
A SKETCH OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

Introduction

Why learn more about the OT?

God has given it to us. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that all scripture is breathed about by God and given for our benefit.

Much truth about God, humanity, redemption. The OT makes up about $\frac{3}{4}$ of our Bible. This is a lot of revelation about God, humanity, and redemption!

To understand the NT (and the whole of the Bible). The more we understand the NT, the more we'll understand the OT. And the more we understand the OT, the more we'll understand the NT. Sidney Greidanus compiles these statistics from a variety of other sources in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*:

- NT contains at least 1,604 citations of OT (plus thousands of references)
- 229 of the 260 chapters in the New Testament have 2+ citations or references to OT
- 19 others have 1 citation or reference
- So, only 12 NT chapters don't have a *specific* OT reference
- 32% of the NT is composed of OT references

It's generally less known by us. It seems more foreign to us. We generally read, study, and hear it preached less. Because it's less known, we ought to give more time and energy to it.

How are we to think about OT History?

OT is Sub-Christian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OT God = bad/evil; NT God = good/gracious• No continuity from OT Judaism to NT Christianity
OT is Non-Christian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpret OT independently of NT• OT is already complete, is <i>only</i> Jewish
OT is Pre-Christian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sees basic discontinuity between OT & NT• OT addressed to & belongs to Israel (not the Church)
OT is Christian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic continuity between OT & NT• Both OT & NT belong to God's people

Chronologically: OT is Pre/Before-Christianity

Essentially: OT is Christian; Foundation is the house; headwaters are the river.

OT = Promise. NT = Fulfillment.

Adapted from Sidney Greidanus (Preaching Christ from the Old Testament, 39-46)

Goals for Tonight

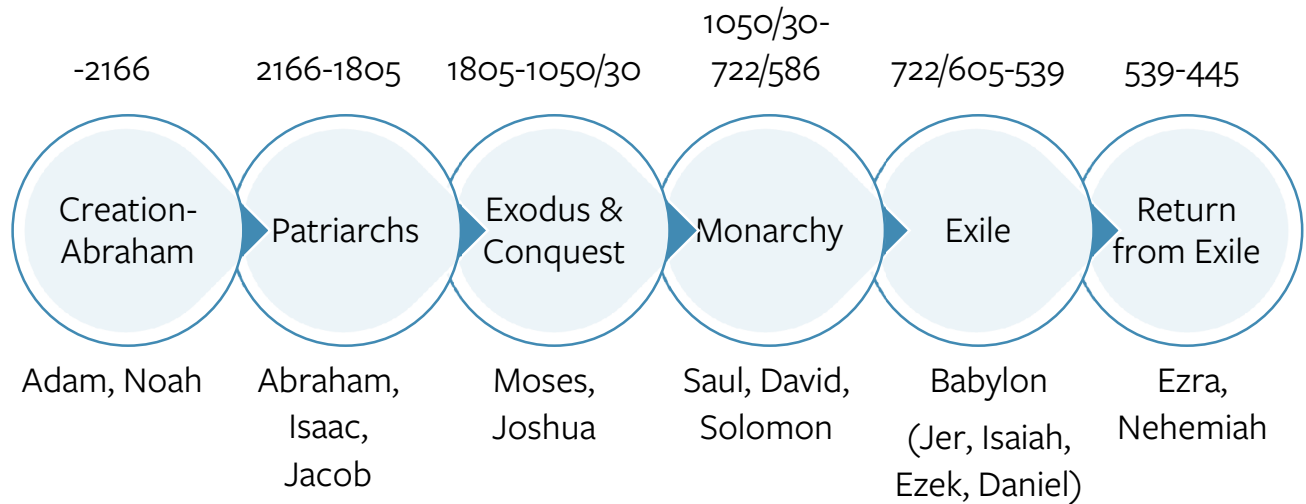
- Grow in grasp of key eras, dates, names in OT
- Grow in grasp of the overarching big story of OT
- Think about the theological meaning of key OT history
- Be able to place an OT book in a general context for greater understanding

Format

- Teaching
- Ask Questions
- Fly-by first, then come back to add details and think of the theological import
- Hopefully time for questions at end. Then time to hang out/chat.

