man close to the year 600 B.C. Compiling all the dates of his lifetime, it is safe to conclude that he lived nearly to 520 B.C.] An approximate date would be 530 B.C., or when the prophet was around ninety years of age.”⁴ With such dates that covered the lifetime of Daniel, we find that his contemporaries were the prophets Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Daniel, as Ezekiel, ministered as a prophet during the Babylonian captivity of Israel from 605 – 536 BC. We understand that Daniel's capture occurred in the first Babylonian attack in 605 BC. Ezekiel would follow in 597 BC. The entire city was

destroyed, along with the Temple in 586 BC. However, unlike Ezekiel, Daniel would live to see the entire length of the captivity and would also see the first of the returning exiles on their way back to Jerusalem. Babylon would fall in 586 BC to the Medes and Persians. The book of Daniel will continue to show Daniel's involvement in the kingdom of Darius and Cyrus.

Significant individuals include:

Nabopolassar (626 – 605 BC), Babylonian king

Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562 BC), the principle Babylonian king during Judah's fall and the books of Ezekiel and Daniel.

Belshazzar (553 – 539 BC), co-regent with Nabonidus, the Babylonian ruler at the time of Babylon's fall to the Medes and Persians.

Jehoiakim: Judean king at the time of the first Babylonian attack in 605 BC (Daniel's captivity)

Jehoiachin: Judean king at the time of the second Babylonian attack in 597 BC (Ezekiel's captivity)

Zedekiah: Judea's final king at the time of the third Babylonian attack in 586 BC. The city and Temple were destroyed.

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC), Persian king who co-reigned with Darius the Mede.

Darius (539 – 525 BC), king of the Medes, co-reigned with Cyrus.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Daniel has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel). The Jewish Canon places it in the Historical Books which consists only of Daniel, Ezra – Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

THEME

Early in the book of Daniel we find the words to Nebuchadnezzar, "...that you be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes." (Daniel 4:25)⁸ Such declaration has led Scofield to state that the theme of the book is the "Rise and Fall of Kingdoms."⁹ Daniel was certainly one to witness what God had spoken. He views the fall of Jerusalem as well as the fall of Babylon in his lifetime.

Kings and kingdoms came and went, but not the Kingdom of God. "Prominent above every other theme in the book is God's sovereign control over the affairs of all rulers and nations, and their final replacement with the True King.....A second theme woven into the fabric of Daniel is the display of God's sovereign power through miracles. Daniel's era is one of 6 in the Bible with a major focus on miracles by which God accomplished His purposes. Other periods include: 1) the Creation and Flood (Gen. 1-11); 2) the patriarchs and Moses (Gen. 12-Deut.); 3) Elijah and Elisha (1 Kin. 19-2 King.13); 4) Jesus and the apostles (Gospels, Acts); and 5) the time of the Second Advent (Revelation). God, who has everlasting dominion and ability to work according to His will (4:34, 35), is capable of miracles, all of which would be lesser displays of power than was exhibited when he acted as Creator in Gen. 1:1. Daniel chronicles the God-enabled recounting and interpreting of dreams which God used to reveal His will (chaps.

2, 4, 7). Other miracles included; 1) His writing on the wall and Daniel's interpreting it (chap. 5); 2) His protection of the 3 men in a blazing furnace (chap 3); 3) His provision of safety for Daniel in a lion's den (chap. 6); and 4) supernatural prophecies (chaps. 2; 7; 8; 9:24-12:13)."¹⁰

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Two nations are to be noted during the days of Daniel: the kingdom of Babylon (from 605 – 539 BC), and the kingdom of the Medes and Persians (from 539 – 331 BC). The powerful king, Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562 BC), would rule for a good portion of Daniel's book. Belshazzar (553 – 539 BC) would be the final Babylonian ruler at the time when it fell to Cyrus in 539 BC. The kingdom of Persia would eventually fall to Alexander the Great in 331 BC.

OUTLINE

- A. A Look at the Prophet, 1
- B. A Look at the Gentile Nations, 2-7
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, 2
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar's Image, 3
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar's Vision, 4
 - d. Belshazzar's Feast, 5
 - e. Darius' Decree, 6
 - f. Daniels' Vision, 7
- C. A Look at Israel's Future, 8-12
 - a. Vision 1 – The Ram and Goat, 8
 - b. Vision 2 – 70 Weeks, 9
 - c. Vision 3 – The Future Prophecies, 10-12
 - i. Visions, 10
 - ii. Nations, 11
 - iii. Israel, 12

REFERENCES

¹ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 221.

² The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7, Daniel, by Archer, Jr., Gleason, Gaebelien, Frank E., General Editor, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985, p. 4.

⁴ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 379.

⁸ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

⁹ The New Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield, C.I., editor, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 896.

¹⁰ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1226.

Ezra

Spiritual Restoration

Captivity to Birth of Christ
538 BC – 440 BC

AUTHOR

Ezra is another of the Old Testament books that does not specifically name its author. Some debate has come as a result of it.

EZRA: It is interesting to note that Ezra is the only named option as writer for this book. Some have speculated that there is an unknown compiler, but as to name, no other is given but the name Ezra. This is supported by internal evidence and tradition.

