

The Old Testament Timeline

From Creation to Malachi — The Unfolding of God's Plan

c. 4000 BC – c. 400 BC

Primary Source: Holy Scripture · noblemind.study/old-testament-timeline/

One hundred fifteen events across thirteen phases. Structural framework drawn from Bob Waldron's teaching. Hebrew Masoretic chronology with the Exodus at 1446 BC; pre-patriarchal dates use the broader Ussher-style framework.

Phase 1 — Before the Flood (c. 4000 BC and the Antediluvian World)

In the Beginning

Creation

The six days of creation; the Sabbath rest

 *Genesis 1:1 – 2:3*


By the word of His mouth, God creates the universe in six days. Day one: light, separated from darkness. Day two: the firmament dividing waters above from waters below. Day three: dry land, seas, vegetation. Day four: sun, moon, and stars to mark seasons and signs. Day five: sea creatures and birds. Day six: land animals, then man — male and female — made in His own image and given dominion over the earth. Day seven: God rests and sanctifies the Sabbath. Each day closes with the refrain: *and God saw that it was good*; after the sixth day, *behold, it was very good*.

Exodus 20:11 anchors the six-day creation in the giving of the Sabbath commandment. John 1:1–3, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 11:3 affirm that all things were made through the Word, by faith we understand.

Day Six / The Garden

Creation

Adam in Eden; the woman formed from his side

 *Genesis 2:7–25*

God forms man from the dust, breathes into his nostrils the breath of life, and places him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. From every tree of the garden he may freely eat — but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; in the day he eats of it, he will surely die. Then God declares: *it is not good for man to be alone*. He fashions woman from the man's side, and the man calls her bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. The two become one flesh, naked and unashamed.

Jesus appeals to this account when teaching on marriage (Matt 19:4–6). Paul appeals to it for the order of authority (1 Tim 2:13).

Soon after

Pre-Flood

The Fall: the serpent, the fruit, the curse

Genesis 3

The serpent, more crafty than any beast of the field, deceives Eve: *has God really said...*? She sees that the fruit is good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. She takes, eats, and gives to her husband; he eats. Their eyes are opened; they know they are naked; they hide. God curses the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground. He drives them from the Garden, lest they reach the Tree of Life and live forever in their fallen state. Cherubim with a flaming sword guard the way back.

Paul: through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin (Rom 5:12). The expulsion from the Tree of Life is reversed in Revelation 22:2.

Within the curse

Pre-Flood

The first promise of a Savior — the seed of the woman

Genesis 3:15

In the midst of cursing the serpent, God speaks the first promise of the gospel: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel* (Gen 3:15). The protoevangelium. From this point on, the entire Bible traces the unfolding of how one of the seed of woman would triumph over the serpent. Every promise that follows — to Abraham, to Judah, to David — narrows the line through which this one will come.


The promise is consummated in Christ. Compare Galatians 4:4 (born of a woman) and Romans 16:20 (the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet).

→ Trace eight promise threads from OT to Christ — each named by an NT writer →

First generation

Pre-Flood

Cain and Abel; the first murder

 *Genesis 4:1–16*

Eve bears Cain, then Abel. Cain is a tiller of the ground; Abel a keeper of sheep. Each brings an offering. The Lord regards Abel's offering and his person; He does not regard Cain's. Cain becomes very angry. God warns him: *sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it*. Cain rises up against Abel in the field and kills him. The blood of Abel cries from the ground. Cain is cursed from the ground and becomes a wanderer.


Hebrews 11:4 names Abel as the first man commended by faith. 1 John 3:12 names Cain as of the evil one. Jesus calls Abel righteous (Matt 23:35). The first acceptable offering recorded in Scripture is Abel's firstling — the opening note of a pattern that runs all the way to Calvary.

→ Trace the lamb God provides: Abel → Moriah → Passover → Calvary →

After Abel's death

Pre-Flood

Seth's line; men begin to call upon the name of the Lord

 *Genesis 4:25–26; Genesis 5*

Eve bears Seth: *God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him*. Seth has a son, Enosh. *Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord*. From Seth the genealogy is preserved: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. The pre-Flood patriarchs of Genesis 5 — each living hundreds of years, each begetting sons and daughters, each dying. One does not die: Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Hebrews 11:5 records Enoch's translation. Jude 14–15 cites him as a prophet.

→ See the lifespans charted: the Adam-to-Abraham genealogy →

Generations later

Pre-Flood

Wickedness fills the earth; the Lord is grieved

 *Genesis 6:1–8*

The sons of God see that the daughters of men are beautiful and take wives. The Nephilim are on the earth in those days. The Lord sees that the wickedness of man is great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. The Lord is sorry that He has made man, and He is grieved in His heart. He declares: *I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land*. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.


Jesus uses the days of Noah as the type for the days of His coming (Matt 24:37–39). 2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah a preacher of righteousness.

Phase 2 — The Flood (c. 2350 BC)

Before the Flood

Flood

God commissions Noah to build the ark

 *Genesis 6:9–22; 7:1–9*

God says to Noah: *the end of all flesh has come before Me*. He commands the building of an ark of gopher wood — 300 cubits long, 50 wide, 30 high, with rooms inside, pitched within and without with pitch, a window above, a door in the side, three decks. God establishes His covenant with Noah: he, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives will enter the ark with two of every kind of unclean animal and seven pairs of every clean kind. The construction itself is a long sermon — 2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah *a preacher of righteousness*, and the patience of God in those days waits while the ark is being prepared (1 Pet 3:20).

Hebrews 11:7 names Noah's faith in building the ark in reverence for warnings about things not yet seen. 1 Peter 3:20 connects Noah's salvation through water to baptism (1 Pet 3:21).

Noah's 600th year

Flood

The fountains of the deep burst open; forty days of rain

 *Genesis 7:10–24*

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the fountains of the great deep burst open and the floodgates of the sky are opened. The rain falls forty days and forty nights. The waters prevail upon the earth one hundred and fifty days. All flesh that moves on the earth perishes — birds, cattle, beasts, every swarming thing, every man. Only Noah and those with him in the ark remain. The mountains are covered.

On the Genesis 5 figures, Methuselah dies in the very year the Flood begins — his name traditionally read as his death shall send forth. The companion genealogy chart shows the overlap directly.

→ See the lifespans charted: the Adam-to-Abraham genealogy →

About one year later

Flood

The waters recede; the ark rests on Ararat; Noah leaves the ark

Genesis 8

God remembers Noah. The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky are closed; the rain restrained. After 150 days the waters decrease. The ark comes to rest in the mountains of Ararat. Noah sends a raven, then a dove. The dove returns with a fresh olive leaf, then does not return at all. In the six hundred first year, first month, first day, the waters are dried up. Noah, his family, and every living thing leave the ark. Noah builds an altar and offers burnt offerings of every clean animal and clean bird. The Lord smells the soothing aroma and says in His heart: *I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

After leaving the ark

Flood

The Noahic covenant: rainbow, meat, blood, capital punishment

Genesis 9:1–17

God blesses Noah and his sons: *be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth*. The fear of man is now upon every beast and bird. Every moving thing is given for food (the first explicit grant of meat) — but they shall not eat flesh with its lifeblood. The shedding of human blood will be answered by the shedding of the shedder's blood: *for in the image of God He made man* (Gen 9:6) — the foundation of capital punishment. God establishes His covenant with Noah, his descendants, and every living creature: never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood. The bow in the cloud is the sign — the rainbow.

The Noahic covenant is universal, made with all flesh that is on the earth (Gen 9:17) — not narrowed to one people. The rainbow remains the sign to every generation. This is the first of the five major covenants — and the only one still in force today exactly as given.

→ See all five major covenants side by side →

Soon after the Flood

Flood

Noah's vineyard; Ham's sin; the curse on Canaan

Genesis 9:18–29

Noah plants a vineyard, drinks of the wine, and becomes drunk; he lies uncovered in his tent. Ham sees the nakedness of his father and tells his brothers outside. Shem and Japheth take a garment, walk backward, and cover their father, refusing to look. When Noah awakes and learns what was done, he curses Canaan (Ham's son): *cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers*. He blesses Shem: *blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant*. He blesses Japheth: *may God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem*.

The curse falls on Canaan specifically — whose descendants will inhabit the very land later promised to Abraham's seed, and whose dispossession by Israel under Joshua fulfills the curse pronounced here.

Phase 3 — The Scattering of the People (Babel and the Table of Nations)

Generations after the Flood

Scattering

The Table of Nations: descendants of Japheth, Ham, and Shem

Genesis 10

Genesis 10 is the Table of Nations — the genealogy of Noah's three sons whose descendants become the nations of the earth. Japheth's line (Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras) settles primarily in the regions of Asia Minor and Europe. Ham's line (Cush, Mizraim, Put, Canaan) settles in Africa and the Levant — including Nimrod, founder of Babel and Nineveh, and the Canaanite peoples Israel will later dispossess. Shem's line (Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, Aram) leads to Eber, then to Peleg, *in whose days the earth was divided*, and eventually to Abram. Each son's lineage is given *according to their families, according to their tongues, in their lands, by their nations* — anticipating the linguistic and geographic division that will follow.

Acts 17:26 — He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.

Shortly thereafter

Scattering

The Tower of Babel; the confusion of languages

Genesis 11:1–9

The whole earth uses the same language and the same words. As men migrate east, they settle in the plain of Shinar and resolve: *let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.* The Lord comes down to see the city and tower; He observes that as one people speaking one language, nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them. The Lord confuses their language so that one cannot understand the other; they leave off building the city. The place is called Babel. The Lord scatters them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

The scattering precipitated by Babel is healed in part at Pentecost (Acts 2:5–11), when men of every nation hear the wonderful works of God in their own native tongues — Babel reversed by the Spirit.

→ *Why Babel? — what God was opposing and why it was mercy* →

From the Flood to Abram

Scattering

From Shem to Terah — ten more generations narrowing to the chosen line

Genesis 11:10–32

Genesis 11:10–32 gives the post-Flood patriarchs: Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abram. Lifespans shorten dramatically across this list — from Shem's 600 years to Terah's 205 — as the post-Flood conditions take hold. Terah, living in Ur of the Chaldees, has three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran dies in Ur. Terah takes Abram, Sarai (Abram's wife), and Lot (Haran's son), and sets out for the land of Canaan; they travel as far as Haran and settle there. Terah dies in Haran at 205 years. The stage is set: God will call one man out of this family, out of this town, into a land He will show him.

