

The Historical Books

Introduction

As previously mentioned, the Old Testament can be divided into four basic sections with each providing a specific focus with regard to the person to Christ. With Joshua through Esther, we come to the second group of twelve books that deals with the history of the nation of Israel. These books cover the life of the nation from their possession of the land down to the two deportations and loss of the land because of unbelief and disobedience. Covering about 800 years of Israel's history, these twelve books tell about the conquering and possession of Canaan, the reigns of the judges, the establishment of kings, the division of Israel into the northern and Southern Kingdoms, the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, the exile of the Southern Kingdom into Babylon, and the return to Jerusalem under the leadership of men like Nehemiah and Ezra.

As these books prepare us for the coming of Christ, the Messiah, they can be seen as follows:

Historical Books: The Preparation for Christ ⁵		
Joshua Judges-Ruth	the possession of the land by the nation the oppression of the nation	The Theocracy: These books cover the period when Israel was ruled by God (1405-1043 B.C.).
1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 1-10 1 Kings 11-22 2 Kings 1-17 2 Kings 18-25 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles	the stabilization of the nation the expansion of the nation the glorification of the nation the division of the nation the deterioration of the Northern Kingdom the deportation of the Southern Kingdom the preparation of the Temple the destruction of the Temple	The Monarchy: These books trace the history of Israel's monarchy from its establishment to its destruction in 586 B.C.
Ezra Nehemiah Esther	the restoration of the Temple the reconstruction of the city the protection of the nation's people	The Restoration: These books describe the return of a remnant to the land after 70 years of captivity (605-536 B.C.).

⁵ Some of the ideas for this chart were drawn from *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, by Norman L. Geisler, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 83 and *Talk Thru The Bible*, by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1983, p. 47-49.

JOSHUA (Possession and Conquest)

Author: Joshua

Date: 1400-1370 B.C.

Title of the Book:

Unlike the first five books of the Old Testament, this book appropriately takes its name from the chief human personality of the book, Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' servant. Joshua's original name was *Hoshea* (Num. 13:8; Deut. 32:44) which means "*Yahweh* is salvation". This amounted to a prophetic anticipation and reminder to Joshua, to the spies, and the people that victory over the enemies and possession of the land would be by the power of the Lord rather than by human skill or wisdom or power. This book is given the name *Joshua* because, though Joshua was one of the world's greatest military strategist of history, his wisdom and military achievements came from the Lord who alone is our Salvation. It was the Lord Himself who brought about victory for Israel and vanquished Israel's enemies giving them possession of the land.

Theme and Purpose:

Possessing, conquering, and dividing of the Promised Land is the theme and purpose of Joshua. The book of Joshua is designed to show God's faithfulness to His promises, doing for Israel exactly as He had promised (cf. Gen. 15:18 with Josh. 1:2-6 and 21:43-45). The events recorded in Joshua are selective to set forth God's special intervention on behalf of His people against all kinds of tremendous odds. The fulfillment of God's promises, as so evident in the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah and in possessing the land with its fortified cities, is the work of God.

Key Words: Possession, conquest, victory, dividing the land.

Key Verses: Josh 1:3,8-9; 11:23; 24:14-15

Key Chapter(s):

Changes in leadership are always critical times for any nation. For that reason, the following chapters are key chapters in Joshua.

Chapters 1-4 record the change of leadership from Moses to Joshua and God's personal promises and words of encouragement to Joshua in his new commission from the Lord, the crossing of the Jordan by the power of God, the commemoration of the crossing followed by the statement, "On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life."

Chapter 24: In keeping with the crucial nature of changes in leadership, chapter 24 is likewise an important chapter. Here Joshua reminds the people of God's faithfulness from the time of Abraham through their deliverance out of Egypt, the crossing of the Jordan and victory over the Canaanites. Then he calls on them to remember the necessity of their faithfulness or they would be consumed by the Lord.

Key People: Joshua, Rahab, Caleb.**Christ as Seen in Joshua:**

Though there are no direct Messianic prophecies of Christ, there are a number of types which point to the Savior. Joshua is a type of Christ in two very important ways. First, his name, *Yeshua*, a contracted form of *Yehoshua*, meaning, "Yahweh is salvation," is the Greek equivalent of the name *Jesus*. Joshua is actually called by the name *Jesus* in Acts 7:45. Second, Joshua is seen as a type of Christ in his work of leading Israel triumphantly into the rest of their promised possession, the land of Canaan (cf. Heb. 4:8). This is but a foretaste of the rest we enter by faith in Christ. He surely foreshadows the Savior who leads "many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:9-10). Further, Joshua was met by the Commander of the Lord's army in 5:13-15. This is undoubtedly a theophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ who was there to teach Joshua that He had come not to take sides, but to take over as commander. Finally, Rahab's scarlet cord (2:21) portrays salvation through the blood and death of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:19-22). This Gentile prostitute heard of the mighty works of God, believed, hid the spies, was delivered when Jericho was destroyed, and is found in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1:5).