Internal Evidence: “Though Ezra is not referred to in the book as having written it, he has long been supposed to be the book’s author. Internal evidence points to this fact for in 7:27-9:15 the author refers to himself in the first person. Hebrew tradition also has considered Ezra the author. He was a priest and a scribe of the Law (7:21). Undoubtedly Ezra had documents at his disposal for the historical sections in chapter 1-6. Many Bible students have noted similarities between the style of Ezra and the style of 1 and 2 Chronicles. Therefore some suppose that Ezra was the author of all three.”¹

Ezra’s access to the library of Nehemiah is given as additional support of this conclusion. “He evidently incorporated into the final edition the personal memoirs of Nehemiah (i.e., the book of Nehemiah) including even his form of the list of returnees. Using Nehemiah’s library facilities, Ezra probably composed Chronicles during this same period.”²

Tradition: Jewish tradition (the Talmud) has supported Ezra’s authorship of this book. The debate comes from the Christian church. It is believed from tradition that Ezra was the author of a series of historical books: the Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah; these three making up a continuation of history from the time of David to the time of Nehemiah.

DATE OF WRITING

Primarily, a writing date is given by conservative scholars as approximately 444 B.C. by Ezra the prophet. The reason is as follows:

The Open Bible: “Since Ezra lived to the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 8:1-9; 12:36), he had plenty of time to finish his book between April of 458 B.C., when the events of Ezra 10:17-44 took place, and the summer of 444 B.C., when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem from the Persian court.”³

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: “The Book of Ezra covers two distinct time periods. Chapters 1-6 cover the 23 years from the edict of Cyrus to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (538-515 B.C.). Chapters 7-10 deal with the events after Ezra returned from

Babylon (458 B.C.). The two exceptions are 4:6, which refers to an event in the reign of Xerxes (458-465) and verses 7-23, which parenthetically include a letter written later during the reign of Artaxerxes (464-424). The time of writing of the completed book could not have been earlier than about 450 B.C. (when the events recorded in 10:17-44 took place).”⁴ Added to this is what is very convincing: “No hint of the conquest of Alexander is to be found, and perhaps more important, no reference to the suffering and chaos of the mid-fourth century B.C. when Judah joined in the Phoenician rebellion, harshly put down by Artaxerxes III and his general, Bagoas. In conclusion, we would date the composition of the Ezra materials about 440, the Nehemiah memoirs about 430, and the Chronicles about 400.”⁵

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Ezra covers nearly 100 years of Persian history. 539 BC marks the date of the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus the king made a proclamation in 538 for the Jews to begin returning to their own land in Judea to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel was the principle leader in this group, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple is completed in 516 BC.

A second return is led by Ezra in 458 BC under the authority of Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah would follow with the third group in 445 BC.

Principle rulers during the time of Ezra’s history:

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC): first return with Zerubbabel, edict to build Temple.

Darius I (521 – 486 BC)

Xerxes (486 – 464 BC), Esther is queen.

Artaxerxes (464 – 423 BC): second return led by Ezra, third return led by Nehemiah

Significant individuals include: Haggai and Zechariah the prophets.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Ezra has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Historical Books along with Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Esther, and Nehemiah. The Jewish Canon places it in the Historical Books also, but this list consists only of Daniel, Ezra – Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

THEME

The theme of the book of Ezra can simply be stated as “rebuilding the people”. Nehemiah’s emphasis is rebuilding the walls. With the people returning to Israel after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, there is much work needed to acclimate the people to the ways of the Lord. They need to be taught the expectations of the Law and how to live in the land. Therefore, as Wilkinson writes, “The basic theme of Ezra is the spiritual, moral, and social restoration of the returned Remnant of Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. Israel’s worship was revitalized and its people were purified. God’s faithfulness is seen in the way He sovereignly protected His people by a powerful empire while they were in captivity. They prospered in their exile and God raised up pagan kings who were sympathetic to their cause and encouraged them to rebuild their homeland. God also provided zealous and capable spiritual leaders who directed the

return and the rebuilding. He kept the promise He made in Jeremiah 29:14; “‘I will be found by you,’ says the Lord, “and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,” says the Lord, “and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.”⁶

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

Since this book deals primarily with the Medo-Persian kingdom, the information given above outlines the history that relates to the time of Ezra.

OUTLINE

- A. First Return With Zerubbabel, 1-6
 - a. Cyrus’ Decree, 1
 - b. The Census, 2
 - c. Construction of the Temple, 3-6
 - i. Good Beginnings, 3
 - ii. Opposition, 4
 - iii. Restart, 5
 - iv. Completion, 6
- B. Second Return With Ezra, 7-10
 - a. Artaxerxes’ Decree, 7
 - b. The Census, 8
 - c. Revival of the Nation, 9-10
 - i. The Problem, 9:1-4
 - ii. Repentance, 9:5-10:2
 - iii. The Covenant, 10:3-8
 - iv. The Recovery, 10:9-44

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¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Ezra, by Martin, John A., Walvoord, John F., Zuck, Roy B., Editors, Victor Books, 1988, p. 651.

² A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 457.

³ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, p. 436.

⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Ezra, p. 651.

⁵ The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 4, Ezra, p. 580.

⁶ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 118-119.