Stephen, in Acts 7:2–4, attributes Abram's original call to a moment in Mesopotamia before he lived in Haran, while Genesis records the call narrative beginning at Gen 12 after Haran. Both are reconcilable: God called Abram in Ur; the family went to Haran; after Terah's death Abram fully obeyed and went on to Canaan.

→ See the lifespans charted: the Adam-to-Abraham genealogy →

Phase 4 — The Patriarchs (c. 2091 – c. 1876 BC: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)

c. 2091 BC

Patriarch

The call of Abram; the threefold promise

Genesis 12:1–9

The Lord says to Abram: *Go from your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* The threefold promise — Nation, Land, Spiritual — is given at the outset. Abram, age 75, takes Sarai, Lot, and all their possessions and journeys to Canaan. At Shechem the Lord appears and promises: *to your offspring I will give this land.* Abram builds an altar.

Hebrews 11:8 — by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called, not knowing where he was going. Galatians 3:8 reads the Abrahamic promise as the gospel preached beforehand.

→ Trace the threefold promise — Nation, Land, Blessing — across the whole OT →

Shortly after

Patriarch

Abram in Egypt: the half-truth about Sarai

 *Genesis 12:10-20*


Famine in the land drives Abram to Egypt. Fearing for his life on account of Sarai's beauty, he asks her to say she is his sister. Pharaoh takes her into his house and gives Abram sheep, oxen, donkeys, servants, camels. The Lord afflicts Pharaoh's house with plagues. Pharaoh learns the truth, returns Sarai, and sends them away. The patriarch escapes through the deceit, but the seed is endangered and the lesson is recorded.

The Sarai-as-sister deception is repeated later with Abimelech (Gen 20) and copied by Isaac with Rebekah (Gen 26).

c. 2085 BC

Patriarch

Abram and Lot part; Lot chooses the plain of Jordan

 *Genesis 13*

Returning from Egypt, Abram and Lot find their possessions too great for the land to support them together. Strife arises between their herdsmen. Abram says: *let there be no strife between you and me... is not the whole land before you?* Lot lifts his eyes and sees the Jordan valley well-watered like the garden of the Lord. He chooses east; Abram remains in Canaan. After Lot's departure the Lord renews the land promise: *all the land you see, I will give to you and to your offspring forever.*

Soon after

Patriarch

Battle of the kings; Melchizedek blesses Abram

 *Genesis 14*


Four eastern kings under Chedorlaomer defeat five kings of the Jordan plain and carry Lot off. Abram arms 318 trained men born in his household, pursues by night, defeats the kings, and recovers Lot and all the people and goods. Returning, he is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who brings bread and wine and blesses Abram. Abram gives him a tenth of everything.

Hebrews 7 takes Melchizedek as a type of Christ — without father, without mother, without genealogy in the record, made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually.

c. 2080 BC

Patriarch

The Abrahamic covenant cut; the prophecy of 400 years in Egypt

 Genesis 15

The word of the Lord comes to Abram: *do not be afraid; I am your shield, your reward shall be very great*. Abram complains he is childless. The Lord takes him outside: *look at the heavens and count the stars... so shall your offspring be*. Abram believes the Lord, and He counts it to him as righteousness. The Lord cuts a covenant: animals halved, Abram in a deep sleep, a smoking firepot and flaming torch passing between the pieces. The Lord foretells: *your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they will be afflicted four hundred years; afterward they shall come out with great possessions... in the fourth generation they shall come back here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*.

Galatians 3:6 — just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. God alone passes between the divided pieces; the covenant's fulfillment rests entirely on Him. Hebrews 6:17–18 names this oath as one of the two unchangeable things on which the whole gospel hope is anchored.

→ See all five major covenants side by side →

c. 2080 BC

Patriarch

Ishmael born to Hagar; not the son of promise

 Genesis 16


After ten years in Canaan, Sarai still bears no child. She gives Hagar her Egyptian maidservant to Abram as a wife. Hagar conceives and despises her mistress. Sarai mistreats her; Hagar flees. The angel of the Lord finds her by a spring and tells her to return: *I will greatly multiply your descendants... you shall bear a son and call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction*. Hagar returns; Ishmael is born when Abram is 86.

Galatians 4:21–31 reads Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac as the two covenants — bondage and freedom.

c. 2067 BC

Patriarch

The covenant of circumcision; Abraham and Sarah renamed

 *Genesis 17*

When Abram is 99, the Lord appears: *walk before Me and be blameless... you shall be the father of a multitude of nations*. His name is changed from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). Sarai becomes Sarah. The sign of the covenant is given: every male shall be circumcised on the eighth day. Abraham circumcises Ishmael (then 13) and every male in his household that very day. The Lord promises that Sarah will bear a son within the year — Isaac — and that the covenant will be established through him, not Ishmael.

Romans 4:9–12 — Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

Soon after

Patriarch

Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed; Lot delivered

 *Genesis 18–19*


Three visitors come to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre — the Lord and two angels. The Lord reveals that Sodom and Gomorrah's outcry has reached Him. Abraham intercedes, bargaining down to ten righteous men. The angels go to Sodom; Lot urges them to lodge with him; the men of the city press to assault them. The angels strike them with blindness. At dawn they urge Lot to flee with his wife and two daughters. Lot lingers; the angels seize their hands. The Lord rains fire and brimstone from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah and overthrows the cities. Lot's wife looks back and becomes a pillar of salt.

Jesus appeals to Sodom's judgment as a type (Luke 17:28–32). 2 Peter 2:6–9 uses it as the example of God knowing how to rescue the godly while keeping the unrighteous for judgment.

c. 2066 BC

Patriarch

Isaac born; Ishmael and Hagar sent away


 *Genesis 21*

The Lord visits Sarah as He had said. She conceives and bears a son in her old age. Abraham, 100; Sarah, 90. They name him Isaac — *laughter*. At the feast on the day Isaac is weaned, Sarah sees Ishmael mocking. She says: *cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac*. God tells Abraham to do as Sarah says. Hagar and Ishmael are sent away. The angel of God provides water in the wilderness; God is with the lad as he grows.

c. 2050 BC

Patriarch

The binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah

 Genesis 22

God tests Abraham: *take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.* Abraham rises early. Three days' journey. He leaves the servants below, says *we will worship and return to you*, lays the wood on Isaac's back, takes the fire and knife. Isaac asks where the lamb is; Abraham answers: *God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.* He binds Isaac on the altar, takes the knife. The angel of the Lord stops him: *do not lay your hand on the boy... now I know that you fear God.* A ram caught in a thicket is offered in Isaac's place. Abraham names the place: *The Lord will provide.* The covenant is reaffirmed with an oath.

Hebrews 11:17-19 — Abraham considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead. 2 Chronicles 3:1 names Mount Moriah as the site of Solomon's temple — the same mountain range where, two millennia later, God provided Himself the Lamb. The Lord will provide.

→ Trace the lamb God provides: Abel → Moriah → Passover → Calvary →

c. 2026 BC

Patriarch

Sarah dies; Isaac marries Rebekah; Abraham dies

 Genesis 23-25:11

Sarah dies at 127 in Hebron; Abraham purchases the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site — the first piece of the promised land legally owned. Abraham sends his servant back to his kindred in Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac. The servant prays for guidance at the well of Nahor; Rebekah arrives and answers his prayer exactly. She agrees to go; she meets Isaac and becomes his wife. Abraham dies at 175 and is gathered to his people, buried in Machpelah with Sarah. Ishmael and Isaac, the half-brothers, bury him together.


The Hittites — the 'sons of Hetb' from whom Abraham buys Machpelah — were long dismissed by critics as a biblical invention, until the excavation of their capital at Hattusa proved them a real empire.

→ See the stones that confirm the record — the Hittites, the House of David, Hezekiah's own seal, the Isaiah Scroll →

c. 2006 BC

Patriarch

Esau and Jacob born; the birthright and the blessing

 *Genesis 25:19–28:9*

Rebekah is barren. Isaac prays; she conceives. The children struggle within her. The Lord says: *two nations are in your womb... the older shall serve the younger*. Esau, the firstborn, is red and hairy — a man of the field. Jacob, his brother, comes out grasping Esau's heel. Esau despises his birthright and sells it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. Years later, when Isaac is old and blind, Jacob — at Rebekah's urging — disguises himself in Esau's clothes and takes the blessing. Esau hates him and resolves to kill him after their father dies. Rebekah sends Jacob to her brother Laban in Haran.

Romans 9:10–13 cites the Jacob-Esau choice as a paradigm of God's electing purpose. Hebrews 12:16–17 names Esau as a warning against profanity that sells eternal things for a moment of bodily satisfaction.

c. 1928 BC

Patriarch

Jacob at Bethel and in Haran; Rachel, Leah, and the twelve sons

 *Genesis 28:10–35:29*

Fleeing toward Haran, Jacob dreams at Bethel — a ladder reaching to heaven, angels ascending and descending, the Lord at its top, the covenant renewed. *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it*. He vows that Yahweh will be his God if He brings him back in peace. At Haran he works seven years for Rachel, is given Leah, works another seven for Rachel. Through Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah, twelve sons are born: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and (later, in Canaan) Benjamin. After twenty years he flees Laban with his wives, children, and flocks. On the way home he wrestles with the angel of God at Peniel and his name is changed to Israel.

c. 1898 BC

Patriarch

Joseph sold into Egypt; the long providence of God

 *Genesis 37–45*

Joseph at seventeen, favored son of Jacob and Rachel, brings a bad report of his brothers, wears the coat of many colors, and dreams of sheaves and stars bowing down to him. His brothers hate him. They sell him to Midianite traders for twenty shekels of silver; he is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, he is imprisoned. There he interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and baker; two years later, Pharaoh's dreams — seven fat cows, seven lean; seven full ears, seven thin. Joseph interprets: seven years of plenty, seven of famine. Pharaoh sets him over the land of Egypt — at thirty years old. The brothers, driven by famine, come down to Egypt and bow before him. After testing, Joseph reveals himself: *I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt... you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good*.