Overview

Timeline



2166, Abram Called

1446, Exodus from Egypt

1406, Entrance into Canaan

1010-971, David's Reign

931, Kingdom Splits

722, Fall of Samaria (Israel) to Assyria

628, King Josiah's Reforms

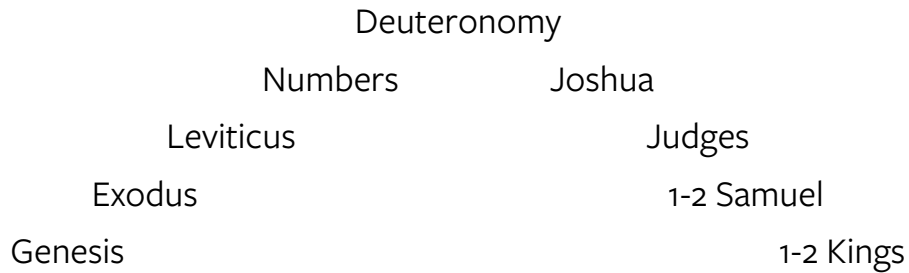
586, Fall of Jerusalem, Exile to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar

538, Return from Exile under King Cyrus of Persia

Dates taken from ESV Study Bible

Genre

Narrative. Israel's *primary history* is covered from Genesis-2 Kings with Deuteronomy in the middle. This goes from creation "in the beginning" (Gen 1.1) to the middle of exile in Babylon in 561 BC when Jehoiachin was released from prison (yet remained in exile).



Secondarily, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1-2 Chronicles cover Israel’s history from a *post-exilic perspective*.

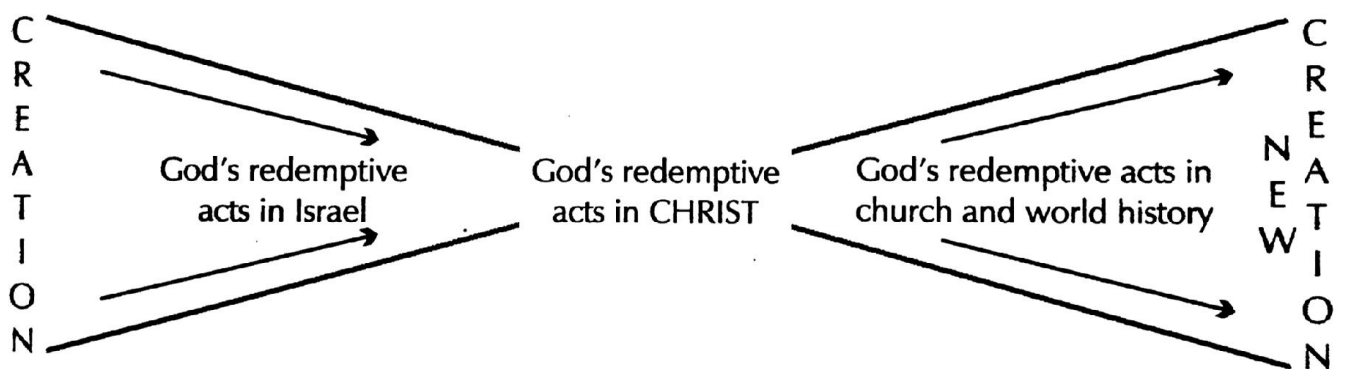
Also, there are other narrative books, such as Ruth, much of Daniel, Esther, Jonah.

Law. Principally found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy within larger narrative.

Poetry/Wisdom/Prophecy. Principally in Psalms, wisdom books, and prophets. Sometimes with narrative chunks. Often written in terse form and with much imagery.

These categories aren’t exclusive. Most books weave these together (Moses’ song after the crossing of the Red Sea, Jonah is narrative with tons of poetry, Prophets point back to the law and apply it to current events, etc.). Awareness of a book/passage’s genre helps us to best understand it in its original context.