Haggai

Build

Captivity to Birth of Christ
520 BC

AUTHOR

At the earliest point in the Book of Haggai the author is identified. “In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest saying,” (1:1)¹ Not only are the words rather straightforward concerning the authorship of the book, but Haggai has the distinction of being one of the few books of the Bible without significant criticism in any of its categories. As Archer states, “Of all the books of the Old Testament, this one enjoys the unusual statue of being uncontested by all critics of every persuasion. It is acknowledged to be the work of the prophet Haggai himself, and the date it assigns to each message is accepted as reliable.”² Haggai makes the point of authorship even more concrete with mention of his name nine times within the short book (1:1, 3, 12-13; 2:1, 10, 13-14, 20). Even the information about Haggai outside the book is given in other parts of the Bible. “The author is the only person in the Old Testament named Haggai which means “festive” or “Festal.” He is one of the prophets whose personal life is unknown. He is mentioned by Ezra (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). He was the first postexilic prophet who ministered to the remnant that had returned from Babylonian captivity. His prophecy is clearly to be dated in 520 B.C., the second year of Darius the king. Haggai was probably born in exile in the early part of the sixth century. His contemporary in the prophetic office was Zechariah (cf. Hag. 1:1 with Zech. 1:1; see also Ezra 5:1; 6:14).”³

DATE OF WRITING

Setting the date for this book is just as easy as naming the author. Haggai does us a great service in stating the actual time in which the messages were proclaimed. “Benware writes, “There is no question as to the date of his messages, since he carefully dates them (1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 18, 20). The year is 520 B.C., about fifteen years after they returned to Judah.”⁴ More specifically, the book can be arranged according to the sequence of the dates. “Haggai 1:1, September 1, 520 B.C.; Haggai 1:15, September 24, 520 B.C.; Haggai 2:1, October 21, 520 B.C.;...Haggai 2:10, 20, December 24, 520 B.C....”⁵

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Haggai is believed to have returned to Jerusalem to help rebuild the Temple in the year 538 BC. The project is halted after 2 short years. No work is given to it for the next 13 years. Here is where Haggai and Zechariah have significant roles in seeing the work beginning again. Haggai has an older, more ‘harsh’ tone in his encouragement to work. Zechariah has an optimistic “if we build it, the Lord will come” approach. Both are needed to see the work resume near the year 520 BC and completed in 516 BC.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Haggai has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

The theme of this book cannot be separated from the building of the post-exilic Temple. Haggai had a role in the encouragement of the people to rise up and build it. Thus, as Jensen writes, “The divine message which Haggai passed on to his Jewish brethren could be summarized thus: ‘If you want to be restored to a blessed relationship with the Lord, put first things first in your life. For example, resume work on the Lord’s Temple.’”⁶ This is also supported by the words of Wilkinson. “Haggai’s basic theme is clear; the Remnant must reorder its priorities and complete the temple before they can expect the blessing of God upon their efforts. Because of spiritual indifference they failed to respond to God’s attempt to get their attention. In their despondency, they did not realize that their hardships were divinely given symptoms of their spiritual disease. Haggai brought them to an understanding that circumstances become difficult when people place their own selfish interests before God’s. When they put God first and seek to do His will, He will bring His people joy and prosperity.”⁷

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

539 BC marks the date of the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus the king made a proclamation in 538 for the Jews to begin returning to their own land in Judea to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel was the principle leader in this group, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple is completed in 516 BC.

A second return is led by Ezra in 458 BC under the authority of Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah would follow with the third group in 445 BC.

Principle rulers during the time of Ezra’s history:

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC): first return with Zerubbabel, edict to build Temple.

Darius I (521 – 486 BC)

Xerxes (486 – 464 BC), Esther is queen.

Artaxerxes (464 – 423 BC): second return with Ezra, third return with Nehemiah
Significant individuals include: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the prophets.

OUTLINE

- A. A Call for Construction, 1
- B. A Call for Courage, 2:1-9
- C. A Call for Cleansing, 2:10-19
- D. A Call for Comfort, 2:20-23

An outline by H.L Willmington is also given as a useful explanation of both the divisions and the purpose of the book.

PERFORM (1:1-15)

- Don't Give Up – on the Temple
- Do Go Up – on the mountain
- Get All Stirred Up – about the Lord

PATIENCE (2:1-9)

- In Spite of the insignificant Temple they had just built
- Because of the magnificent Temple they someday would build

PONDER (2:10-23)

- The Fact of Judah's Contamination (2:10-17)
- The Fact of God's Determination (2:18, 19)
- The Fact of the Coming Tribulation (2:20-22)
- The Fact of Zerubbabel's Elevation (2:23)⁸

REFERENCES

¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 469.

³ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978, p. 866.

⁴ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman's Bible Commentary, Benware, Paul N., Moody Press, 1988, p. 228.

⁵ Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson, Bruce & Boa, Kenneth, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 284.

⁶ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 459.

⁷ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 284.

⁸ Willmington's Guide to the Bible, Willmington, H. L., Tyndale House Publishers, 1981, p. 254.

Zechariah

Prepare for Messiah

Captivity to Birth of Christ 520 BC – 470 BC

AUTHOR

The opening verse of the book identifies Zechariah as the author. “In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,” (1:1)¹ This information is important to the book. “Zechariah was careful to identify himself by his family line (1:1). He was the “son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.” This information is helpful since Nehemiah 12:4, 16 reveals that Iddo was one of the priests that returned from Babylon to Judah. So Zechariah was another priest who was called to the prophetic office.”²

To the average student of the Word, this may not make much of a point, but to the Jewish scholar, it is very significant. “According to Jewish tradition, Zechariah was a member of the Great Synagogue that collected and preserved the canon of revealed Scripture. Matthew 23:35 indicates he was “murdered between the temple and the altar” in the same way that an earlier Zechariah was martyred (see 2 Chr. 24:20-21). The universal testimony of Jewish and Christian tradition affirms Zechariah as the author of the entire book.”³