Acts 7:9–14 (Stephen's sermon) condenses the Joseph story as the demonstration of God's providence raising a deliverer in advance of need.

c. 1876 BC

Patriarch

Jacob and the seventy go down to Egypt; the scepter to Judah

 *Genesis 46–50*

Jacob and his sons, with their wives and children — seventy souls in the Hebrew counting (Gen 46:27; Stephen counts seventy-five in Acts 7:14, including Joseph's grandsons born in Egypt) — go down to Egypt. Pharaoh settles them in Goshen, the best of the land. Jacob lives seventeen more years in Egypt. On his deathbed he calls his twelve sons and blesses each — and gives a prophecy to Judah: *the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples*. Jacob dies; his body is carried back to Canaan and buried in Machpelah with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Rebekah. Joseph dies at 110, swearing his bones will be carried back when God visits His people.

The scepter prophecy (Gen 49:10) narrows the messianic line to Judah. Joseph's request about his bones (Gen 50:25) is fulfilled at the Exodus (Ex 13:19) and his bones are finally buried in Shechem (Josh 24:32).

Phase 5 — The Exodus (c. 1446 BC: From Bondage to Sinai)

c. 1700s BC

Egypt

A new king arises who knew not Joseph; Israel in bondage

 *Exodus 1*


Joseph dies, and that whole generation. The sons of Israel multiply, increase, and become exceedingly mighty — the land is filled with them. A new king arises over Egypt who does not know Joseph. He says to his people: *behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we... let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply*. Egyptian taskmasters afflict them with hard labor: bricks, mortar, and field work. But the more they are afflicted the more they multiply. Pharaoh commands the Hebrew midwives to kill every male child at birth; they fear God and refuse. Pharaoh commands every Hebrew son to be thrown into the Nile.

Stephen's summary (Acts 7:17–19) notes that as the time of the promise approached, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt — God's promise to Abraham unfolding even under bondage.

c. 1526 BC

Egypt

The birth of Moses; raised in Pharaoh's house

 Exodus 2:1-10

A Levite man takes a Levite woman as wife. She bears a son; seeing he is a fine child, she hides him three months. When she can hide him no longer, she takes a basket of bulrushes, daubs it with bitumen and pitch, places the child in it, and sets it in the reeds by the river bank. Pharaoh's daughter comes to bathe, sees the basket, has compassion on the child. Miriam, his sister watching from a distance, offers to fetch a Hebrew nurse — and brings Moses' own mother. The child grows; he is brought to Pharaoh's daughter and becomes her son. She names him Moses — *because I drew him out of the water*.

Hebrews 11:23 — by faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. Acts 7:20-22 adds that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

c. 1486 BC

Egypt

Moses kills an Egyptian; flees to Midian

 Exodus 2:11-22

When Moses is forty he goes out to his brethren and sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. He looks this way and that, sees no one, kills the Egyptian, and hides him in the sand. The next day he finds two Hebrews fighting; he tries to make peace. One asks: *are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?* Pharaoh hears and seeks to kill Moses. Moses flees to Midian. At a well he defends seven daughters of Jethro (Reuel) from rough shepherds. He is taken into Jethro's household, marries Zipporah, and tends sheep — forty years more.

Stephen (Acts 7:23-29) emphasizes Moses' attempt at deliverance was at age forty; the people did not understand that God was granting them deliverance through him.

c. 1446 BC

Exodus

The burning bush; Moses commissioned

 Exodus 3-4


Moses, now eighty, is tending Jethro's flock on the backside of the wilderness when he comes to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appears in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush; the bush burns but is not consumed. *Moses, Moses... do not come near; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground... I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* God commissions Moses to deliver His people. Moses objects; God provides Aaron as his spokesman. Moses asks what name to give the people: *I AM WHO I AM... thus you shall say to the sons of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.*

Jesus appeals to Exodus 3:6 — I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — as proof of the resurrection (Matt 22:31-32). The name YHWH (often rendered the Lord) is connected here to the I AM declaration.

c. 1446 BC

Exodus

The ten plagues; Pharaoh's heart hardened

 Exodus 7-12

Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh: *thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Let My people go.* Pharaoh refuses. Ten plagues fall on Egypt — each, in part, a judgment on a particular Egyptian deity: **1.** Nile to blood. **2.** Frogs. **3.** Gnats. **4.** Flies. **5.** Death of livestock. **6.** Boils. **7.** Hail and fire. **8.** Locusts. **9.** Three days of darkness. **10.** Death of every firstborn. Pharaoh hardens his heart through the first plagues; the Lord hardens his heart through the later ones. After each plague Pharaoh promises to let the people go, then reneges. After the tenth, he drives them out.

The Lord declares the purpose: that you may know that I am the Lord (Ex 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2) — repeated through the plague cycle. Romans 9:17 cites Pharaoh as the paradigm of vessels of wrath.

Nisan 14, c. 1446 BC

Exodus

The Passover; the firstborn struck; Israel goes out

 Exodus 12

On the tenth day of the first month each household takes a lamb without blemish — a male, a year old — and keeps it until the fourteenth. At twilight they kill the lamb, put its blood on the doorposts and lintel, and eat it roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, dressed for travel. At midnight the Lord strikes every firstborn in Egypt, from Pharaoh's to the prisoner's, and the firstborn of every beast. There is no house in Egypt without a dead. Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron by night: *rise up, get out from among my people... go, serve the Lord, as you have said*. Six hundred thousand men, plus women and children, plus a mixed multitude, go out — Israel has been in Egypt 430 years to the very day.

1 Corinthians 5:7 — Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. John 1:29 — behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Nisan 10–14 sequence laid down here is the rehearsal Christ walked through to the day fifteen centuries later.

→ Trace the lamb God provides: Abel → Moriah → Passover → Calvary →

→ Read «The Last Week of the Lamb» — the Passover pattern at Calvary →

Soon after

Exodus

The crossing of the Red Sea; the army of Pharaoh drowned

 Exodus 14

The Lord leads them by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. He directs them not by the way of the Philistines but toward the wilderness — and toward the Red Sea. Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues with six hundred chariots and all the chariots of Egypt. Israel sees them and panics: *were there no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?* Moses: *do not fear; stand by and see the salvation of the Lord... the Lord will fight for you while you keep silent*. The pillar moves behind, separating Israel from Egypt. Moses stretches out his hand; the Lord drives the sea back by a strong east wind all night; the waters are divided. Israel goes through on dry ground. The Egyptians follow; the Lord throws their army into confusion; Moses stretches out his hand again; the sea returns; not one of them remains. The people fear the Lord and believe in the Lord and in His servant Moses.

1 Corinthians 10:1–2 — all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. The crossing becomes the type of Christian baptism in apostolic teaching.

Three months out

Exodus

Sinai; the giving of the Law; the covenant ratified

Exodus 19–24

Three months after leaving Egypt, Israel camps before Mount Sinai. The Lord descends in fire; the mountain quakes; thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, the sound of a trumpet growing louder. He speaks the Ten Words from the mountain — the Decalogue (Ex 20). Moses goes up; he receives the rest of the Book of the Covenant (Ex 21–23). The people swear: *all the words which the Lord has spoken we will do*. Moses sprinkles half the blood on the altar, half on the people: *behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words*.

Hebrews 12:18–24 contrasts the terror of Sinai with the joy of Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly of the firstborn, Jesus the mediator of a new covenant. The Mosaic is the only one of the five major covenants Scripture explicitly declares obsolete (Heb 8:13) — having served its purpose to lead us to Christ.

→ See all five major covenants side by side →

Soon after

Exodus

The golden calf; Moses' intercession

Exodus 32–34

Moses delays forty days on the mountain receiving the tablets of stone. The people gather around Aaron: *make us gods who will go before us, for this Moses who brought us up from the land of Egypt — we do not know what has become of him*. Aaron collects the gold, fashions a calf, and proclaims: *tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord*. They offer burnt offerings and rise up to play. The Lord tells Moses what is happening; Moses descends, the tablets in his hand. Seeing the calf and the dancing he breaks the tablets at the foot of the mountain. He grinds the calf to powder, scatters it on water, makes the people drink. He calls: *whoever is for the Lord, come to me* — the sons of Levi gather. Three thousand are slain that day. Moses intercedes: *blot me out of your book if You will not forgive them*. The Lord relents; the covenant is renewed; new tablets are cut.

Stephen, Acts 7:39–43, treats the golden calf as the beginning of a long pattern of idolatry that runs all the way to the captivity.

After Sinai

Exodus

The tabernacle constructed; the cloud descends

 *Exodus 25–40 (esp. 40:34–38)*

Following the pattern shown on the mountain, Israel builds the tabernacle: the bronze altar, the laver, the table of showbread, the lampstand, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant — overlaid with gold, with the mercy seat and two cherubim. Bezalel and Oholiab, filled with the Spirit of God, lead the work. When all is finished, Moses inspects the work and blesses them. The cloud covers the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle — so much so that Moses cannot enter. Throughout all their journeys, when the cloud is taken up they set out; when it does not lift they do not journey. By day the cloud was on it; by night fire was within it — in the sight of all the house of Israel.

John 1:14 — the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. The Greek eskēnōsen echoes the tabernacle in the wilderness. Every piece of furniture — bronze altar, laver, lampstand, table, incense altar, ark, mercy seat — was pictured Christ in some specific way the New Testament names.

→ Explore the Tabernacle floor plan — every piece, its place, its picture →

After the tabernacle

Exodus

The book of Leviticus; the priestly system

 *Leviticus*

Leviticus opens with the offerings — burnt, grain, peace, sin, guilt. Aaron and his sons are consecrated; Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire and are struck dead. Clean and unclean animals; laws of childbirth, leprosy, bodily discharges. The Day of Atonement — the great annual atonement at the mercy seat with two goats: one sacrificed, one bearing the sins of Israel into the wilderness. The feasts: Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles. The year of Jubilee. *You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*

Hebrews 9–10 treats the Day of Atonement as the type fulfilled in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. The priestly system operates inside and around the tabernacle — every offering moves through the sequence: gate, altar, laver, holy place, veil, ark.

→ Step through the Day of Atonement — two goats, one offering →


→ Walk the appointed times of the LORD — Leviticus 23 feast by feast →

→ Trace the kinsman-redeemer: Lev 25 → Ruth → Christ →

About a year out

Exodus

The trip to Kadesh; spies sent into the land


 Numbers 13

Israel breaks camp at Sinai and journeys toward the promised land. They come to the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh-barnea. At the Lord's command Moses sends twelve men — one from each tribe — to spy out the land. They go for forty days, returning with grapes so large two men carry them on a pole. Ten of the spies report: *the land flows with milk and honey... but the people who dwell in it are strong, the cities are fortified and very large; we saw the descendants of Anak there... we are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.* Caleb (Judah) and Joshua (Ephraim) plead: *let us by all means go up and take possession of it, for we are well able to overcome it.* The people side with the ten.