Outline:

- I. The Invasion of Canaan (1:1-5:12)
 - A. The Commissioning of Joshua (1:1-9)
 - B. The Command of Joshua to the People and Their Response (1:10-18)
 - C. The Canvassing of Jericho (chap. 2)
 - D. The Crossing of the Jordan (chap. 3)
 - E. The Commemoration of the Crossing (chap. 4)
 - F. The Consecration of the People (chap. 5:1-12)
- II. The Conquest of Canaan (5:13-12:24)
 - A. Conditioned for Victory: The Divine Commander (5:13-15)
 - B. The Campaign in the Central Portion (chaps. 6-8)
 - C. The Campaign in the South (chaps. 9-10)
 - D. The Campaign in the North (11:1-15)
 - E. The Review of the Victories (11:16-12:24)
- III. The Division of Canaan (chaps. 13-21)
 - A. The Inheritance for the Two and One-Half Tribes (chap. 13)
 - B. The Inheritance for Caleb (chap. 14)
 - C. The Inheritance for the Nine and One-Half Tribes (15:1-19:48)
 - D. The Inheritance for Joshua (19:49-51)
 - E. The Cities of Refuge (20:1-9)
 - F. The Cities for the Levites (21:1-45)
- IV. Conclusion (chaps. 22-24)
 - A. The Dispute About the Altar (chap. 22)
 - B. The Discourse of Joshua (23:1-24:28)
 - C. The Death of Joshua (24:29-33)

JUDGES (Seven Cycles of Apostasy, Judgment, and Deliverance)

Author:

Tradition tells us that Samuel wrote the book, but its authorship is actually uncertain. Samuel may have assembled some of the accounts from the period of the judges and prophets like Nathan and Gad may have had a hand in editing the material (see 1 Chron. 29:29).

The Hebrew title is *Shophetim*, meaning "judges, rulers, deliverers, or saviors." *Shophet* not only carries the idea of maintaining justice and settling disputes, but it is also used to mean "liberating and delivering." First the judges deliver the people; then they rule and administer justice...⁶

Date: ca. 1367 to 1050 B.C. (of writing 1050-1000 B.C.)

Title of the Book:

The book gets its name from the number of leaders called judges whom God raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors. The title for the book is best expressed in 2:16, "Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them." Ultimately, however, God was Israel's Judge and Deliverer because it was God Himself who would first allow the times of oppression as divine discipline for Israel's repeated apostasy, and then raise up judges to bring deliverance after the nation repented and cried out for help (cf. 11:27 and 8:23).

Theme and Purpose:

The contrast between the moods of Joshua and Judges is striking. Israel goes from the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat, from freedom to oppression, and from advancement to retrogression. So why the book?

Historically, Judges bridges the gap from the time of Joshua to the time of the prophet Samuel and the beginning of the monarchy under Saul and David. It records the history of seven cycles of decline, oppression, supplication, and deliverance. In doing so, it becomes an explanation and reason for the need of a monarchy in Israel. With every man doing that which was right in his own eyes (21:25), the nation needed the leadership of a righteous king.

Doctrinally, Judges draws our attention to a number of important truths. As God had warned in Deuteronomy, obedience brings blessing, but disobedience results in God's discipline and oppression. But Judges also reminds us that when people will turn to the Lord, cry out to Him and repent, God, who is long-suffering and gracious, responds in deliverance. Judges unfolds its theme by describing cycles of apostasy followed by oppression as a form of divine discipline followed by supplication and repentance by the people followed by judges whom God raised up to deliver the nation.

Key Words: Evil (14 times), judge, judged, judgment (22 times)

⁶ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 59.

Key Verses: Judges 2:15-16, 20-23; 21:25**Key Chapter:**

Chapters 1-2 give a backward look to Israel's sin and a forward look to Israel's servitude. As such, these two chapters provide a kind of overview of the key issues in the book. One of the keys to Israel's failure is found in the repeated phrase, they "did not drive out the inhabitants" of the land (Judges 1:21, 27, 29, 30). This early failure was an ingredient in Israel's later failure to remain faithful to the Lord. Then, chapter 2 gives a kind of summary of the rest of the book which records the picture of the cycles: from being godly to ungodly to oppression to deliverance through the judges.