DATE OF WRITING

Dating the Book of Zechariah is not difficult due to the fact that he sets a date for us within the book. “There are datelines in the book of Zechariah: at 1:1; 1:7; and 7:1. The second year of Darius (1:1) was 520 B.C., and the fourth year (7:1) was 518 B.C. The opening words of 8:1 suggest a later revelation to Zechariah, as do the opening words of 9:1. How much later these revelations were given, however, cannot be determined. It is possible that chapters 1-8 were written during the building of the Temple (520-516 B.C.); and chapters 9-14, after the Temple was completed in 515 B.C.”⁴ The Open Bible places Zechariah in the time of Haggai and Darius Hystaspis. “Zechariah, a contemporary of Haggai, began his prophetic ministry in 520 B.C. The latest date indicated in the book (7:1) is 518 BC., the fourth year of Darius Hystaspis.”⁵

However, the point of contention comes again with the final 5 chapters. Wilkinson writes, “Chapters 9-14 are undated, but stylistic differences and references to Greece indicate a date of between 480 and 470 B.C. This would mean that Darius I (521-486 B.C.) had passed from the scene and had been succeeded by Xerxes (486-464 B.C.), the king who deposed Queen Vashti and made Esther queen of Persia.”⁶ If this is accurate, it would mean that Zechariah’s ministry ranged from 520 to 470 B.C., making him much

younger at the beginning of his call (maybe around 30 years of age) and much older when the final chapters were written (perhaps 70 or 80 years of age). There is nothing unreasonable about this perspective.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

Zechariah is believed to have returned to Jerusalem to help rebuild the Temple in the year 538 BC. The project is halted after 2 short years. No work is given to it for the next 13 years. Here is where Haggai and Zechariah have significant roles in seeing the work beginning again. Haggai has an older, more ‘harsh’ tone in his encouragement to work. Zechariah has an optimistic “if we build it, the Lord will come” approach. Both are needed to see the work resume near the year 520 BC and completed in 516 BC.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Zechariah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the Nebiim (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

There is a link within the thoughts of Zechariah between the building of the Temple and the coming of Messiah. Scofield lists “Messiah’s Advents”⁷ as the theme, noting that Zechariah makes reference to both comings of the Lord. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary states, “The central theme of Zechariah is encouragement – primarily encouragement to complete the rebuilding of the temple.”⁸ MacArthur unites both themes in his comments in the MacArthur Study Bible. “Zechariah sought to encourage the people to build the temple in view of the promise that someday Messiah would come to inhabit it. The people were not just building for the present, but with the future hope of Messiah in mind. He encouraged the people, still downtrodden by the Gentile powers (1:8-12), with the reality that the Lord remembers His covenant promises to them and that he would restore and bless them. Thus the name of the book (which means “The Lord remembers”) contains in seed form the theme of the prophecy.”⁹

Another concept, typical of Archer’s writing, places the stress of the book on the work of God and His authority to govern the affairs of men. “The theme of his prophecy was: God is going to preserve His remnant from all the world powers which oppress them and threaten their extinction; these Gentile empires shall be destroyed, but Israel shall survive every ordeal to come, because they are the people of the Messiah. It is He who shall some day establish the kingdom and rule over all the earth after vanquishing all heathen opposition.”¹⁰

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

539 BC marks the date of the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus the king made a proclamation in 538 for the Jews to begin returning to their own

land in Judea to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel was the principle leader in this group, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple is completed in 516 BC.

A second return is led by Ezra in 458 BC under the authority of Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah would follow with the third group in 445 BC.

Principle rulers during the time of Ezra's history:

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC): first return with Zerubbabel, edict to build Temple.

Darius I (521 – 486 BC)

Xerxes (486 – 464 BC), Esther is queen.

Artaxerxes (464 – 423 BC): second return with Ezra, third return with Nehemiah

Significant individuals include: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the prophets.

OUTLINE

- A. The Visions of Zechariah, 1-6
 - a. Five Visions of Comfort
 - i. Horses, 1:7-17
 - ii. Four Horns and Four Workmen, 1:18-21
 - iii. Measuring Line, 2:1-13
 - iv. Joshua the High Priest, 3
 - v. Lampstand, 4
 - b. Three Visions of Judgment
 - i. Flying Scroll, 5:1-4
 - ii. Woman in the Basket, 5:5-11
 - iii. Four Chariots, 6:1-8
 - c. Crowning of Joshua, 6:9-15
- B. The Messages of Zechariah, 7-8
 - a. Message 1, Rebuke for Empty Ritual, 7:4-7
 - b. Message 2, Reminder of Disobedience, 7:8-14
 - c. Message 3, Restoration of Israel, 8:1-17
 - d. Message 4, Recovery of Joy, 8:18-23
- C. The Burdens of Zechariah, 9-14
 - a. Rejection of the Messiah, 9-11
 - b. Reign of Messiah 12-14

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⁵ The Open Bible, New American Standard Bible, p. 868.

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⁷ The New Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield, C.I., editor, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 964.

⁸ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7, Zechariah, p. 601.

⁹ The MacArthur Study Bible, New King James Version, MacArthur, John, Author and General Editor, Word Bibles, Thomas Nelson Company, 1997, p. 1337.

¹⁰ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 470.