Kadesh

Exodus

Israel refuses to go up; the sentence to wander

 Numbers 14


All night the people weep. They speak of returning to Egypt, of choosing another leader. Caleb and Joshua tear their clothes: *do not rebel against the Lord; the Lord is with us — do not fear them.* The congregation says to stone them. The glory of the Lord appears at the tent of meeting. The Lord proposes to strike the people with pestilence and start over from Moses; Moses intercedes for the Lord's name's sake. The Lord pardons — but pronounces sentence: every man twenty years old and upward who grumbled against Him will fall in this wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua. The people will wander forty years — one year for each day the spies were in the land. Their children will enter; they will not.

Hebrews 3:7–4:11 uses Kadesh as the paradigm of unbelief that excludes from the rest of God.

During the 40 years

Wilderness

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; the earth opens

 *Numbers 16*


Korah (a Levite) with Dathan, Abiram, and 250 leaders of the congregation rises against Moses and Aaron: *all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?* Moses says the Lord will show whom He has chosen. The next morning, the ground opens and swallows Korah, his household, and the men with him alive into Sheol. Fire from the Lord consumes the 250 men offering incense. The next day the congregation grumbles against Moses and Aaron, blaming them for the death of *the people of the Lord*; a plague breaks out; Aaron runs into the midst with his censer and makes atonement; 14,700 die before the plague is stayed.

Jude 11 lists Korah's gainsaying among the warnings to the church. The earth opening confirms in dramatic fashion that priesthood is by God's appointment, not by claim.

During the 40 years

Wilderness

Aaron's rod that budded

 *Numbers 17*

To end the murmuring against the priesthood once and for all, the Lord commands twelve rods to be laid before the testimony — one for each tribe, with the head of each tribe's name on it, and Aaron's on the rod of Levi. *The rod of the man whom I choose will sprout.* By morning Aaron's rod has budded, blossomed, and yielded ripe almonds. It is placed before the testimony as a sign against the sons of rebellion. The lesson: God's choice is unmistakable when He makes it.

Hebrews 9:4 lists Aaron's budded rod with the manna and the tablets of the covenant in the ark.

Late in the 40 years

Wilderness

The sin of Moses and Aaron at Meribah

 Numbers 20:1-13

The people gather against Moses and Aaron at Kadesh for lack of water. The Lord tells Moses: *take the rod... speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water*. Moses takes the rod, gathers the assembly, and says: *listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?* He strikes the rock twice with the rod; water comes out abundantly. But the Lord says to Moses and Aaron: *because you did not believe Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them*. Years of faithful leadership; one moment of disobedience; both men barred from the land.

1 Corinthians 10:4 — the rock was Christ. The first time Moses struck the rock at Horeb (Ex 17), it was right; the second time, speaking would have sufficed.

Late in the 40 years

Wilderness

Miriam dies; Aaron dies on Mount Hor


 Numbers 20:1, 22-29

Miriam dies at Kadesh and is buried there. Soon after, the Lord tells Moses to bring Aaron and his son Eleazar up Mount Hor. There Moses strips Aaron of his priestly garments and puts them on Eleazar; Aaron dies on the mountain. The congregation mourns thirty days. Only Moses of the original three is left, and only briefly — he too will die on Mount Nebo before they cross over.

Late in the 40 years

Wilderness

The fiery serpents; the bronze serpent lifted up

 Numbers 21:4-9

Edom refuses passage. Israel must skirt around. The people grow impatient on the way: *why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food*. The Lord sends fiery serpents among the people; many die. The people repent: *we have sinned; pray that the Lord may remove the serpents*. The Lord tells Moses: *make a fiery serpent and set it on a standard; everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live*. Moses makes a serpent of bronze; whoever looks lives.

Jesus to Nicodemus: as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life (John 3:14-15). The bronze serpent later becomes the idol Nehushtan, destroyed by Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4).

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

Sihon and Og defeated; the Transjordan settled


 *Numbers 21:21–35; 32*

Sihon, king of the Amorites, refuses passage and goes out to attack; Israel strikes him down and takes his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok. Og, king of Bashan — a giant — also comes out; he too falls. The Lord delivers him. Israel possesses the Transjordan. Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh ask to settle east of the Jordan. Moses agrees on condition: their warriors will cross over with their brethren and not return until the land is conquered.

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

Balaam: the prophet who could not curse

 *Numbers 22–24*


Balak, king of Moab, fears Israel and sends for Balaam son of Beor at Pethor to come curse them. Balaam asks the Lord and is forbidden. Balak sends more honorable messengers; Balaam asks again; God permits him to go but says he must speak only what he is told. On the way, the angel of the Lord stands in the path with a drawn sword; Balaam's donkey sees, turns aside, finally lies down. Balaam strikes her three times. The Lord opens her mouth: *what have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?* The Lord opens Balaam's eyes; he sees the angel. He goes on but speaks four oracles — each one a blessing on Israel. The fourth contains the messianic prophecy: *a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel.*

Balaam's later counsel to seduce Israel into idolatry (Num 31:16; Rev 2:14) shows that the man who could not curse still ruined many. 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11 use him as the type of the false teacher who loves the wages of unrighteousness.

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

Fornication at Peor; Phinehas's zeal

 *Numbers 25*

While at Shittim, the men of Israel begin to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. They join in sacrificing to Baal of Peor. The Lord's anger burns; a plague breaks out. Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, sees Zimri brazenly bringing a Midianite woman into the tent. He takes a spear and runs them both through. The plague is stopped — but not before 24,000 have died. The Lord grants Phinehas *my covenant of peace* and a perpetual priesthood for his line because he was jealous for his God.

Psalms 106:30–31 — Phinehas stood up and interposed, and the plague was stayed; and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

The second census; Joshua chosen as successor

Numbers 26–27

On the plains of Moab the Lord commands a second census — 601,730 men of war from the new generation, none of whom (except Caleb and Joshua) were numbered at Sinai. The land is allotted by lot among them. Moses asks the Lord to appoint a man over the congregation, *so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep which have no shepherd*. The Lord chooses Joshua, son of Nun, in whom is the Spirit. Moses lays his hand on him before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation; some of his authority is conferred.

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

The slaughter of Midian; Israel's vengeance

Numbers 31

The Lord commands Moses to take vengeance on the Midianites for their role in seducing Israel at Peor. A thousand men from each tribe — twelve thousand armed — go out under Phinehas with the holy vessels and trumpets. They kill every male, including the five kings of Midian and Balaam son of Beor. They return with women, children, and spoil. Moses is angry: it was these women who carried out Balaam's counsel. The judgment is severe.

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

The book of Deuteronomy; Moses' farewell speeches

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is Moses' final series of speeches on the plains of Moab, looking across to the land. He recounts the journey from Horeb to Moab; he reviews the law; he pleads with the new generation to be faithful. He sets blessings and cursings before them: blessings for obedience, cursings for disobedience (Deut 27–28). He warns of exile if they forsake the covenant; he promises return if they repent (Deut 30). He writes the song of Moses (Deut 32) and gives the blessing of the tribes (Deut 33).

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy three times during the temptation (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). Paul quotes the same passages (Deut 30:11–14) in Romans 10.

End of the 40 years

Wilderness

Moses dies on Mount Nebo; buried by the Lord

Deuteronomy 34

Moses goes up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, opposite Jericho. The Lord shows him all the land — Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, Ephraim and Manasseh, Judah as far as the western sea, the Negev, the plain of Jericho — and says: *this is the land I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to your descendants. I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.* Moses dies there in the land of Moab, 120 years old, his eye not dim nor his vigor abated. The Lord buries him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; no man knows his grave to this day.

Jude 9 — the archangel Michael disputed with the devil over the body of Moses. Moses appears with Elijah at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1–3).

Phase 7 — Invasion and Conquest of the Land (c. 1406 BC and following)

c. 1406 BC

Conquest

Joshua commissioned: Be strong and courageous


Joshua 1

After the death of Moses, the Lord speaks to Joshua: *Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan... every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.* Three times He tells him: *be strong and courageous.* The promise: *no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life; just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.* Joshua charges the officers to prepare provisions; in three days they will cross. He reminds Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh of their pledge. They answer: *all that you have commanded us we will do... only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses.*

c. 1406 BC

Conquest

Spies at Jericho; Rahab hides them; the scarlet cord

 Joshua 2


Joshua sends two spies from Shittim. They lodge with Rahab the harlot in Jericho. The king of Jericho learns of them; Rahab hides them under stalks of flax on her roof and sends the pursuers down the wrong road. She tells the spies: *I know that the Lord has given you the land... the dread of you has fallen on us... for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.* She asks for mercy for her household; they swear by a scarlet cord in the window. She lets them down by a rope through the window. They return: *surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands.*

Rahab is named in the genealogy of Christ (Matt 1:5). Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 commend her faith and her works.

c. 1406 BC

Conquest

Crossing the Jordan; twelve stones at Gilgal


 Joshua 3-4

Israel breaks camp at Shittim and comes to the Jordan. The priests bearing the ark of the covenant step into the water; the waters from upstream stand up in a heap; the waters flowing toward the Salt Sea are cut off. The priests stand firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crosses on dry ground. Twelve men, one from each tribe, take twelve stones from the riverbed and set them up at Gilgal as a memorial. Joshua: *when your children ask in time to come, what do these stones mean?... you shall let them know, Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.* The kings of the Amorites and Canaanites hear; their hearts melt.

c. 1406 BC

Conquest

Circumcision at Gilgal; first Passover in the land


 Joshua 5:1-12

At Gilgal the Lord commands Joshua to circumcise the sons of Israel — none of the men of war born in the wilderness had been circumcised, only those who came out of Egypt (now dead). They are circumcised at Gibeath-haaraloth. *Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.* They keep the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month. The day after the Passover they eat of the produce of the land: unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceases; no more is given. They eat of the yield of Canaan.

c. 1406 BC

Conquest

The fall of Jericho; the walls collapse on the seventh day

 Joshua 6


The captain of the Lord's army appears to Joshua with sword drawn: *are you for us, or for our adversaries?* He answers, *No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord.* Joshua falls on his face and worships. The instructions for Jericho are unusual: march around the city once for six days, on the seventh day march seven times, blow the trumpets, and the wall will fall. They do exactly so. The wall falls down flat. Israel goes up into the city, every man straight before him, and takes it. Only Rahab and her household are spared. Everything else is devoted to the Lord — burned, or placed in the treasury of the Lord. Joshua pronounces a curse on the man who would rebuild Jericho — fulfilled later in 1 Kings 16:34.