Key People:

The Judges—Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Tola and Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, and Samson. The best known judges are Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.

Christ as Seen in Judges:

Since each judge functioned as a ruler-deliverer, they served as pictures of the Savior in His work as Savior and Lord, the Righteous Deliverer King.

Outline:

Judges easily divides into three sections: Deterioration (1:1-3:4), Deliverance (3:5-16:31), and Depravity (17:1-21:25). Some like to divide the book around the seven cycles of apostasy.

- I. Deterioration—An Introduction, the Reason for the Period of the Judges (1:1-3:6)
 - A. The Political Condition (1:1-3:6)
 - B. The Spiritual Condition (2:1-3:6)
- II. Deliverance—The History and Rule of the Period of the Judges (3:7-16:31)
 - A. Mesopotamian Oppression and Othniel's Deliverance (3:7-11)
 - B. Moabite Oppression and Ehud's Deliverance (3:12-30)
 - C. Shamgar's Victory Over the Philistines (3:31)
 - D. Canaanite Oppression and Deliverance by Deborah and Barak (4:1-5:31)
 - E. Midianite Oppression and Gideon's Deliverance (6:1-8:35)
 - F. Abimelech's Tyranny (9:1-57)
 - G. Tola's Judgeship (10:1-2)
 - H. Jair's Judgeship (10:3-5)
 - I. Ammonite Oppression and Jephthah's Deliverance (10:6-12:7)
 - J. Ibzan's Judgeship (12:8-10)
 - K. Elon's Judgeship (12:11-12)
 - L. Abdon's Judgeship (12:13-15)
 - M. Philistine Oppression and Samson's Career (13:1-16:31)
- III. Depravity—Apostasy and Anarchy, the Ruin of the Period of the Judges (17:1-21:25)
 - A. Micah and the Migration of the Danites (17:1-18:31)
 - B. The Benjamite War (19:1-21:25)

RUTH (An Addendum to Judges)

Author: As with Judges, the author is uncertain though Jewish tradition points to Samuel. This is unlikely, however, since the author of Ruth mentions David, and Samuel died before David's coronation (4:17, 22).

Date: 1000 B.C.

Title of the Book:

The book of Ruth gets its name from one of its main characters, a young woman of Moab, the great-grandmother of David and one who is in the genealogical line of the Savior (Matt 1:5). Another book of the Bible named after a woman is Esther.

Theme and Purpose:

Ruth is the story of a couple in Israel who, during a time of famine, moved to Moab. There the husband and his two sons died, leaving the mother (Naomi) alone with her two daughters-in-law (Orpah and Ruth). Naomi decided to move back to Israel and Ruth insisted on returning with her. Once in Israel, they turned to a relative by the name of Boaz for help. Eventually, Ruth married Boaz.

Like a brilliant diamond against black velvet, Ruth sparkles against the dark days of the book of Judges. Ruth is the story of loyalty, purity, and love in a day when anarchy, selfishness, and depravity was generally the rule. As such, Ruth serves as a positive picture of faith and obedience in the midst of apostasy and shows how such faith brings blessing. Ruth also serves as an important link in the ancestry of King David and, as mentioned, is found in the line of Messiah. Other purposes of Ruth are seen in the way it illustrates the truths of the Kinsman-Redeemer, the presence of a godly remnant even in times of great apostasy, and God's faithfulness to those who will walk with Him by faith. Since Ruth was a Gentile, the book illustrates God's desire to bring the Gentile world into the family of God.

It may seem surprising that one who reflects God's love so clearly is a Moabitess. Yet her complete loyalty to the Israelite family into which she has been received by marriage and her total devotion to her desolate mother-in-law mark her as a true daughter of Israel and a worthy ancestress of David. She strikingly exemplifies the truth that participation in the coming kingdom of God is decided, not by blood and birth, but by the conformity of one's life to the will of God through the "obedience that comes from faith" (Rom. 1:5). Her place in the ancestry of David signifies that all nations will be represented in the kingdom of David's greater Son.⁷

Key Words:

Kinsman (14 times), Redeem (9 times). In thought, a key term would be *Kinsman-Redeemer*.

Key Verses:

1:15-17; 3:11-13; 4:17

⁷ Notes from the *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, 1985, electronic version.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 1 is a key chapter because it demonstrates Ruth's decision of faith, devotion, and commitment to stay with Naomi, a decision that led to her redemption.