Esther

Providence

Captivity to Birth of Christ

486 BC – 465 BC

AUTHOR

The question of authorship has long puzzled the scholars of the book of Esther. Simply put, the text does not claim an author; therefore, what is suggested is based on internal and external evidence. There are three possibilities put forward: Mordecai, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

MORDECAI: Perhaps the biggest reason for suggesting Mordecai is because of his role within the book's narrative. It would appear that the author had intimate knowledge of the situation of Esther's day as well as the familiarity of the Persian palace. MacArthur writes that "whoever penned Esther possessed a detailed knowledge of Persian customs, etiquette, and history, plus particular familiarity with the palace of Shushan (1:5-7). He also exhibited intimate knowledge of the Hebrew calendar and customs, while additionally showing a strong sense of Jewish nationalism."¹ Mordecai would certainly be a good candidate for this.

Among the additional reasons for Mordecai's authorship, it is noted that tradition supports it. "The Jewish authorities record the tradition (as old as Josephus and repeated by Ibn Ezra) that Mordecai was the author of the book."² Besides that, Mordecai is said to have kept records (9:20). The only argument against this suggestion is summed up in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia. "Mordecai, whose claims have been strongly urged by some, is excluded by the closing words (Est 10:3), which sum up his life work and the blessings of which he had been the recipient. The words imply that when the book was written, that great Israelite had passed away."³

EZRA or NEHEMIAH: There are two key factors in the conclusion that Ezra or Nehemiah was the author of the book. One has to do with the time in which the book was written. Obviously, the author had insight into the Persian palace, as mentioned above concerning Mordecai. Therefore, the author had to be writing from the period of time that Ezra and Nehemiah lived. One comes to the conclusion based on the fact that Ezra is definitely named as the writer of such books as 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and possibly Nehemiah. Nehemiah, if he wrote the book that bears his name, would also qualify by nature of being a writer during the Persian period. Add to this that Nehemiah had access to the Persian court by virtue of his employment as cupbearer to the king.

The second issue contains the style of the book's writing. Jensen writes, "Some have suggested Ezra or Nehemiah as possible authors, on the basis of similarity of writing style."⁴ This opinion is not shared by Wilkinson who writes, "Ezra and Nehemiah have also been suggested for authorship, but the vocabulary and style of Esther are dissimilar

to that found in their books.”⁵ At this point, without more evidence to work with, it is probably best to leave the author as anonymous.

DATE OF WRITING

In an attempt to place a date upon the writing of the book of Esther, several key historical dates need to be considered as reference points from which to work.

First of all, King Ahasuerus (the monarch of the Book of Esther) reigned in Persia from 486 B.C. until his death by assassination in 465 B.C. The record of Esther 10:2 suggests that the book was written after his death in 465 B.C. This may be stated as the earliest date possible for the book to have been written.

Since the strength of the Persian kingdom is regarded as important to date the book, one must also consider that the kingdom had begun to decline after 430 B.C. and within that time, the palace at Susa was burned with fire. There is no record of that history within the book. Therefore, we are safe to conclude that the Book of Esther was written between the years 465 B.C. and 430 B.C, but with the most likelihood, nearer the 430 B.C. date because of its link with the record of Nehemiah.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The book of Esther is cradled in the history of the Persians. 539 BC marks the date of the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus the king made a proclamation in 538 for the Jews to begin returning to their own land in Judea to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel was the principle leader in this group, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple is completed in 516 BC.

A second return is led by Ezra in 458 BC under the authority of Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah would follow with the third group in 445 BC.

Principle rulers during the time of Persia’s history:

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC): first return with Zerubbabel, edict to build Temple.

Darius I (521 – 486 BC)

Xerxes [also known as Ahasuerus] (486 – 464 BC), Esther is queen.

Artaxerxes (464 – 423 BC): second return with Ezra, third return with Nehemiah

Significant individuals include: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the prophets, however none of these were ministering in the days of Esther.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Esther has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Historical Books along with Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The Jewish canon places it in the Kethubim (Hagiographa/Writings) in the Megilloth (5 Scrolls) that were to be read at the annual Jewish feasts or memorial services.

Megilloth (5 Scrolls) – read at the annual Jewish feasts/memorials

Song of Solomon (Passover – 14th of Nisan [Mar/Apr])

Ruth (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after Passover, 6th of Sivan [May/June])

Lamentations (Memorial of the destruction of Jerusalem, 9th of Ab [July/August])
 Ecclesiastes (Feast of Pentecost, the feast of weeks – 50 days after Passover, Sivan [May/June])
 Esther (Festival of Purim – 14th & 15th of Adar [Feb/Mar])

THEME

Even with the omission of the name of God, there is no doubt that God is in control throughout the Book of Esther. Scofield labeled the theme of the book as “God’s Providential Care.”⁶ This is seen as a quiet “behind the scenes” kind of care that carries a young lady from the exiles to the palace. To some, is similar to the way God moved Ruth into the family of Boaz. But to others, there is much more going on behind the scenes than the book narrates.

“Esther could be compared to a chess game. God and Satan (as invisible players) moved real kings, queens, and nobles. When Satan put Haman into place, it was as if he announced “Check.” God then positioned Esther and Mordecai in order to put Satan into “Checkmate!” Ever since the fall of man (Gen. 3:1-19), Satan has attempted to spiritually sever God’s relationship with His human creation and disrupt God’s covenant promises with Israel. For example, Christ’s line through the tribe of Judah had been murderously reduced to Josiah, who was rescued and preserved (2 Chr. 22:10-12). Satan tempted Christ to denounce God and worship him (Matt. 4:9). Peter, at Satan’s insistence, tried to block Christ’s journey to Calvary (Matt. 16:22). Finally, Satan entered into Judas who then betrayed Christ to the Jews and Romans (Luke 22:3-6). While God is not mentioned in Esther, He is everywhere apparent as the One who opposed and foiled Satan’s diabolical schemes by providential intervention. In Esther, all of God’s unconditional, covenant promises to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-8) and to David (2 Sam. 7:8-16) were jeopardized. However, God’s love for Israel is nowhere more apparent than in this dramatic rescue of His people from pending elimination. “Behold, he who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4).”⁷

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

The facts concerning the history of the Persian empire is given above.