Hebrews 11:30 — by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

Soon after

Conquest

Achan's sin; defeat at Ai, then victory


 Joshua 7-8

Achan of the tribe of Judah takes from the devoted things of Jericho — a beautiful mantle, two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold — and hides them in his tent. At Ai, Israel is routed; thirty-six men die. Joshua falls on his face before the ark; the Lord answers: *Israel has sinned... they have taken some of the things under the ban.* The next morning the tribes are brought near; the family of Zerah of Judah; the household of Zabdi; Achan. He confesses; the goods are found in his tent. He, his family, and all his goods are stoned and burned in the Valley of Achor — *trouble*. The Lord turns from His burning anger. The second assault on Ai succeeds.

Soon after

Conquest

The Gibeonite deception; the southern campaign; sun stands still


 Joshua 9-10

The Gibeonites, hearing of Jericho and Ai, send envoys with worn-out sacks, moldy bread, and patched sandals — pretending to come from a far country. Joshua and the leaders do not ask the counsel of the Lord; they make a covenant with them. Three days later the deception is discovered. The Lord's name has been sworn; the covenant stands. The Gibeonites become hewers of wood and drawers of water. The five Amorite kings — Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon — gather to punish Gibeon for switching sides. Joshua marches up by night, defeats them at Gibeon, and the Lord casts down great stones from heaven. The sun stands still on Gibeon and the moon over the Valley of Aijalon; *there has been no day like it before or after.* The five kings are pursued, found hiding in the cave of Makkedah, and executed.

Soon after

Conquest

Northern campaign; the land is divided; cities of refuge appointed

 Joshua 11–21

Jabin king of Hazor gathers an alliance of northern kings — like the sand of the seashore in number, with horses and chariots in great abundance. Joshua attacks suddenly at the waters of Merom; the Lord delivers them. Hazor itself, the head of those kingdoms, is burned. The campaign brings the entire land under Israel's hand. Joshua 12 lists the kings defeated; Joshua 13–19 records the allotment of the land by tribes; Joshua 20–21 designates six cities of refuge for the manslayer and forty-eight Levitical cities. *So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers... not one of all their enemies stood before them... not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass* (Josh 21:43–45).

Two of the three promises to Abraham — Nation and Land — are now formally fulfilled.

→ Trace the threefold promise — Nation, Land, Blessing — across the whole OT →

End of Joshua's life

Conquest

Joshua's farewell; the covenant renewed at Shechem


 Joshua 23–24

Joshua, old and advanced in years, calls Israel together. He warns: *be very firm to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside to the right or to the left... not one of the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed*. He reminds them their fathers served other gods beyond the river; the Lord brought them out. *If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*. The people pledge themselves. Joshua writes the words in the book of the law of God, takes a large stone and sets it under the oak by the sanctuary, and says, *this stone shall be for a witness against us*. Joshua dies at 110 and is buried in his inheritance at Timnath-serah.

c. 1380 BC

Judges

After Joshua: a generation arose that knew not the Lord

 Judges 2

Joshua and the elders who outlived him die. *There arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.* The sons of Israel do evil in the sight of the Lord, serve the Baals, and forsake the Lord their God. He sells them into the hand of plunderers. They are in great distress. The Lord raises up judges who deliver them; but when the judge dies they turn again, more corrupt than before. *Whenever the judge died, they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers* (Judg 2:19). This cycle — rebellion, oppression, crying out, deliverance, peace, rebellion — repeats for some 350 years.

c. 1370 BC

Judges

Othniel: the first judge

 Judges 3:7–11

Israel serves Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, eight years. They cry to the Lord; He raises up Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord is on him; he judges Israel and goes out to war. The Lord gives Cushan-rishathaim into his hand. The land has rest forty years; Othniel dies.

c. 1320 BC

Judges

Ehud: the left-handed Benjaminite kills Eglon


 Judges 3:12–30

Eglon, king of Moab, with Ammon and Amalek, defeats Israel and takes the city of palms (Jericho). For eighteen years they serve him. The Lord raises up Ehud, a left-handed Benjaminite. He fashions a two-edged sword a cubit long, straps it to his right thigh under his cloak, and brings tribute to Eglon. *I have a secret message for you, O king.* Eglon dismisses his attendants and rises; Ehud thrusts the sword into his belly; the fat closes over the blade. Ehud escapes, blows the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and Israel kills ten thousand Moabites that day. The land has rest eighty years.

c. 1240 BC

Judges

Deborah and Barak; Jael drives the tent peg

 Judges 4–5

Jabin king of Canaan, with his commander Sisera and nine hundred chariots of iron, oppresses Israel twenty years. Deborah, a prophetess, judges Israel under the palm of Deborah. She sends for Barak: *has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded — go and march to Mount Tabor and take with you ten thousand men.* Barak: *if you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.* Deborah: *I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.* The Lord routs Sisera. He flees on foot. Jael wife of Heber the Kenite invites him into her tent, gives him milk to drink, covers him with a rug. When he is asleep she drives a tent peg through his temple. The song of Deborah and Barak is sung in Judges 5.

c. 1190 BC

Judges

Gideon: three hundred with torches and trumpets

 Judges 6–8

Midian oppresses Israel seven years. Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it. The angel of the Lord appears: *the Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.* Gideon: *if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?* The Lord commissions him: *go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; have I not sent you?* Gideon tests with the fleece — wet then dry. The Lord reduces his army from 32,000 to 300, lest Israel boast: *my own power has delivered me.* At night the 300 surround the Midianite camp with torches in pitchers and trumpets; they break the pitchers and shout: *a sword for the Lord and for Gideon.* The Midianites turn on each other and flee. The land has rest forty years. After his death, Israel turns back to Baal.

c. 1130 BC

Judges

Jephthah; the rash vow

 Judges 10:6–12:7

After eighteen years of Ammonite oppression, the elders of Gilead seek Jephthah — the son of a harlot, driven out by his half-brothers. He agrees on terms: if I deliver, you will make me head. He sends messengers to the king of Ammon; the king refuses. The Spirit of the Lord comes on Jephthah. He vows: *if You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.* He defeats Ammon. His daughter — his only child — comes out to meet him with tambourines and dancing. He tells her of the vow; she asks for two months to mourn her virginity; she returns; *he did to her according to the vow he had made.*

Hebrews 11:32 includes Jephthah among the great cloud of witnesses. The reading of the vow's outcome (literal sacrifice vs. perpetual virginity dedicated to the Lord) is debated.

c. 1075 BC

Judges

Samson: superhuman strength, fatal weakness

Judges 13-16

An angel appears to Manoah's wife (barren): *you shall conceive and give birth to a son... no razor shall come on his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb... he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines*. Samson grows; the Spirit of the Lord begins to stir him. He tears apart a lion bare-handed; later finds honey in its carcass. He kills thirty Philistines for their garments to pay a wager. He burns the Philistines' fields by tying torches to foxes' tails. He kills a thousand with the jawbone of a donkey. He loves Delilah; she nags out the secret of his strength. While he sleeps she has his hair cut. The Spirit departs; he is taken, blinded, and made to grind in the prison. His hair grows back. At a great feast of the Philistines in the temple of Dagon, he prays: *O Lord God, please remember me... that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines*. He pushes the two middle pillars apart; the house falls; he dies with the Philistines — killing more in his death than in his life.

Hebrews 11:32 — Samson is also named among the faithful.

Judges era

Judges

Micah and the Danites; the Levite's concubine; the war on Benjamin

Judges 17-21

The book of Judges closes with two terrible appendices. Micah, in Ephraim, makes a household idol and hires a wandering Levite to be his priest. The tribe of Dan, looking for territory, takes the idol, the ephod, and the Levite by force and settles in Laish in the far north — establishing a center of false worship that endures (Judg 17-18). A Levite from Ephraim with a Gibeonite concubine is brutally abused by the men of Gibeah; she dies. He cuts her into twelve pieces and sends them throughout Israel. Israel gathers to demand justice; Benjamin refuses to give up the men of Gibeah; Israel makes war on Benjamin and nearly annihilates the tribe. The book's refrain: *in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (Judg 17:6; 21:25).

Days of the Judges

Judges

The book of Ruth: a Moabitess in the line of David

Ruth

In the days when the judges judged, famine drives Elimelech and Naomi from Bethlehem to Moab with their two sons. The sons marry Moabite women — Orpah and Ruth. All three men die. Naomi returns; Ruth refuses to leave her: *where you go, I will go... your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.* They arrive in Bethlehem at barley harvest. Ruth gleans in the field of Boaz, a near kinsman. Boaz redeems her — taking her as wife under the levirate principle. She bears Obed, father of Jesse, father of David. *Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom.* The book closes with the genealogy from Perez to David.

Ruth appears in the genealogy of Christ (Matt 1:5). A Moabitess in the line of David — and of the Messiah — in an era when Moab had been Israel's seducer at Peor. The widow at the gate whose redemption pictures Christ's also becomes His literal ancestor. The type and the fulfillment share a bloodline.

→ Trace the kinsman-redeemer: Lev 25 → Ruth → Christ →

c. 1100 BC

Judges

Samuel born; Eli's failure; the ark captured and returned


1 Samuel 1-7

Hannah, barren, prays at Shiloh: *O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me... then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.* She bears Samuel and brings him to Eli when he is weaned. Eli's own sons Hophni and Phinehas are worthless men who treat the offerings with contempt; Eli does not restrain them. The word of the Lord is rare in those days. The Lord calls Samuel by name three times; on the fourth he answers: *Speak, for Your servant is listening.* The Lord pronounces judgment on Eli's house. In battle the Philistines capture the ark; Hophni and Phinehas die; Eli falls backward and breaks his neck. The ark afflicts the Philistines; they return it. Samuel judges Israel.

c. 1050 BC

United Kingdom

Israel demands a king; Saul anointed

 1 Samuel 8-10


Samuel, old, makes his sons judges; they take bribes and pervert justice. The elders come to Samuel at Ramah: *now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations*. The thing is displeasing to Samuel; he prays. The Lord answers: *they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them... listen to their voice; but you shall solemnly warn them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them*. Samuel warns: the king will take their sons, daughters, fields, vineyards. The people refuse to listen. The Lord directs Samuel to Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin — head and shoulders taller than any. Samuel anoints him privately, then publicly at Mizpah.