Chapter 4 is another key chapter because in this chapter, Ruth goes from being a widow and poverty to marriage and wealth through the Kinsman-Redeemer.

Key People: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz.**Christ as Seen in Ruth:**

In the Old Testament, if a person or an estate were sold into bondage, they could be redeemed if certain requirements were met by what is called the Kinsman-Redeemer or *goel*, "close relative." This is a perfect illustration of the redemptive work of the Savior. The *goel* must:

1. be a blood relative (a kinsman) of those he redeems (Deut. 25:5, 7-10; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14-15);
2. be able to pay the price of redemption (cf. 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:18-19);
3. be willing to redeem or pay the price (cf. 3:11; Matt. 20:28; John 10:15, 19; Heb. 10:7);
4. be free himself, as Christ was free from the curse of sin, being without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

Outline:

- I. The Resolve and Return of Ruth (1:1-22)
 - A. Her Background, 1:1-5
 - B. Her Choice, 1:6-18
 - C. Her Arrival in Bethlehem, 1:19-22
- II. The Reaping Rights of Ruth (2:1-23)
 - A. Her Right to Glean (2:1-3)
 - B. The Results of Her Gleaning (2:4-17)
 - C. The Report of Her Gleaning (2:17-23)
- III. The Request of Ruth (3:1-18)
 - A. Suggested by Naomi (3:1-4)
 - B. Executed by Ruth (3:5-9)
 - C. Agreed to by Boaz (3:10-18)
- IV. The Reward of Ruth (4:1-22)
 - A. A Husband (4:1-12)
 - B. A Son (4:13-17)
 - C. A Lineage (4:18-22)

FIRST SAMUEL (Transition From Judges to Kingship)

Author:

Precisely who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel is not certain. The Jewish talmudic tradition says that it was written by Samuel. However, though 1 and 2 Samuel take their name from the prophet Samuel, the key figure of the early chapters, the prophet could not possibly have written more than part of 1 Samuel, since his death is recorded in chapter 25. But 1 Samuel 10:25 does attest to the fact that Samuel did write a book. Further, 1 Chronicles 29:29 indicates that Nathan and Gad also wrote about the events recorded in Samuel.

Date: 930 B.C. and later.

Title of the Book:

Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were placed together as one book in the Hebrew Bible. These two books give the history of the monarchs of Israel in the early period of the monarchy. Fundamentally, 1 Samuel is about king Saul and 2 Samuel is about king David. Both 1 and 2 Samuel get their names from the prophet Samuel whom God used in the transition from using judges to the establishment of the monarchy.

Although originally a single book. First and Second Samuel were divided into two books by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT). This division was later followed by Jerome (the Latin Vulgate) and by modern versions. The title of the book has varied from time to time, having been designated "The First and Second Books of Kingdoms" (Septuagint), "First and Second Kings" (Vulgate) and "First and Second Samuel" (Hebrew tradition and most modern versions).

Theme and Purpose:

Beginning with the birth of Samuel and his training in the temple, 1 Samuel describes how this great man of God led Israel as prophet, priest, and the last judge. During Samuel's leadership, the people of Israel, wanting to be like the nations, demanded a king. Under God's direction, Samuel then anointed Saul to be the first king. But Saul was rejected by God because of his disobedience. To replace Saul, again under God's directions, Samuel anointed David, a man after God's own heart to become the king of Israel. The rest of the book describes the struggles between jealous and demented Saul and godly David.

First Samuel picks up the history of Israel where Judges left off with Samuel following Samson (cf. Judges 16:31). This book traces the transition of leadership in the nation from judges to kings, from a theocracy to a monarchy. Because the people of Israel would not allow *Yahweh* to rule their lives, with every man doing that which was right in his own eyes, the monarchy brought stability because the people were more willing to follow an earthly king. "And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (8:7).

The clamor for an earthly king in First Samuel was a natural outcome of this practical rejection (8:7). God had intended to give Israel a king (see Gen. 49:10; Deut. 17:14-20), but the people in-

sisted on the king of their choice instead of waiting for God's king. ... Saul was rejected by the Lord because he failed to learn the truth that "to obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22). He became characterized by mental imbalance, raging jealousy, foolishness, and immorality. David illustrated the principle that, "the Lord does not see as man sees" (16:7). The Lord established the Davidic dynasty because of David's obedience, wisdom, and dependence on God.⁸

Historically, one of the key purposes of 1 Samuel is to record the divine origin of the Davidic dynasty.

