



OT Book Summaries



Genesis- 50 chapters- key verses (1:26;12:2,3)

The story of beginnings. The beginning of creation, sin, man's rebellion against God and God's plan of redemption. The Genesis story focuses on the life of Abraham and his family. God called Abraham and blessed him and his family. His descendants Isaac and Jacob also walked with God. God miraculously provided for Jacob's family and the story ends with them in Egypt, prepared for the next phase of God's salvation in history.

Exodus- 40 chapters- key verses (19:4-6)

The story of God's rescuing the nation of Israel from Egypt and creating a nation out of this family. Through the miraculous plagues and the leadership of Moses, the nation of Israel left Egypt and camped in the desert. Then God entered into a covenant with them to make them a special nation for Himself. He gave them the law in the form of the Ten Commandments and other laws as a way for them to live in holiness with Him and He gave them the design for the tabernacle as His dwelling place among them.

Leviticus- 27 chapters- key verse (11:45)

Continuation of the Law given by God. Specific ways to be pure and Holy as a special nation in relationship to God. Explains how ritual fellowship with God can be had and maintained via sacrificial atonement for sin.

Numbers- 36 chapters- key verse (32:13)

Continuation of the story of Israel moving out of Egypt into the Holy Land. God prepared them to move immediately into the promised land, but because of their rebellion, they were forced to continue in the desert for 40 years. The story of their wanderings, victories and preparation for entering the land God had promised.

Deuteronomy- 34 chapters- key verse (4:1)

At the end of the 40 years wandering, before their final move into the promised land, Moses gathered the people together and told them all of the law of God. This second summary of the Law is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy (which means "second law"). This is a good rehearsal of what is expected of God's people, as well as promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience as they live in the land.

Joshua- 24 chapters- key verses (21:43,45)

The account of how the Israelites finally entered and conquered the promised land. The inhabitants were all overthrown with the miraculous help of God and the leadership of Joshua. Then the land is divided up among the people of God.

Judges- 21 chapters- key verses (2:16-17)

The sporadic history of the next period in Israelite history. The sad account of how the people turned away from their God. He then let them be conquered by their neighbors. They repented and cried out to God and He raised up a "judge" or leader to lead them in victory. This sad cycle of rebellion, oppression, repentance and deliverance is repeated many times. God was very good to His people even when they were not good to Him.

Ruth- 4 chapters- key verse (1:16)

The story of two women, their faithfulness to one another, and how God rewards them in the end for their faithfulness. A touching story of tragedy and love. It shows how God is faithful and brings good out of bad situations. It also gives a preview to the coming of king David.

I Samuel- 31 chapters- key verses (8:7; 12:14)

The story of three leaders in the history of Israel and how there came to be a king. Samuel was a priest and the first of the prophets. He led the nation faithfully and brought reform. As Samuel neared death, the people called for a king to lead them in battle. Samuel anointed Saul to be king. Saul proved to be a good leader in battle, but disobeyed God and slowly became a terrible leader. After God rejected Saul as king, Samuel anointed David to be the next king. David began to grow in influence and fame. Saul became jealous of David and the rest of the book finds David running for his life from the threats of Saul. A great study of 2 leaders, one good and one bad.

2 Samuel- 24 chapters- key verses (7:8,16)

The continuation of the story of David, how he became king after the death of Saul. He was greatly successful as a king and brought prosperity to the land. The Bible records his failures as well as his successes; David sinned greatly and God brought punishment on him for it. In the end, God was faithful and blessed David greatly until his death.

I Kings- 22 chapters- key verses (9:4-7)

Continuation of the history of Israel under the kings. States key people and events, telling whether each king was good or evil. Highlights are the life of King Solomon, one of the greatest kings to ever live, the division of the kingdom into two nations in the time of King Rehoboam, and the life and ministry of Elijah the prophet against the evil king Ahab and his wife Jezebel.

2 Kings- 25 chapters- key verses (17:19,20)

Continuation of 1 Kings. Highlights are the life of Hezekiah and his reforms, the ministry of Isaiah in the time of invasion from Assyria, and the conquest of Judah by Babylon.

1 Chronicles- 29 chapters- key verses (9:1-2; 10:13; 18:14)

The history of Israel from a different perspective. It keys mostly on the religious life of Israel, especially the ministry in the temple. Highlights are the temple planning and David's military victories.

2 Chronicles- 36 chapters- key verse (36:15)

Continuation of 1 Chronicles. Highlights are the reforms under Hezekiah and Josiah and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem and captivity in Babylon.

Ezra- 10 chapters- key verses (6:14; 7:10)

Tells the story of the return from Babylon of the Jewish people who had been captive there as the result of punishment from God. A story of restoration and hope. The People return and the temple is rebuilt in the midst of great opposition. The people take measures to insure they don't fall under God's judgment again.

Nehemiah- 13 chapters- key verses (2:17; 9:2)

Similar to Ezra. Years after Ezra, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and undertook to rebuild the walls of the city against great obstacles and oppositions. Under the vision and leadership of one man, the great work of rebuilding the city was completed. God provided a great revival among the people as a result.

Esther- 10 chapters- key verse (4:14)

Story of intrigue and power, with good guys and bad guys. Esther gives the history of the Jewish people in exile in the Persian empire. They were almost killed off completely as a nation, but were saved by the courage of Esther and her uncle Mordecai.

Job- 42 chapters- key verses (42:2,5)

The story of a righteous man who is struck by severe suffering and misfortune. Job's friends try to comfort him and they also accuse him of wrongdoing. He denies that he has done evil and cries to God for justice. In the end God answers him and is vindicated and Job is healed of his suffering. Deals with the problem of suffering and humanities relationship with life's difficult questions.