→ The United Kingdom — Saul, David, Solomon and the promise that outlasted them →

c. 1050–1010 BC

United Kingdom

Saul's reign; his disobedience; rejected by the Lord


 1 Samuel 13-15

Saul delivers Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites; the kingdom is renewed at Gilgal. He fights the Philistines. At Gilgal he grows impatient waiting for Samuel and offers the burnt offering himself. Samuel: *you have acted foolishly... now your kingdom shall not endure*. Later, the Lord commands Saul through Samuel to utterly destroy the Amalekites — every man, woman, child, ox, sheep. Saul spares Agag and the best of the livestock. Samuel: *has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice... because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king*.

c. 1024 BC

United Kingdom

David anointed; David and Goliath


 1 Samuel 16-17

The Lord sends Samuel to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse. Seven sons pass before Samuel; none is chosen. *The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.* David, the youngest, is sent for from the sheep. Samuel anoints him. The Spirit of the Lord comes mightily on David from that day forward. Soon after, the Philistine champion Goliath of Gath — six cubits and a span tall — defies the armies of Israel forty days. David, bringing food to his brothers, hears the defiance: *who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?* He goes out with five smooth stones and a sling. *You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts... that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's.* The stone sinks into Goliath's forehead.

c. 1024-1010 BC

United Kingdom

Saul pursues David; the years of flight


 1 Samuel 18-26

Saul's jealousy turns to murderous rage. David flees — first to Samuel at Ramah, then to Nob (where Ahimelech the priest is later slaughtered with eighty-five priests for helping him), then to the cave of Adullam where 400 men gather to him, then to the wilderness of Engedi, then to the Philistines at Gath under Achish. Twice David has Saul in his power — in the cave at Engedi and in the camp at Hachilah — and refuses to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. Jonathan, Saul's son, loves David as his own soul and helps him; they make a covenant. Samuel dies during this period; David weeps but does not return.

c. 1010 BC

United Kingdom

Saul and Jonathan die at Mount Gilboa


 1 Samuel 28-31; 2 Samuel 1

The Philistines gather at Shunem; Saul is afraid. He goes by night, disguised, to the medium at En-dor — having previously cut off the mediums from the land. He demands she bring up Samuel. Samuel appears; the medium screams. Samuel pronounces final judgment: *tomorrow you and your sons will be with me; the Lord will also give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.* The next day on Mount Gilboa the Philistines rout Israel. Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchi-shua are slain. Saul, badly wounded, falls on his own sword. David hears in Ziklag; he laments: *how the mighty have fallen... Jonathan, you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women.*

c. 1010–1003 BC

United Kingdom

David king at Hebron; war with the house of Saul


 2 Samuel 2–5

David goes up to Hebron and is anointed king over Judah. Abner, Saul's commander, makes Saul's son Ish-bosheth king over the rest. War continues a long time. Abner is killed by Joab at Hebron after defecting to David; David mourns him publicly. Ish-bosheth is murdered in his bed; David executes his murderers. The elders of all Israel come to Hebron; David is anointed king over all Israel — at thirty years old, after seven and a half years at Hebron. He reigns thirty-three more years in Jerusalem; forty years in all.

c. 1003 BC

United Kingdom

David captures Jerusalem; brings the ark to Zion

 2 Samuel 5–6

David goes against the Jebusites at Jerusalem. They taunt: *the blind and the lame will turn you back*. David takes the stronghold of Zion (the City of David) through Joab's lead. Hiram king of Tyre sends cedar and craftsmen; David builds a house. David and the warriors bring the ark up from Kiriath-jearim. The first attempt: on a new cart; Uzzah reaches out to steady it when the oxen stumble; the Lord strikes him dead. Three months later they try again — this time carried by Levites with poles on their shoulders, as the law required. David dances before the Lord with all his might. Michal despises him from a window.

c. 1000 BC

United Kingdom

The Davidic covenant: an eternal throne

 2 Samuel 7

David, settled in his palace, says to Nathan the prophet: *see now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains*. Nathan: *go, do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you*. That same night the word of the Lord comes to Nathan: David will not build the house, but his son will. And: *when your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you... I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me... your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever*. David sits before the Lord: *who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?*

Fulfilled definitively in Christ: the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:32–33). Peter at Pentecost cites this covenant as the basis for Christ's enthronement (Acts 2:30). The Davidic covenant joins the Noahic and Abrahamic as eternal — still in force, fulfilled in the present reign of Christ.

→ See all five major covenants side by side →

→ Trace eight promise threads from OT to Christ — each named by an NT writer →


→ See how God guarded David's line through three near-extinctions →

→ See the stones that confirm the record — the Hittites, the House of David, Hezekiah's own seal, the Isaiah Scroll →

c. 991 BC

United Kingdom

David and Bathsheba; the death of Uriah; the prophet's parable


 2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51

In the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, David remains in Jerusalem. From his roof he sees Bathsheba bathing. He inquires; she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's mighty men, away in battle. He sends for her; she conceives. He brings Uriah home, hoping he will go to his wife; Uriah refuses to enjoy himself while the army is in the field. David sends him back with sealed orders to Joab: place him in the fiercest fighting and withdraw, that he may be struck down. It is done. David takes Bathsheba as wife. *The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord*. Nathan the prophet comes with the parable of the rich man who stole the poor man's lamb. David's anger burns. Nathan: *you are the man*. David: *I have sinned against the Lord*. Nathan: *the Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However... the child also that is born to you shall surely die*. Psalm 51 is the prayer of penitence.

c. 980 BC

United Kingdom

Absalom's rebellion; David's flight; restoration


 2 Samuel 13-19

The judgment of Nathan was that the sword would not depart from David's house (2 Sam 12:10). Amnon rapes Tamar; Absalom kills Amnon and flees. Joab arranges a reconciliation. Absalom stands at the city gate and steals the hearts of the men of Israel. He has himself proclaimed king at Hebron. David flees Jerusalem barefoot, weeping, his head covered. Shimei curses him on the way. Ahithophel, David's counselor, defects to Absalom and advises pursuit by night; Hushai, David's spy, counters with delay. Absalom's hair catches in the branches of an oak; Joab thrusts three spears into his heart against David's order. David weeps: *O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!*

c. 971 BC

United Kingdom

David's last words; Solomon anointed


 1 Kings 1-2; 1 Chronicles 28-29

David is old. Adonijah, his fourth son, exalts himself: *I will be king*. He invites Joab and Abiathar the priest and his other brothers — but not Nathan, Benaiah, or Solomon. Nathan and Bathsheba speak to David. David swears Solomon will reign. Zadok the priest, Nathan, and Benaiah take Solomon to Gihon on David's own mule; Zadok anoints him with the horn of oil from the tent. The trumpet sounds; the people cry: *Long live King Solomon!* Adonijah's feast scatters in fear. David gives Solomon final charges: walk in the Lord's ways; settle accounts with Joab and Shimei. David sleeps with his fathers; he is buried in the city of David.

c. 971 BC

United Kingdom

Solomon's wisdom; an understanding heart


 1 Kings 3; 2 Chronicles 1

At Gibeon the Lord appears to Solomon in a dream: *ask what you wish Me to give you*. Solomon: *I am but a little child... give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil*. The speech is pleasing in the sight of the Lord. He grants him a wise and discerning heart — none has been like him before and none will be after — and also riches and honor that no king has had. Soon: two harlots claim the same living child; Solomon orders it cut in two; the true mother yields. All Israel hears the king's wisdom and stands in awe.

967 BC

United Kingdom

Solomon builds the temple; the glory fills it

 1 Kings 6-8; 2 Chronicles 3-7

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the temple foundation is laid. Cedars from Lebanon (sent by Hiram of Tyre), stones cut at the quarry so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard at the temple while it was being built. After seven years it is finished. At the dedication, the priests bring the ark; the cloud fills the temple; the priests cannot stand to minister because of the cloud. Solomon prays the great dedicatory prayer: *will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built.* Fire comes down from heaven and consumes the burnt offering; the glory of the Lord fills the house.

1 Kings 6:1 — the 480-year anchor for the Exodus date (Exodus = 1446 BC if Solomon's fourth year is 967 BC). The temple was the tabernacle realized in stone: same floor plan, same furniture, scaled larger and made permanent.

→ Explore the Tabernacle floor plan — every piece, its place, its picture →

c. 950 BC

United Kingdom

Queen of Sheba; Solomon's wealth and writings

 1 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 9; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song of Solomon

The queen of Sheba comes to test Solomon with hard questions. She sees the house he has built, the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, their attire, his cupbearers, his stairway by which he goes up to the house of the Lord — and there is no more spirit in her. *The half was not told me... how blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.* Solomon writes Proverbs (3000), Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes. His ships bring gold from Ophir. Silver becomes as common as stones in Jerusalem. Solomon excels all the kings of the earth.

Late in Solomon's reign

United Kingdom

Solomon's apostasy: his wives turn his heart away

1 Kings 11

Solomon loves many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter — Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, Hittite. Seven hundred wives, three hundred concubines; his wives turn his heart away. He goes after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. He builds a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab on the mountain east of Jerusalem, and for Molech. The Lord is angry: *because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant... I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.* Adversaries arise — Hadad the Edomite, Rezon of Damascus, Jeroboam the Ephraimite. Ahijah the prophet tears his new garment into twelve pieces and gives ten to Jeroboam.

Phase 10 — The Divided Kingdom (931 - 722 BC: Israel North, Judah South)

931 BC

Divided Kingdom

The kingdom splits; Rehoboam loses ten tribes to Jeroboam

1 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 10


Solomon dies. Rehoboam goes to Shechem to be made king. The northern tribes, led by Jeroboam (returned from Egypt where he had fled from Solomon), petition for lighter labor and taxation: *your father made our yoke hard; lighten the hard service and we will serve you.* Rehoboam takes counsel — the elders advise lightening; the young men with whom he grew up advise: *my father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.* Rehoboam answers harshly. The ten northern tribes secede: *what portion do we have in David? To your tents, O Israel!* Jeroboam is made king of Israel (the north); Rehoboam keeps Judah and Benjamin in the south. The kingdom is divided — never to be reunited under one king.