OUTLINE

- A. The Plot Against the Jews, 1-4
 - a. The Problems of Vashti, 1
 - b. The Promotion of Esther, 2
 - c. The Plot of Haman, 3-4
- B. The Protection of the Jews, 5-10
 - a. Mordecai Preserved, 5-7
 - i. Haman’s Pride, 5
 - ii. Haman Humbled, 6
 - iii. Haman Hung, 7
 - b. The Jews Preserved, 8-10
 - i. Ahasuerus’ Decree, 8

- ii. Israel Defeats Enemies and the Days of Purim, 9
- iii. Mordedai's Promotion, 10

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³ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Orr, James, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, Inc.) 1999.

⁴ Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 241.

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⁷ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 682.

Nehemiah

Political Restoration

Captivity to Birth of Christ
446 BC – 420 BC

AUTHOR

Among the options given as to who best qualifies as author of Nehemiah, three are the most prominent: Ezra, Nehemiah, and a unnamed compiler.

EZRA: Ezra's access to the library of Nehemiah is given as support of this conclusion. "He evidently incorporated into the final edition the personal memoirs of Nehemiah (i.e., the book of Nehemiah) including even his form of the list of returnees. Using Nehemiah's library facilities, Ezra probably composed Chronicles during this same period."¹ Jewish tradition (the Talmud) has also supported Ezra's authorship of this book. It is believed from tradition that Ezra was the author of a series of historical books: the Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah; these three making up a continuation of history from the time of David to the time of Nehemiah.

MacArthur supports this conclusion with the following quote from his study Bible. "Though much of this book was clearly drawn from Nehemiah's personal diaries and written from his first person perspective (1:1-7:5; 12:27-43; 13:4-31), both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author. This is based on external evidence that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book as reflected in the LXX and Vulgate; it is also based on internal evidence such as the recurrent "hand of the Lord" theme which dominates both Ezra and Nehemiah and the author's role as a priest-scribe. As a scribe, he had access to the royal archives of Persia, which accounts for the myriad of administrative documents found recorded in the two books, especially in the book of Ezra. Very few people would have been allowed access to the royal archives of the Persian Empire, but Ezra proved to be the exception (cf. Ezra 1:2-4; 4:9-22; 5:7-17; 6:3-12)."²

NEHEMIAH: Assuming that the title also names the author, some scholars have entertained the opinion that Nehemiah was the author of this book. Their reasoning is that "much of this book came from Nehemiah's personal memoirs. The reporting is remarkably candid and vivid. Certainly some portions (1:1-7:5; 12:27-43; 13:4-31) are the "words of Nehemiah" (1:1). Some scholars think that Nehemiah composed those portions and compiled the rest."³ The "fact that the narrative is written in the first person singular in many places is evidence that the book was written by Nehemiah himself. The places where he is mentioned in the third person (8:9; 10:1; 12:26, 47) can be explained in harmony with his authorship. For example, 12:26 and 12:47, which seem to look back to 'the days of Nehemiah,' are both used in conjunction with the days of someone else.

Perhaps Nehemiah had retired from the governorship, and was here looking back on his administration.”⁴

COMPILER: The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia is willing to concede that Ezra and Nehemiah had a role in the writing of each book, but there seems to be too much evidence that points to a compiler who produced the final edition of both books. “The unity of the combined work is shown by the fact that they have the same common object, the same plan, and a similarity of language and style; that they treat, for the most part, of the same period of time; and that Ezra is one of the most prominent persons in both. It is not fair to deny the essential unity on the ground that the list of priests and others found in Ezra 2 is repeated in Nehemiah 7; for there is no doubt that Ezra was the compiler of parts at least of the book called after him, and that Nehemiah also was the original writer of parts of the book that bears his name. Whoever was the final editor of the whole work, he has simply retained the two almost identical lists in their appropriate places in the documents which lay before him.”⁵

If the author must be chosen between Ezra and Nehemiah, then I would have to think that Ezra is the logical choice. Ezra is cited for producing the books of Chronicles, as well as the book that bears his name. No one suggests that Nehemiah wrote the Chronicles or the book of Ezra. Therefore, if the evidence shows a single author for all three books, Ezra is the most likely author. I have found no reason to doubt that the primary author of the book of Nehemiah is Ezra, who wrote from the diary of Nehemiah, just as he also wrote from the library of Nehemiah.

DATE OF WRITING

Generally, the dating of the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah are similar, especially if Ezra was the primary author of both books. A date is given by conservative scholars as approximately 440-400 B.C. “The events in Nehemiah 1 commence late in the year 446 B.C., the 20th year of the Persian King, Artaxerxes (464-423 B.C.). The book follows chronologically from Nehemiah’s first term as governor of Jerusalem ca. 445-430 B.C. (Neh. 1-12) to his second term, possibly beginning ca. 424 B.C. (Neh. 13). Nehemiah was written by Ezra sometime during or after Nehemiah’s second term, but no later than 400 B.C.”⁶ Technically, Nehemiah is the last historical book of the Old Testament.