Psalms- 150 chapters- key verses (145:20,21)

A collection of prayers and praise songs used in ancient Israelite worship. Contains praises and emotions of people in response to God. Runs the full spectrum of emotions from joy to fear to sadness to anger. Use the Psalms to give words to the emotions you feel in all of life's experiences.

Proverbs- 31 chapters- key verse (1:7)

Proverbs is a collection of wisdom, how to live a successful life. Many sayings in proverbs are just common sense for life, but most all have the idea that to live successfully is to follow God and walk in His ways.

Ecclesiastes- 12 chapters key verse (12:13)

A book of wisdom written by a man who had experienced all of life's pleasures, learned all the knowledge of the day, and thought through philosophy and wisdom. With all this experience, he concluded that all these things are worthless on their own because they end in death. And it is more important to enjoy life. His final conclusion is that serving God is the most important thing.

Song of Songs- 8 chapters- key verse (8:6)

The Bible speaks to all areas of life. This book speaks about human love, one for another. God created love and love (even sensual love) is good (in the proper context). This book talks about the romance and feelings between a man and a woman.

Isaiah- 66 chapters- key verse (49:6)

Isaiah was a man who spoke to Israel in tough times. He spoke of coming judgment for their sins. But in the midst of this message he spoke of profound hope. God was the only God and salvation would come through Him. Isaiah sees into the future and spoke of the coming redemption. Isaiah is called the prince of the prophets.

Jeremiah- 52 chapters- key verse (4:14)

Jeremiah was a prophet who spoke right before and during the time that God brought judgment on Israel for their sins. The main thrust of his message was that judgment was coming unless people repented and returned to God with their whole hearts. He is called the weeping prophet because he mourned over the coming judgment. Even in the midst of this horrible time, Jeremiah shines forth the great hope of the New Covenant and faithfulness of God.

Lamentations- 5 chapters- key verses (3:19-24)

A song of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jews. Contains bitter sadness for sin and punishment, but also contains one of the most profound statements of hope in God during hard times.

Ezekiel- 47 chapters- key verses (18:31-32)

Ezekiel spoke at approximately the same time as Jeremiah, except he spoke to the people who had already gone into exile as punishment for their sins. He had a twofold message, first he warned people of coming judgment for their sins, second, he promised the restoration of the people to Jerusalem.

Daniel- 12 chapters- key verses (7:13-14)

Tells of the life and teachings of the prophet Daniel, who was taken to Babylon as captive but rose to a position of power. Both Daniel and his friends served God in the midst of tremendous persecution without compromising. Daniel was then given visions of what would take place in world history and the end of time. Some symbolic language is hard to understand, but the point – that God rules over history – is very clear.

Hosea- 14 chapters- key verse (14:1)

Hosea the prophet married a woman who turned out to be a harlot. God told him to take this woman back and then he proclaimed the mercy of God. God used this picture to teach of His unchanging love and mercy toward His people who had been unfaithful to Him. Great picture of God's love that is far beyond our ability to comprehend.

Joel- 3 chapters- key verses (2:25-32)

Joel uses the occasion of a plague of Locust to call people to repentance. He also promises God's deliverance and repayment for the destruction out of His goodness.

Amos- 9 chapters- key verse (8:11)

Warnings to Israel that her future contained only judgment unless she repented of her sins. Amos speaks out against spiritual sins and sins of social injustice and oppression.

Obadiah- 1 chapter- key verse (1:3)

Prophecy against the neighboring nation of Edom. Edom was to expect judgment because they had treated the Jews very harshly and were boastful in Jerusalem's destruction.

Jonah- 4 chapters- key verse (4:2)

The story of the call of Jonah to preach to the pagan nation of Ninevah, his refusal and flight, and God's using a whale to persuade Jonah to carry out His command. Jonah was prejudice against Ninevah and didn't want them to experience God's grace. God overcame Jonah's narrow-mindedness and showed that He cared for all nations and people.

Micah- 7 chapters- key verse (6:8)

Micah is another prophet who speaks both of judgment and the need for repentance for sin, and the future hope based upon God's goodness and righteousness.

Nahum- 3 chapters- key verses (1:7,8)

Nahum speaks against the Assyrian city of Ninevah. He predicts its violent overthrow and destruction, bringing the punishment they deserved. God punishes the wicked and brings comfort to the righteous. The God of Israel is also the God who is sovereign over all nations and they must answer to Him.

Habakkuk- 3 chapters- key verses (2:3,4)

This book is a dialogue between the prophet Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk complains against the injustice of Israel and God tells him of the coming judgment from Babylon. Habakkuk then questioned whether this was right, to use an even more wicked nation to punish Israel. God answered that He will bring justice to all. The last chapter is a prayer to God in praise from Habakkuk.

Zephaniah- 3 chapters- key verse (2:3)

Zephaniah speaks of the coming final wrath of God, called the "Day of the Lord." He also speaks of the mercy to get people through this wrath and encourages men to seek God for his mercy in times of coming judgment.

Haggai- 2 chapters- key verses (2:4,5)

Haggai was a prophet among the people of Ezra's time who returned from exile. He rebuked the people for caring for their own interests before taking care of the temple of God. He said that their misfortunes were the result of these misplaced priorities and promised blessing if they honored God.

Zechariah- 14 chapters- key verse (8:13)

A series of oracles and visions from the prophet Zechariah in the same time as Haggai. These were encouragement and exhortation to the people of Israel in hard times reminding them of their glorious future.

Malachi- 4 chapters- key verse (3:7)

This is a call for God's people to return to the right way of life, in purity, sincerity, and generosity. Malachi speaks against many abuses of that time and calls the people to righteous living.