Redemptive History



Sidney Greidanus (Preaching Christ from the Old Testament, 237)

Drilling Down

Not all OT books listed here

Creation-Abraham, -2166

KEY PEOPLE:	Adam & Eve, Noah
KEY EVENTS:	Creation, Adamic Covenant, Fall, Flood, Tower of Babel
KEY PLACES:	Garden of Eden
BOOKS:	Genesis 1-11

“In the beginning, **God created** the heavens and the earth” out of nothing in the span of 6 days which was followed by a day of rest (Gen 1). God created **Adam and Eve** in his image to fill the earth and rule over it (Gen 1-2). They were to cultivate the **temple-garden of Eden** where God dwelt with them.

However, **Adam sinned**, bringing all of creation and every person under the dominion of sin which results in death (Gen 3, Romans 5). Sin quickly results in brother murdering brother and inescapable death for all people (Gen 4-5). Corruption boiled over such that “every intention of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually.”

God’s response is to put all people to death in a **massive flood** & to save **Noah** (and his family) who is commissioned as a “new Adam” as God establishes his covenant with Noah and all creation (Gen 9). Yet, sin remains. People seek to build a name for themselves rather than for their Creator; God confuses their language and scatters them from **Babel**.

Patriarchs, 2166-1805

KEY PEOPLE:	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph
KEY EVENTS:	Call of & Covenant with Abraham, Birth of Isaac, Preservation of family through Joseph in Egypt
KEY PLACES:	Canaan, Egypt
BOOKS:	Genesis 12-50

In Genesis 12, **God calls Abram**, asking him to follow & trust him and promising to bless he and all nations, multiply his descendants, and give them a land. He **establishes covenant** with him in Genesis 15, gives him the sign of the covenant (circumcision) in Genesis 17, and finally provides the promised child (**Isaac**) in Genesis 21 who is born to **Abraham and his wife, Sara**.

Isaac marries Rebecca who bears twins: **Jacob** & Esau. Jacob has 12 sons who become the 12 tribes of Israel (Jacob is renamed Israel in Genesis 35). The sons sell their brother **Joseph** into slavery and he winds up in **Egypt**. Years later, a famine drives Israel’s

family to travel to Egypt in search of food. Joseph, now in authority there, provides for his family who all move from **Canaan** to **Egypt**. After being preserved from threat of famine, God's people "multiplied and grew exceedingly strong" in Egypt (Exod 1.7).

Exodus & Conquest, 1805-1050/30

KEY PEOPLE: Moses, Joshua, Judges

KEY EVENTS: Moses' call, Passover, Exodus, Giving of Law, Mosaic Covenant, Building of Tabernacle, Wanderings, Entry & Conquest of promised land

KEY PLACES: Egypt, Sinai, Wilderness, Canaan/Israel

BOOKS: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth

Hundreds of years go by as the family of Israel becomes a vast people. **God calls Moses** to rescue them from slavery under Pharaoh (Exod 3). God displays his power through 10 plagues which culminate in the **Passover** as the LORD struck down all the first born in Egypt and "passed-over" Israel's children for whom a lamb was sacrificed as substitute (Exod 7-12). His people leave Egypt (**the 'exodus'**) and begin their journey to the land promised to Abraham.

They journey to **Mt. Sinai** where God gives them the **law** and establishes **covenant** with them (Exod 19-24). They quickly and idolatrously turn from God, worshipping a golden calf; because of Moses' intercession, God renews covenant and they build a **tabernacle** so God can dwell with them, a sinful people (Exod 32-40).

Leviticus details holiness laws, demanding Israel's loyal obedience to God and providing means of forgiveness and cleansing so that God may continue to dwell with them. Numbers tells of their 40 years of **wanderings** until they reach the promised land of **Canaan**. Deuteronomy means "second law"; there we find renewed covenant, expounded law-giving, and the death of Moses as they are on the edge of the land promised to Abraham.