Key Word:

In thought, the key word is "*transition*," but in use, *anoint* (7 times) and *rejected* (7 times) are two key terms to this period of transition.

Key Verses: 8:6-7; 13:14; 15:22-23

Key Chapters:

Chapter 8, particularly verses 19-22, record the sad complaint of the nation in their desire for a king over them like that of the nations to judge them and fight their battles. Here, in answer to their request, Samuel is told by the Lord to appoint them a king and the prophet assumes his role of becoming a king-maker.

Chapter 15 is another key chapter in that it records the transition of kingdom authority from Saul to David because of Saul's disobedience and self-willed character (cf. 15:23).

Chapter 16 forms another key chapter in that it records the choice and anointing of David.

Key People:

Samuel the prophet, Saul the disobedient king, and David the shepherd.

Christ as Seen in 1 Samuel:

Samuel forms an interesting portrait of Christ in that he was a prophet, a priest, and though he was not a king, he was a judge who was used of God to inaugurate a new age.

Messiah is literally "the anointed one" and Samuel is the first biblical book to use the word *anointed* (2:10). Furthermore, the primary portrait and anticipation of *Messiah* is found in the life of David. He was born in Bethlehem, worked as a shepherd, was ruler over Israel, and became the forerunner of Messiah King through the Davidic dynasty. In the New Testament, Christ is described as a "descendant of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3).

Outline:

- I. Samuel, the Last Judge (1:1-8:22)
 - A. The Call of Samuel (1:1-3:21)
 - B. The Commission of Samuel (4:1-7:17)
 - C. The Concern of Samuel (8:1-22)
- II. Saul, the First King (9:1-15:35)

⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 72.

- A. The Selection of Saul (9:1-12:25)
- B. The Rejection of Saul (13:1-15:35)
- III. David, the Next King (16:1-31:13)
 - A. David, the Shepherd, Chosen and Anointed (16:1-23)
 - B. David, the Giant Killer, Acclaimed by the Court of Saul (17:1-58)
 - C. David, the Friend of Jonathan, but Rejected by Saul (18:1-19:24)
 - D. David, the Fugitive, Pursued by Saul (20:1-26:25)
 - 1. David protected by Jonathan (20:1-42)
 - 2. David protected by Ahimelech (21:1-9)
 - 3. David protected by Achish (21:10-15)
 - 4. David and his band of men (22:1-26:25)
 - E. The Refuge of David in Philistine Territory (27:1-31:13)
 - 1. David becomes a Philistine servant (27:1-28:2)
 - 2. Saul consults the medium at En-dor (28:3-25)
 - 3. David dismissed by the Philistines (29:1-11)
 - 4. David destroys the Amalekites (30:1-31)
 - 5. The Philistines and the death of Saul (31:1-13)

SECOND SAMUEL (David's Reign; Expansion of the Nation)

Author: See comments under 1 Samuel.

Date: 930 B.C. and later.

Name: See comments under 1 Samuel.

Theme and Purpose:

With no real break in the story of Israel's kingdom, 2 Samuel continues the narrative of the beginning of Israel's kingdom beginning with Saul's death and continuing with the reign of David. It is distinctively about the forty-year reign of David (5:4-5) and traces his reign through his triumphs and tragedies, which include his sins of adultery, murder, and their consequences on his family and the nation. The theme, as 2 Samuel recounts David's reign, could be summarized as "how sin turns triumphs into troubles." Whereas the kingdom was established under Saul, it is expanded by David. Saul's kingdom gave stabilization to Israel from the time of the judges, but David's reign brought growth or expansion. In the typical fashion of the Bible which candidly tells the story of its leaders with warts and all, 2 Samuel portrays the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of the life of King David.

Key Word: Since the name of David occurs some 267 times (NASB), his name clearly becomes the key word.

Key Verses: 7:12-16; 12:12-14

Key Chapters:

Chapter 5 is a key chapter in that it records David's reign as king over all Israel, but **chapters 11-12** are perhaps the more pivotal chapters in that they record David's sin with Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, his rebuke by Nathan the prophet, and the discipline that came on David's house as a result.

Key People: David, Bathsheba, Nathan, Absalom, Joab, Amnon, and Ahithophel.

Christ as Seen in 2 Samuel:

With the exception of his sins, David remains a type of Christ as the king of Israel. It is in this chapter that God establishes the Davidic covenant which ultimately has its fulfillment in the person of Christ.