→ See the Divided Kingdom side by side — 40 kings, 14 prophets, 345 years →

931 BC

Divided Kingdom

Jeroboam's golden calves at Bethel and Dan


 1 Kings 12:25–33; 13

Jeroboam fears that if his people go up to Jerusalem to worship, their hearts will return to the house of David. He makes two golden calves: *behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt*. He sets one in Bethel (south) and one in Dan (north). He makes priests from all classes of people (not Levites). He devises a feast in the eighth month. From this point, the standard formula for each northern king is: *he walked in the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat and in his sin which he made Israel to sin*. This sin is the spiritual root of the northern kingdom's eventual destruction.

874–853 BC

Divided Kingdom

Ahab and Jezebel; Elijah the Tishbite

 1 Kings 16:29–22:40; 2 Chronicles 18

Ahab does more evil than all who were before him. He marries Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal of Sidon, who imports Baal worship into Israel on a national scale. The prophet Elijah suddenly appears: *as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word*. Three and a half years of drought. Elijah is fed by ravens at Cherith; sustained at Zarephath by the widow whose flour and oil do not fail; raises her son from death. He confronts Ahab and challenges the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel: fire from heaven consumes Elijah's offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water in the trench. The prophets of Baal are slain. Then comes the rain. Jezebel threatens Elijah's life; he flees to Horeb; the Lord meets him not in the wind or earthquake or fire but in the still small voice and gives him three further commissions.

Elijah appears with Moses at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:3). Malachi 4:5 promises an Elijah figure before the great and terrible day of the Lord — fulfilled in John the Baptist (Matt 11:14).

c. 850 BC

Divided Kingdom

Naboth's vineyard; the judgment on Ahab's house

 1 Kings 21

Ahab covets the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, adjacent to his palace. Naboth refuses to sell: *the Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers*. Ahab sulks. Jezebel writes letters in his name, calling a fast, seating Naboth with the leaders, suborning false witnesses to accuse him of cursing God and the king. He is stoned. Ahab goes down to take possession. Elijah meets him: *have you murdered and also taken possession?... in the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours... and the dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel*. Both prophecies are fulfilled to the letter (1 Kings 22:38; 2 Kings 9:30–37).

c. 848 BC

Divided Kingdom

Elijah taken up; Elisha receives a double portion


 2 Kings 2

Elijah and Elisha walk from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho. At each stop Elijah says *stay here*, and Elisha refuses: *as the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you*. They cross the Jordan on dry ground after Elijah strikes the water with his folded cloak. Elijah: *ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you*. Elisha: *let a double portion of your spirit be upon me*. A chariot of fire and horses of fire appear; Elijah goes up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha takes up the cloak that has fallen, strikes the Jordan: *where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?* The water parts. The sons of the prophets bow before him.

c. 848–800 BC

Divided Kingdom

Elisha's ministry: miracles of mercy and judgment

 2 Kings 2–13

Elisha's miracles run through 2 Kings: the bitter water of Jericho healed; oil multiplied for the widow; the Shunammite woman's son raised; poison in the pot rendered harmless; bread multiplied for a hundred; Naaman the Syrian general healed of leprosy; Gehazi cursed with that same leprosy; the iron axe head made to swim; the army of Syria struck blind and led to Samaria; the famine of Samaria ended by a word; Hazael anointed as king of Syria; Jehu anointed as king of Israel to execute the judgment on Ahab's house. Even after Elisha's death, a corpse touched to his bones is revived.

c. 760–722 BC

Divided Kingdom

The writing prophets to Israel: Amos, Hosea

 Amos; Hosea

Amos, a herdsman of Tekoa in Judah, is sent to Bethel under Jeroboam II — the most prosperous reign of the northern kingdom. He thunders against the oppression of the poor, the corruption of justice, the empty religiosity. *Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream*. Amaziah the priest of Bethel commands him: *go, flee away to the land of Judah... do not prophesy anymore at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king*. Hosea, a prophet to Israel, is commanded to marry Gomer, a wife of harlotry. Her unfaithfulness becomes the picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord. Three children are named with prophecies of doom: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah (no compassion), Lo-ammi (not my people). Then come the reversals: *I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, You are My people*.

Paul cites Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 in Romans 9:25–26 as fulfilled in the calling of the Gentiles. Joel and Obadiah are also active during this divided-kingdom era.

722 BC

Divided Kingdom

The fall of Samaria; Israel taken into Assyrian captivity

 2 Kings 17

Hoshea, the last king of Israel, conspires with So king of Egypt against Assyria. Shalmaneser V of Assyria comes up; the siege of Samaria lasts three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria takes Samaria. The Israelites are carried away into exile — to Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. The Lord's verdict is given at length: *this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God... they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations*. Foreigners from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim are settled in the cities of Samaria; they intermarry with the remnant; their descendants become the Samaritans of the New Testament.


→ See the Divided Kingdom side by side — 40 kings, 14 prophets, 345 years →

Phase 11 — Judah Alone (722 – 586 BC)

715–686 BC

Judah Alone

Hezekiah: righteous king; Sennacherib's army destroyed

 2 Kings 18–20; 2 Chronicles 29–32; Isaiah 36–39

Hezekiah does what is right in the sight of the Lord. He removes the high places, breaks down the sacred pillars, cuts down the Asherah, breaks in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made (Nehushtan) because the sons of Israel had been burning incense to it. He trusts in the Lord. Sennacherib king of Assyria comes up against Judah and besieges all the fortified cities. The Rabshakeh stands before Jerusalem and taunts the Lord. Hezekiah goes into the house of the Lord and spreads the letter before Him. Isaiah sends word: *concerning the king of Assyria... he will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there... for I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake*. That night the angel of the Lord strikes down 185,000 in the Assyrian camp. Sennacherib returns to Nineveh; his own sons assassinate him.

A clay seal impression bearing 'Belonging to Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king of Judah' was recovered in Jerusalem and published in 2015 — the king's own signature, matching 2 Kings 18:1 word for word.

→ See the stones that confirm the record — the Hittites, the House of David, Hezekiah's own seal, the Isaiah Scroll →

740-680 BC

Judah Alone

Isaiah: the prophet of the Messiah

📖 *Isaiah; cf. 2 Kings 19-20*

Isaiah son of Amoz ministers from the year King Uzziah died (740 BC) through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and into the time of Manasseh. His vision in chapter 6 — the Lord on the throne, the seraphim crying holy three times, the live coal from the altar — is his commissioning. His prophecies move from indictment to deliverance: the suffering Servant of chapter 53, the Virgin's son of 7:14 (Immanuel), the child whose government will be on his shoulder (9:6), the wolf and lamb dwelling together (11:6), the comfort of chapter 40, the new heavens and new earth of 65-66. Tradition (extra-biblical, but ancient) holds that Isaiah was sawn in two under Manasseh (cf. Heb 11:37).

Quoted more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book. Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21) and declares it fulfilled in their hearing. Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch from Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:32-35). The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (c. 125 BC) carries this same book a thousand years older than any copy known before 1947 — and the text is essentially unchanged.

→ Trace eight promise threads from OT to Christ — each named by an NT writer →

→ See the stones that confirm the record — the Hittites, the House of David, Hezekiah's own seal, the Isaiah Scroll →

697-642 BC

Judah Alone

Manasseh: the longest reign, the deepest evil, the late repentance


📖 *2 Kings 21; 2 Chronicles 33*

Manasseh rebuilds the high places his father Hezekiah broke down, erects altars for Baal, makes an Asherah, worships all the host of heaven, builds altars in the house of the Lord, makes his son pass through the fire, practices witchcraft and divination, sets up the carved image of the Asherah in the temple. *He shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.* The Lord declares: *I will bring such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah that everyone who hears of it, both his ears will tingle.* Late in his reign Assyria takes him with hooks and bronze fetters to Babylon; in his distress he humbles himself greatly and prays; God hears and brings him back. He removes the foreign gods and restores the altar of the Lord. But the damage is done.

640-609 BC

Judah Alone

Josiah: the last great reform; the book of the law found


 2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35

Josiah does right in the sight of the Lord, turning neither to the right nor to the left. In his eighteenth year he sends Shaphan the scribe to repair the temple. Hilkiah the high priest finds the book of the law in the house of the Lord. Shaphan reads it before the king; the king tears his clothes. He sends to Huldah the prophetess; she confirms the coming judgment but promises Josiah will be gathered to his grave in peace. The king reads the book before all the people and makes a covenant. He removes the idolatrous priests, breaks down the houses of the male cult prostitutes, defiles Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom, tears down the high places, even the altar at Bethel that Jeroboam had built. *Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might.* He celebrates a great Passover such as had not been kept since the days of the Judges. He dies in battle at Megiddo against Pharaoh Neco. Jeremiah laments him.

627-586 BC

Judah Alone

Jeremiah: the weeping prophet to a kingdom dying

 Jeremiah; Lamentations

Jeremiah is called as a youth in the thirteenth year of Josiah. He prophesies through Josiah's reformation, through the brief reign of Jehoahaz, the eleven years of Jehoiakim, the three months of Jehoiachin, and the eleven years of Zedekiah — through the first deportation, the second, and the final destruction of Jerusalem. He buys a field as a sign of return after exile (Jer 32). He prophesies the seventy years of captivity (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). He weeps in Lamentations. He is put in stocks, thrown into a cistern, mocked, despised. He is forced into Egypt with the remnant after the assassination of Gedaliah. Tradition holds he was stoned to death there. His prophecies of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) are quoted directly in Hebrews 8.


Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Nahum are also active in this period — each addressing aspects of the coming Babylonian crisis. Jeremiah 31:31-34 announces the New Covenant — the fifth and final major covenant — six hundred years before Christ inaugurated it at the cup of the Last Supper.