Joshua follows Moses and leads the people into Canaan where they are to cleanse the land of the idolatrous people in the **conquest**. The people take over much of the land but fail to fully obey God's commands. The land is then allotted to the different tribes. Following Joshua's death, many **judges** (or deliverers) are raised up by God to rescue them from other nations. However, "in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." (Judges 21.25) Sin grew rampant such that Israel became like the sinful Canaanites.

Monarchy, 1050/30-722/586

KEY PEOPLE:	Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, several 'writing' Prophets
KEY EVENTS:	Demand for a king, David's Reign, Davidic Covenant, Building of Temple, Solomon's death/Split into northern & southern kingdoms
KEY PLACES:	Israel, Jerusalem; Northern Kingdom (Israel), Southern Kingdom (Judah)
BOOKS:	1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, several Prophets

God raises up **Samuel** as the final judge; he anoints the people's chosen king, **Saul**, and God's chosen king, **David**. Saul is a king like the other nations have while David is described as a man after God's heart. He spends many years anointed but not installed as king while he awaits God's timing. Finally, after Saul's death, David is installed as king (2 Sam 5). As king, he works to unite the two regions as one nation, captures and establishes Jerusalem as the capital, and brings the ark of the covenant there. David sins greatly, and he repents deeply.

In 2 Samuel 7, **God establishes covenant with David**, promising that his dynasty and kingdom will last forever. His son, **Solomon**, ascends to the throne (1 Kings 1) and **builds a glorious temple** for the Lord, rules with incredible wisdom, and accumulates great wealth – the nation prospers under him. However, he turns from God, and the kingdom is split following his death. A multitude of kings follow.

The **northern kingdom (Israel)** has its capital in **Samaria**, is ruled by a line of evil kings, and idolatrously worships. The **southern kingdom (Judah)** has its capital in **Jerusalem** and has a mixed bag of kings and worship. God raises up prophets, notably **Elijah** and **Elisha**, to confront idolatry & proclaim his word. King Josiah in Judah provides a spark of hope; around 628 the book of the law is rediscovered and worship & religious life is (partially) reformed.

Exile, 722/605-539

KEY PEOPLE:	Variety of kings and prophets, Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon)
KEY EVENTS:	Destruction of Israel by Assyria (722), Exile of Judah by Babylon (605-586), Return from Exile (539, Cyrus of Persia)
KEY PLACES:	Samaria, Israel; Jerusalem, Judah; Assyria, Babylon
BOOKS:	2 Kings, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel

Israel's sin results in God's judgement upon them according the law in Deuteronomy; they are sent into **captivity** by **Assyria** who destroys **Samaria** in 722. **Amos** and **Hosea** prophesy to Israel in the time leading up to their destruction. Around the time of Israel's exile, **Isaiah** and **Micah** prophesy to **Judah**.

Josiah's reforms don't last, and **Judah is exiled** by the new world-power, **Babylon**, between 605-586. **Jeremiah** prophesies before and during the exilic period and is deported to Egypt himself. **Daniel** is taken in the 1st deportation in 605 under **King Nebuchadnezzar** of Babylon. **Ezekiel** is taken in the 2nd in 597 and begins his ministry just a few years later. The final king of Judah, Zedekiah (a descendant of David), saw his sons slaughtered before his eyes were gouged out and he was taken to Babylon in 586 with the 3rd deportation.

Return from Exile, 539-445

KEY PEOPLE: Cyrus, Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerubbabel

KEY EVENTS: Return to land, Rebuilding of temple, Rebuilding Jerusalem walls

KEY PLACES: Jerusalem, Israel

BOOKS: Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Cyrus, king of Persia, decrees the **return of the exiles** to Jerusalem in 538 (2 Chron 36.22-23, Ezra 1.1-4). Under **Ezra**, they rebuild the temple; under **Nehemiah**, they rebuild the city walls. In the book(s) Ezra-Nehemiah: worship is restored, the Law is read, covenant is renewed, Jerusalem is resettled.