Outline:

Second Samuel naturally falls into three sections: The Triumphs of David (1-10), the Transgressions of David (11), and the Troubles of David (12-24).

- I. The Triumphs of David (1-10)
 - A. The Coronation of the King (1:1-5:6)
 - B. The Consolidation of the Kingdom (5:7-6:23)
 - C. The Covenant Concerning the Kingdom (7:1-29)
 - D. The Conquests of the King (8:1-10:19)
- II. The Transgressions of the King (11:1-27)
 - A. The Adultery by the King (11:1-13)
 - B. The Murder Caused by the King (11:14-27)
- III. The Troubles of the King (12:1-24:25)
 - A. Troubles at Home (12:1-13:36)
 - B. Troubles in the Kingdom (13:37-24:25)

FIRST KINGS (David's Death; Disruption of the Kingdom)

Author:

The author is unknown, though the Jews credit its writing to Jeremiah. As Ryrie points out:

Whoever the author or compiler of these books was, he used historical sources (11:41; 14:19, 29). He likely was one of the exiles who lived in Babylon, perhaps an unknown one, or Ezra or Ezekiel or Jeremiah (though someone other than Jeremiah would have had to write the last chapter of 2 Kings, since Jeremiah apparently died in Egypt, not Babylon; Jer. 43:6-7).⁹

Date:

About 550 B.C. The release of Jehoiachin from prison is the last event recorded in 2 Kings. This took place in the 37th year of his imprisonment (560 B.C.). Therefore 1 and 2 Kings could not have been written before that event. It seems unlikely that the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity in 538 B.C. had taken place when 1 and 2 Kings were written; had it occurred, the author would probably have referred to it. Probably 1 and 2 Kings were completed in their final form between 560 and 538 B.C.¹⁰

⁹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, electronic media.

¹⁰ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983, 1985, electronic media.

Title of the Book:

First and Second Kings, originally one book (like 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Chronicles) and simply called "Kings" in the Hebrew tradition (*Melechim*), are appropriately titled since they trace the history of the kings of Israel and Judah from the time of Solomon to the Babylonian captivity. First Kings abruptly ends with the beginning of the reign of Ahaziah in 853 B.C.

Theme and Purpose:

After David's death (chaps. 1-2), his son Solomon became king. Chapters 1-11 trace the life and reign of Solomon, including Israel's rise to the peak of her glory, the spread of the nation's kingdom, and the construction of the temple and palace in Jerusalem. But in Solomon's later years, he drifted from the Lord because of his pagan wives who wrongly influenced him and turned his heart away from the worship of God in the temple.

As a result, the king with the divided heart leaves behind a divided kingdom. For the next century, the book of First Kings traces the twin histories of two sets of kings and two nations of disobedient people who are growing indifferent to God's prophets and precepts.¹¹

The next king was Rehoboam, who lost the northern part of the kingdom. After this the Northern Kingdom, which included 10 tribes, was known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, which included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, was called Judah. In the last chapters of 1 Kings, the focus is on the evil of King Ahab and righteous prophet Elijah who condemned Ahab's wickedness and Israel's disobedience.

The central theme, therefore, is to show how disobedience led to the disruption of the kingdom. The welfare of the nation depended on the faithfulness of its leadership and people to the covenants of God with Israel. First Kings not only gives a record of the history of these kings, but it demonstrates the success of any king (and of the nation as a whole) depends on the measure of the king's allegiance to God's law or truth. The book truly illustrates how "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Unfaithfulness to God's covenant resulted in decline and captivity.

Key Word:

While the key word is "kingdom," which occurs some 357 times (NASB), the key concept is the division of the kingdom.

Key Verses: 9:3-7; 11:11

Key Chapters:

Chapters 11 and 12: The key chapters are 11 and 12 which describe the demise of Solomon and the division of the kingdom.

Other significant chapters that have key roles are **3 and 4** dealing with Solomon's choice of wisdom and wise rule, **chapter 8** the dedication of the temple, **chapters 17 through 19** recording the great ministry of Elijah.

¹¹ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 84.

Key People: Solomon, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Elijah and Elisha, Ahab and Jezebel.

Christ as Seen in 1 Kings:

Like David, Solomon is one of the greatest types in the Old Testament of Christ, portraying Messiah in His future reign on earth. Solomon especially does this as his fame, glory, wealth, and honor all speak of Christ in His earthly kingdom. Solomon also portrays Christ in the great wisdom he demonstrated.

Outline:

First Kings naturally falls into two sections: the united kingdom (1-11) and the divided kingdom (12-22).