→ See all five major covenants side by side →

605, 597, 586 BC

Judah Alone

The fall of Jerusalem; three deportations to Babylon

 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 39, 52

Three Babylonian assaults end the southern kingdom: **605 BC** — Nebuchadnezzar takes the first deportees, including Daniel and his three friends. **597 BC** — Jehoiachin (eighteen years old) surrenders after three months; he, his mother, his wives, his officials, and ten thousand captives including Ezekiel are taken. **586 BC** — Zedekiah, the puppet king, rebels. The siege lasts a year and a half. Famine grows severe; the wall is breached. Zedekiah flees by night; he is captured in the plains of Jericho; his sons are killed before his eyes; he is blinded and taken to Babylon in bronze fetters. Nebuzaradan, captain of the bodyguard, burns the temple, the king's house, every house in Jerusalem. The walls of Jerusalem are broken down. The bronze pillars Jachin and Boaz are cut up and the bronze sea broken in pieces. The remaining people are deported. Only the poorest of the land are left as vinedressers and plowmen. The temple is gone; the city is gone; the throne of David is empty.

Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy begins to be counted from 606/605 BC.


→ See the Divided Kingdom side by side — 40 kings, 14 prophets, 345 years →

Phase 12 — The Babylonian Captivity (586 - 539 BC)

605-536 BC

Captivity

Daniel: a Hebrew youth in the court of Babylon

 Daniel 1-4


Daniel and his three friends — Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (renamed Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego) — are among the youths taken in the first deportation. Selected for the king's service, they refuse the royal food. The Lord grants them favor and ten times more wisdom than all the magicians. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image — gold, silver, bronze, iron, iron-and-clay — the succession of four kingdoms followed by the eternal kingdom of God. The three friends refuse to bow to the golden image; they are thrown into the furnace heated seven times its usual; a fourth figure walks with them; they emerge unsinged. Nebuchadnezzar is humbled to live as a beast in the fields for seven seasons; he is restored when he lifts his eyes to heaven.

→ Filter the prophecies — Person, Nation, Empire, Exile & Return, Messiah →

c. 539 BC

Captivity

Belshazzar's feast; the handwriting on the wall; Daniel in the lions' den

 *Daniel 5-6; 9*

Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, holds a great feast and uses the vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem. A hand appears and writes on the wall: *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*. Daniel interprets: *God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it... you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient... your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians*. That very night Belshazzar is slain; Darius the Mede receives the kingdom. Under Darius, the satraps conspire against Daniel and trick the king into an irrevocable decree. Daniel prays as he always does — three times a day toward Jerusalem. He is thrown into the lions' den. The next morning he is alive: *my God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths*. His accusers are thrown in; they are torn to pieces. Daniel also receives the vision of the seventy weeks (Dan 9) — the great messianic prophecy: *from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks*.

593-571 BC

Captivity

Ezekiel: visions and the valley of dry bones

 *Ezekiel*


Ezekiel, a priest, is among the captives of 597 BC. In the fifth year of the exile, by the Chebar canal in Babylon, he sees the visions of God — wheels within wheels, four living creatures, a throne and the appearance of a man, *the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*. He is made a watchman to the house of Israel. He acts out sieges and exiles with bread and razor. His wife dies and he is told not to mourn. Word reaches him in chapter 33 that the city has fallen; the mute prophet's mouth is opened. He sees the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37): *Son of man, can these bones live?* The breath enters; an exceedingly great army stands up — a vision of national resurrection. Chapters 40-48 detail a future temple, the river flowing from it, the land redivided among the tribes.

The Ezekiel 37 vision is foundational to the noble mind. study book Can These Bones Live?

539 BC

Captivity

Babylon falls to Cyrus the Persian

 *Isaiah 44:28–45:7; Daniel 5; 2 Chronicles 36:22–23*

Cyrus the Great of Persia takes Babylon in 539 BC without major siege — the Euphrates is diverted, the army marches under the walls in the riverbed. The conquest of Babylon ends a 70-year era and begins a fundamentally different imperial policy. Cyrus, unlike the Assyrians and Babylonians before him, allows exiled peoples to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples. Isaiah had named Cyrus by name nearly 150 years earlier: *thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him... for the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me* (Isa 44:28; 45:1, 4).

Babylon falls in October 539 BC according to the Nabonidus Chronicle and the cylinder of Cyrus.


→ Filter the prophecies — Person, Nation, Empire, Exile & Return, Messiah →

Phase 13 — The Return (538 – c. 400 BC: Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi)

538/536 BC

Return

Cyrus's decree; the first return under Zerubbabel

 *Ezra 1–3; 2 Chronicles 36:22–23*

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirs up the spirit of Cyrus, who makes a proclamation throughout his kingdom: *thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem... whoever there is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him, let him go up.* Zerubbabel (a descendant of David), Jeshua the high priest, and nearly fifty thousand return. They rebuild the altar first; offerings are restored; the foundation of the new temple is laid. The old men who had seen the first temple weep; the young men shout for joy. The noise cannot be distinguished.


The Cyrus Cylinder, unearthed at Babylon in 1879, records Cyrus's own policy of returning conquered peoples to their lands and rebuilding their temples — confirming as authentic the kind of decree Ezra 1 describes from the very king Ezra names.

→ See the stones that confirm the record — the Hittites, the House of David, Hezekiah's own seal, the Isaiah Scroll →

536-516 BC

Return

Opposition; the work stops; Haggai and Zechariah call them back

 Ezra 4-6; Haggai; Zechariah

The peoples of the land — the Samaritans and others — offer to help; Zerubbabel refuses (their religion is corrupted). They retaliate by discouraging the people and bribing counselors against them. Under Artaxerxes (in the larger Persian period) the work stops. For sixteen years no progress is made. The prophet Haggai rises in the second year of Darius (520 BC): *is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?... consider your ways!* Zechariah supports him with eight night visions: *not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts*. The leaders and people return to work. Tattenai the Persian governor questions them; the decree of Cyrus is verified in the archives; Darius confirms it and orders supplies. The temple is finished in the sixth year of Darius — 516 BC, exactly seventy years after the first temple's destruction.

c. 478 BC

Return

Esther: providence in the Persian court

 Esther

In the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), Vashti the queen is deposed for refusing to come at the king's command. Esther, a Jewish orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, is chosen from among many. Mordecai uncovers a plot against the king and saves his life — recorded but unrewarded. Haman the Agagite is elevated; Mordecai refuses to bow; Haman casts lots (purim) and obtains a decree to destroy all the Jews on the thirteenth of Adar. Mordecai to Esther: *if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place... and who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?* Esther fasts three days and goes in unsummoned. The king extends the scepter. A series of providential reversals: the night the king cannot sleep, reading the chronicles, finding Mordecai's unrewarded service; Haman summoned to honor him; the second banquet, Esther's accusation, the gallows Haman built for Mordecai used for Haman himself. The Jews are saved; Purim is established.

The name of God does not appear in the book of Esther. His providence permeates every page.

458 BC

Return

Ezra leads a second return; reforms in Jerusalem

 *Ezra 7-10*

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes (458 BC), Ezra — a priest and scribe descended from Aaron — leads a second return of about 5,000 people. The king grants him remarkable authority and provision. Ezra had *set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel*. He arrives in Jerusalem to find the people, including priests and Levites, intermarried with the peoples of the land. He tears his garments, plucks his hair, and sits appalled until the evening offering. He prays; the people weep; they pledge to put away the foreign wives. The reform is severe but the covenant is preserved.

445 BC

Return

Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem in fifty-two days

 *Nehemiah 1-6*

Nehemiah, cupbearer to Artaxerxes, hears from his brother Hanani that the walls of Jerusalem are broken down and the gates burned. He weeps, fasts, and prays for many days. The king notices his sadness; Nehemiah, in a moment of prayer, asks for leave to rebuild Jerusalem and for letters of safe-conduct and timber. Granted. He arrives, inspects the walls by night, then announces the rebuilding. The work is organized by sections; *the people had a mind to work*. Sanballat and Tobiah ridicule and conspire; the workers build with one hand and hold a weapon with the other. The wall is completed in fifty-two days. *When all our enemies heard, all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.*

445 BC

Return

Ezra reads the law; the covenant renewed

 *Nehemiah 8-10*

On the first day of the seventh month all the people gather as one man in the square before the Water Gate. Ezra opens the book before them — he is on a wooden podium above the people. He blesses the Lord; the people answer *amen, amen* with lifted hands, then bow their faces to the ground. Ezra and the Levites read from the book of the law of God, translating to give the sense (probably Aramaic translation of the Hebrew). The people weep when they hear. Nehemiah and Ezra: *do not mourn or weep... this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength*. They celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for the first time in proper form since the days of Joshua son of Nun. A great prayer of confession follows; the covenant is renewed in writing, sealed by the leaders, including provisions for the temple service.

c. 430 BC

Return

Malachi: the last prophet before silence

Malachi

Malachi (*my messenger*) prophesies during or shortly after Nehemiah's second governorship. The people have grown cold again: the priests despise the Lord's name and offer blemished sacrifices; the men divorce their Jewish wives to marry pagan women; tithes are withheld; *where is the God of justice?* God answers through a series of disputations: *I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, How have You loved us?* The promises: *behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me... and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.* And the final words of the Old Testament: *behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.*

Jesus identifies John the Baptist as the promised Elijah figure (Matt 11:13–14; 17:11–13). The four-hundred-year silence between Malachi and John's appearance follows.

c. 400 BC – c. 4 BC

Return

The four hundred years of silence

The intertestamental period — known from 1 Maccabees, Josephus, and Greek historians; no canonical Hebrew Bible text

After Malachi, the canonical record is silent. But the four hundred years are not empty. Alexander the Great conquers the Persian empire (332 BC); the Hebrew Scriptures are translated into Greek as the Septuagint (LXX, c. 250 BC) in Alexandria. The Maccabean revolt (167–164 BC) under Judas Maccabeus reclaims and cleanses the temple after Antiochus IV Epiphanes profanes it; the rededication is remembered as Hanukkah. Rome rises; Pompey enters Jerusalem in 63 BC. Herod the Great is appointed king of the Jews. The Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots emerge; the synagogue system spreads through the diaspora. The languages of common Bible-times come into place: Hebrew kept for Scripture, Aramaic for daily life in Judea, Greek for the wider world, Latin for the Romans. When Gabriel appears to Zechariah in the temple at Jerusalem (Luke 1:5–25), the four-hundred-year silence breaks. *The fullness of the time* has come (Gal 4:4).

Daniel 2 and 7 foretell this entire period — the succession from Babylon to Medo-Persia to Greece to Rome, and the kingdom of God established in the days of those kings.

Compiled from the Holy Bible · noblemind.study/old-testament-timeline/

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