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

As stated above, we are first introduced to Nehemiah in the throne room of Artaxerxes king of Persia around the year 446 BC. Given permission from the king to return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah arrives in 444 BC to oversee the reconstruction of the walls of the city. He is designated the governor twice (445-430 BC and 424-? BC). Ezra is known to be his contemporary. Malachi the prophet ministered about this time as well.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Nehemiah has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Historical Books along with Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2

Chronicles, Ezra, and Esther. The Jewish Canon places it in the Historical Books also, but this list consists only of Daniel, Ezra – Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

THEME

The theme of the Book of Ezra has been given as “building the people”. The theme of the Book of Nehemiah could be “building the walls”. “While Ezra deals primarily with the religious restoration of Judah, Nehemiah is concerned with Judah’s political and geographical restoration. The first seven chapters are devoted to the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls because Jerusalem was the spiritual and political center of Judah. Without walls, Jerusalem could hardly be considered a city at all. As governor, Nehemiah also established firm civil authority. Ezra and Nehemiah worked together to build the people spiritually and morally so that the restoration would be complete. Thus, Nehemiah functions as the natural sequel to the Book of Ezra, and it is not surprising that the two books were regarded as a unit for centuries. Nehemiah was also written to show the obvious hand of God in the establishment of His people in their homeland in the years after their exile. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, they accomplished in fifty-two days what had not been done in the ninety-four years since the first return under Zerubbabel. By obedient faith they were able to overcome what appeared to be insurmountable opposition.”⁷

One of the most important parts of this book is the reading of God’s Law. Apart from that, the rebuilding of the nation would not have much value. MacArthur states that it is so important that it ought to be considered the main theme of the book. “Careful attention to the reading of God’s Word in order to perform His will is a constant theme. The spiritual revival came in response to Ezra’s reading of “the Book of the Law of Moses” (8:1). After the reading, Ezra and some of the priests carefully explained its meaning to the people in attendance (8:8). The next day, Ezra met with some of the fathers of the households, the priests, and Levites, “in order to understand the words of the Law” (8:13). The sacrificial system was carried on with careful attention to perform it “as it is written in the Law” (10:34, 36). So deep was their concern to abide by God’s revealed will that they took “a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law...” (10:29). When the marriage reforms were carried out, they acted in accordance with that which “they read from the Book of Moses” (13:1).”⁸

Obedience to the Law brought the people into favor with God. This has also been offered as the theme of Nehemiah. “In general, the book of Nehemiah seeks to show how God favored His people, so recently exiled, by strengthening their roots in the homeland of Judah in the face of all kinds of opposition. Specifically, the book shows how the broken-down walls of Jerusalem and the failing faith of the Jews were restored, through (1) the competent leadership of Nehemiah, a man of prayer and faith; and (2) through a host of Jewish brethren, who responded to the divine challenge to rise and build.”⁹

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

539 BC marks the date of the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus the king made a proclamation in 538 for the Jews to begin returning to their own land in Judea to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel was the principle leader in this group, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple is completed in 516 BC.

A second return is led by Ezra in 458 BC under the authority of Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah would follow with the third group in 445 BC.

Principle rulers during this time of history:

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC): first return with Zerubbabel, edict to build Temple.

Darius I (521 – 486 BC)

Xerxes (486 – 464 BC), Esther is queen.

Artaxerxes (464 – 423 BC): second return with Ezra, third return with Nehemiah

Significant individuals include: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the prophets.

OUTLINE

- A. Reconstructing the Walls, 1-7
 - a. Surveying the job, 1-2
 - b. Doing the Job, 3-7
 - i. The Builders, 3
 - ii. The Opposition, 4-6
 - iii. The Registration, 7
- B. Reviving the People, 8-13
 - a. Renewing the Covenant, 8-10
 - i. Reading the Law, 8
 - ii. Repentance by the People, 9
 - iii. Ratifying the Covenant, 10
 - b. Obeying the Covenant, 11-13
 - i. The Cities, 11
 - ii. Priests and Levites, 12:1-26
 - iii. Dedicating the Wall, 12;27-47
 - iv. Reforming the People, 13

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Malachi

Rebuke

Captivity to Birth of Christ
430 BC

AUTHOR

The Book of Malachi is similar to several of the most recently studied books in that the very first verse names Malachi as the author. “The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.” (1:1)¹ There is no other mention of his name in the entire Bible. Without more information, we cannot begin to identify him specifically.

Benware comments that “The name Malachi means “my messenger,” and this has caused some to believe that it is not a proper name, but simply a title for the prophecy. But most likely it is a proper name, as it would be most unusual for this book to be preserved without giving the name of the author. Malachi was the last of the prophets sent to the remnant at Jerusalem. Tradition has it that he was a member of the Great Synagogue organized by Nehemiah.”²

DATE OF WRITING

It seems to be well accepted that the book of Malachi was written around the date of 430 B.C. Not only would this make the book the last of the Old Testament writings, but it also puts Malachi as a contemporary with Nehemiah. “In contrast to Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi does not give the date of his prophecy. But certain internal evidence helps us arrive at a date of about 430 B.C. Malachi probably ministered at the same time as Nehemiah. They addressed similar issues. For example, the Temple was completed but was being misused (Mal. 1:7-10 with Neh. 3:10); there was corruption in the priesthood (Mal. 1:7-2:9 with Neh. 13:1-9); there was some intermarriage with the heathen (Mal. 2:11-16 with Neh. 13:23-28); and there was neglect of the offerings of God (Mal. 3:8-12 with Neh. 13:10-13). Malachi’s ministry would fit very well into the time just after Nehemiah or perhaps into the time when Nehemiah was absent for a short time from Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 13:6).”⁵ Jensen claims that Nehemiah visited Babylon in 433 B.C. (Neh 13:6)⁶