- I. The United Kingdom: The Forty Year Reign of Solomon (1:1-11)
 - A. Solomon's Accession (1:1-3:1)
 - B. Solomon's Wisdom (3:2-4:34)
 - C. Solomon's Temple (5:1-8:66; cf. 2 Chron. 2:1-7:22)
 - D. Solomon's Fame (9:1-10:29; cf. 2 Chron. 8:1-9:28)
 - E. Solomon's Decline and Downfall (11:1-43)
- II. The Divided Kingdom: The First Eighty Years of the Two Kingdoms (12-22)
 - A. The Cause of Division (12:1-24)
 - B. The Reign of Jeroboam in **Israel** (12:25-14:20)
 - C. The Reign of Rehoboam in **Judah** (14:21-31)
 - D. The Reign of Abijam in **Judah** (15:1-8)
 - E. The Reign of Asa in **Judah** (15:9-24)
 - F. The Reign of Nadab in **Israel** (15:25-31)
 - G. The Reign of Baasha in **Israel** (15:32-16:7)
 - H. The Reign of Elah in **Israel** (16:8-14)
 - I. The Reign of Zimri in **Israel** (16:15-20)
 - J. The Reign of Omri in **Israel** (16:21-28)
 - K. The Reign of Ahab in **Israel** (16:29-22:40)
 - L. The Reign of Jehoshaphat in **Judah** (22:41-50)
 - M. The Reign of Ahaziah in **Israel** (22:51-53)

SECOND KINGS (Dispersion—Willful Sin Has a Woeful End)

Author:

Since 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book and were artificially divided, see the previous discussion regarding the author in the 1 Kings overview.

Date:

About 550 B.C. Again, since 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book, see the discussion on the date in 1 Kings.

Title of the Book:

See 1 Kings.

Theme and Purpose:

Second Kings continues the history of Elijah and his successor, Elisha, but it also continues what might be termed, the "Tale of the Two Kingdoms." As such, it continues to trace the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah until they are finally conquered and taken into captivity. Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. and Judah fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In both kingdoms the prophets continued to warn the people that God would punish them unless they repented. Second Kings teaches that willful sin in a nation has a woeful end. In 1 and 2 Samuel, the nation is born, in 1 Kings it is divided, and in 2 Kings it is dispersed. After years of pleading with His people through the prophets, God's patience finally turns to discipline just as He promised. Because both books were originally one, 1 and 2 Kings share the same theme and goal. They teach us how unfaithfulness (disobedience to God's law and rebellion) must lead to God's discipline and the overthrow of the monarchy. The two kingdoms collapsed because of the failure of the kings to rule righteously and give heed to God's truth.

Key Word:

Two key words are the word, "king," occurring over 400 times (NASB), and the word "prophet," which occurs some 34 times (NASB). But the key term that describes the content would be *dispersion* or *captivities* since this book describes the historical demise that led to the loss of the monarchies and the dispersion of the two kingdoms.

Key Verses: 17:18-23; 23:27

Key Chapters:

A number of chapters fall into this category: **chapter 2**, Elijah taken to heaven; **chapter 4**, Elisha's miracle for the widow; **chapter 5**, the healing of Naaman and Gehazi's greed; **chapter 6**, Elisha's prayer for his servant and the capture of Syria; **chapter 17**, Israel's fall and the Assyrian Captivity (722 B.C.); **chapters 18-19**, Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and Hezekiah's prayer; **chapters 22-23**, Josiah's revival, reforms, and renewal; **chapters 24-25**, the fall of Judah to Babylon (586 B.C.)

Key People: Elijah, Elisha, Naaman, Hezekiah, Josiah.

Christ as Seen in 2 Kings:

Elijah naturally anticipates the forerunner of Christ in John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-12; Luke 1:17) and Elisha in many ways reminds us of Jesus Christ in His ministry. Jensen compares and summarizes their ministry:

Elijah is noted for great public acts, while Elisha is distinguished by the large number of miracles he performed, many of them for individual needs. Elijah's ministry emphasized God's law, judgment, and severity. Elisha supplemented this by demonstrating God's grace, love and tenderness. Elijah was like John the Baptist, thundering the message of repentance for sin. Elisha followed this up by going about, as Christ did, doing deeds of kindness, and by doing miracles attesting that the words of the prophets were from God.¹²

¹² Irving L. Jensen, *II Kings with Chronicles, A Self-Study Guide*, Moody, p. 20.