Though the temple is rebuilt, it's not like the glory of Solomon's temple; though **Zerubbabel** (David's heir) is governor, he's not quite a Davidic King; though they are in the promised land, they aren't quite free; though they are still a people, they aren't as numerous as God had promised to Abraham. All of this combines to propel God's people to long for and hope for the coming Messiah and fulfillment of God's promises.

Tracing Some OT Themes

God Dwelling with Us

Garden of Eden → Tabernacle (portable) → Promised Land → Temple (permanent) → Exiled → Prophecy of new & glorious temple (e.g. Ezek 40-48) → Post-exilic temple → JESUS (John 1.14, 2.19, 7.37) → Believers in Jesus (1 Peter 2.4-5) → New Heavens & New Earth (all of new creation, Rev 21.1-22.5)

Creation, Judgement, Re-Creation

Creation	Judgement	Re-Creation
Heavens & earth, Humanity	Adam & Eve exiled from Eden after sin	Promise of defeat of Serpent; Continue to have life
	Flood	Noah as a “second Adam”
	Tower of Babel	Promise of nations being blessed through Abraham
	Pharaoh/Egypt, 10 Plagues	Israel called out of slavery into promised land
	Exile from the land	Promise of return from exile
	Christ’s death	Christ’s resurrection
	Our sin put to death in Christ	“You are a new creation” 2 Cor 5
	Final judgement	New heavens and new earth

Covenant – Promise & Relationship

God relates to his people via ‘covenants’ – relationships of commitment and promise.

Adam. All humanity falls with Adam’s sin. He didn’t obey; death ensues. Romans 5 shows us that Christ has fulfilled what Adam didn’t; either we are in Adam (and dead in sin) or in Christ (and alive).

Abraham. God promises Abraham that all nations will be blessed through his descendants who will be a multitude and have a land. This begins to be fulfilled in Isaac, then Jacob, then the 12 sons who become tribes and finally arrive in the land. Ultimately, it’s fulfilled in Christ who is Abraham’s offspring; in Christ all nations are blessed and we, too, become Abraham’s children.

Moses. With Moses as leader, God’s covenant with (already redeemed) Israel at Sinai has law at the forefront. Jesus has both fulfilled this law on our behalf and given us His Spirit through whom we grow in obedience to God’s good law.

David. God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 promises an eternal reign and kingdom. Solomon takes the throne, then the kingdom splits. Then exile (no king). After return from exile, a Davidic heir is governor... but not king. Jesus is the son of David who ascends the throne and now reigns without end. He is our king forever.

Jesus is the **new Adam**, the **promised seed of Abraham**, the **One who fulfills the Law perfectly**, and the **son of David who reigns as King**.

Where to go from here?

Read the Old Testament

Read Genesis, Exodus, 1-2 Samuel, and Isaiah. Read the primary history. Read 5 OT books you haven't read before (or in a while). Read an OT book then a NT book, then OT, NT...

Read a few Biblical Passages

Read one passage each day for the next few days: Acts 7, Hebrews 11, Psalm 105, Psalm 106. (also, Deuteronomy 1-4, Acts 2 & 13, 2 Corinthians 3, Hebrews, etc.)

Read a Book

Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel. Eugene Merrill

Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today. Richard Belcher

God's Big Picture. Vaughan Roberts (God's Kingdom as His People, Place, Rule & Blessing, traced throughout Scripture; also available as short video series)

God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth. Mitchell Kim & G. K. Beale (Traces the 'temple' idea through all of Scripture)

The Christ of the Covenants. O. Palmer Robertson (An introduction to covenant theology)

The Christ of the Prophets. O Palmer Robertson

Kids

Read the Old Testament with your kids

The Big Picture Story Bible. David Helm (God's Kingdom traced from Genesis-Revelation)

Let's Chat

I'm happy to meet for coffee or a meal sometime over the next few weeks and talk more. Let me know if you would like to explore this some more or ask some specific questions.