Other pieces of evidence points to the same date. “The Persian term for governor, ‘pechah’ (1:9; cf. Neh. 5:14; Hag. 1:1, 14; 2:21) indicates that this book was written during the Persian domination of Israel (539-533 B.C.).”⁷ And, “it is doubtful whether Malachi preached during Nehemiah’s active governorship; for in Mal 1:8 it is implied that gifts might be offered to the “governor,” whereas Nehemiah tells us that he declined all such (Neh 5:15, 18).”⁸

Commenting on the evidence, “Dr. J.M.P. Smith says, The Book of Mal fits the situation amid which Nehemiah worked as snugly as a bone fits its socket” (ICC, 7). That the prophet should exhort the people to remember the law of Moses, which was publicly read by Ezra in the year 444 BC, is in perfect agreement with this conclusion... [and] rightly placed in the period between the two visits of Nehemiah (445–432 BC).”⁹ One other comment is worth repeating here. “In the words of G. Campbell Morgan, “The failures of the people that angered Nehemiah, inspired the message of Malachi.”¹⁰

DATE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT

The history of Malachi is linked to the history of Nehemiah. Nehemiah left the throne room of Artaxerxes king of Persia around the year 446 BC. Given permission from the king to return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah arrives in 444 BC to oversee the reconstruction of the walls of the city. He is designated the governor twice (445-430 BC and 424-? BC). The first half of his work was in the rebuilding of the walls. The second half seemed to be spent primarily on the reform of the people. Ezra is known to be his contemporary. Malachi the prophet ministered about this time as well.

CLASSIFICATION

The book of Malachi has been placed in the Old Testament in the category of the Minor Prophets along with 11 other books. The Jewish canon places it in the *Nebiim* (Prophets) in the section called the Latter Prophets, which includes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THEME

Israel has been a covenant nation ever since the days of Abraham and Moses. Not only were they unique because of their relationship with the Lord, but they were also obligated to fulfill the expectations put upon them by the Lord. Failure to do so led them into captivity for 70 years. After that, and upon their re-establishment into the land which God gave them, it would appear as if they are heading back to a disobedient life or acting as if the covenant no longer pertained to them. Malachi’s message was that they were still obligated to do what the law called for them to do, and his job was to bring them back to a right relationship with God.

Archer writes that “The theme of Malachi is that sincerity toward God and a holy manner of life are absolutely essential in the Lord’s eyes, if His favor is to be bestowed upon the crops and the nation’s economic welfare. Israel must live up to her high calling as a holy nation and wait for the coming of the Messiah, who by a ministry of healing as well as judgment will lead the nation to a realization of all her fondest hope.”¹⁹ Wilkinson, in his comments, states much of the same. “The divine dialogue in Malachi’s prophecy was designed as an appeal that would break through the barrier of Israel’s disbelief, disappointment, and discouragement. The promised time of prosperity had not yet come, and the prevailing attitude that it was not worth serving Yahweh became evident in their moral and religious corruption. But God revealed His continuing love in spite of Israel’s lethargy. His appeal in this oracle was that the people and priests would stop to realize their lack of blessing was not caused by His lack of concern, but by their

own compromise and disobedience to the covenant law. When they repent and return to God with sincere hearts, the obstacles to the flow of divine blessing will be removed. Malachi also reminds the people that a day of reckoning will surely come when God will judge the righteous and the wicked.”²⁰

Without this special covenant between God and Israel, the nation would surely become like any other on the face of the earth. Malachi and the other prophets of his time period were called specifically to see that Israel does not forget her relationship with the Lord.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & WORLD POWERS

539 BC marks the date of the Medo-Persian overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus the king made a proclamation in 538 for the Jews to begin returning to their own land in Judea to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel was the principle leader in this group, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple is completed in 516 BC.

A second return is led by Ezra in 458 BC under the authority of Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah would follow with the third group in 445 BC.

Principle rulers during this time of history:

Cyrus (550 – 530 BC): first return with Zerubbabel, edict to build Temple.

Darius I (521 – 486 BC)

Xerxes (486 – 464 BC), Esther is queen.

Artaxerxes (464 – 423 BC): second return with Ezra, third return with Nehemiah

Significant individuals include: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the prophets.

OUTLINE

- A. God’s Statement of Love, 1:1-5
- B. God’s Standard for Priests Violated, 1:6-2:9
- C. God’s Standard for People Violated, 2:10-3:15
- D. God’s Call for Punishment or Blessing, 3:16-4:2
- E. God’s Promise for the Messiah, 4:1-6

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¹ All Scripture References are from: New American Standard Bible. Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988. iExalt Electronic Publishing.

² Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Benware, Paul N., Moody Press, 1988, p. 234.

⁵ Survey of the Old Testament, Everyman’s Bible Commentary, p. 234.

⁶ Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament, Jensen, Irving L., Moody Press, 1978, p. 467.

⁷ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 295.

⁸ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Orr, James, (Albany, OR: Ages Software, Inc.) 1999.

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament, p. 468.

¹⁹ A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Archer, Gleason L., Moody Press, 1994, p. 478.

²⁰ Talk Thru the Bible, p. 295.