Outline:

Second Kings also naturally falls into two sections. The first section, The Divided Kingdom (1:1-17:41), selectively traces the reign of the kings of both nations until the dispersion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The second section, The Surviving Kingdom of Judah (18:1-25:30), then traces the reign of the surviving kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

I. The Divided Kingdom (1:1-17:41)

- A. The Reign of Ahaziah in **Israel** (1:1-18)
- B. The Reign of Jehoram (Joram) in **Israel** (2:1-8:15)
 - 1. The translation of Elijah (2:1-11)
 - 2. The beginning of Elisha's ministry (2:12-25)
 - 3. Jehoram's expedition against Moab (3:1-27)
 - 4. Elisha's ministry (4:1-8:15)
- C. The Reign of Joram (Jehoram) in **Judah** (8:16-24)
- D. The Reign of Ahaziah in **Judah** (8:25-29)
- E. The Reign of Jehu in **Israel** (9:1-10:36)
- F. The Reign of Athaliah in **Judah** (11:1-16)
- G. The Reign of Jehoash (Joash) in **Judah** (11:17-12:21)
- H. The Reign of Jehoahaz in **Israel** (13:1-9)
- I. The Reign of Jehoash (Joash) in **Israel** (13:10-25)
- J. The Reign of Amaziah in **Judah** (14:1-22)
- K. The Reign of Jeroboam II in **Israel** (14:23-29)
- L. The Reign of Azariah (Uzziah) in **Judah** (15:1-7)
- M. The Reign of Zechariah in **Israel** (15:8-12)
- N. The Reign of Shallum in **Israel** (15:13-15)
- O. The Reign of Menahem in **Israel** (15:16-22)
- P. The Reign of Pekahiah in **Israel** (15:23-26)
- Q. The Reign of Pekah in **Israel** (15:27-31)
- R. The Reign of Jotham in **Judah** (15:32-38)
- S. The Reign of Ahaz in **Judah** (16:1-20)
- T. The Reign of Hoshea in **Israel** (17:1-41)
 - 1. Israel's Defeat (17:1-6)
 - 2. Israel's Sins (17:7-23)
 - 3. Israel's Dispersion (17:24-41)

II. The Surviving Kingdom of Judah (18:1-25:30)

- A. The Reign of Hezekiah (18:1-20:21)
- B. The Reign of Manasseh (21:1-18)
- C. The Reign of Amon (21:19-26)
- D. The Reign of Josiah (22:1-23:30)
- E. The Reign of Jehoahaz (2 Chron. 36:1-4) (23:31-33)
- F. The Reign of Jehoiakim (23:34-24:7)
- G. The Reign of Jehoiachin (24:8-16)
- H. The Reign of Zedekiah (24:17-25:21)
 - 1. Rebellion against Babylon and destruction of the Temple (24:17-25:10)
 - 2. Third deportation to Babylon (25:11-21)
- I. The Governorship of Gedaliah, a Puppet Governor (25:22-26)
- J. The Release of Jehoiachin in Babylon (25:27-30)

Note carefully the instructive contrasts Ryrie demonstrates for us in the content of 1 and 2 Kings.¹³ These contrasts clearly demonstrate the truth that Willful Sin has a Woeful End.

1 & 2 Kings in Contrast

1 Kings

Begins with King David
Opens with Solomon's glory
Begins with the blessings of obedience
Opens with the building of the temple
Traces the progress of apostasy
Shows how kings failed to rule God's people
Introduces the prophet Elijah
Emphasizes the patience of the Lord

2 Kings

Ends with the king of Babylon
Closes with Jehoiachin's shame
Ends with the curse of disobedience
Closes with the burning of the temple
Describes the consequences of apostasy
Depicts consequences of that failure
Introduces the prophet Elisha
Confirms the Lord's sure punishment of sin

FIRST CHRONICLES (Preparation of the Temple)

Author:

Chronicles (originally both 1 and 2 Chronicles were one book) does not identify the author, but Jewish tradition has traditionally ascribed the book to Ezra. The consistency of style throughout the book indicates that though several sources were used in compiling the book, one editor shaped the final product. The various sources include the prophetic records by Samuel (1 Chron. 29:29), Isaiah (2 Chron. 32:32), and others (2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 20:34; 33:19); but particularly a source called "the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel" (2 Chron. 16:11; 25:26). The content suggests a priestly authorship because of the strong focus on the temple, the priesthood, and the theocratic line of David and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. That Ezra is the compiler of the book is also supported by the common themes of Ezra and Chronicles as the building and dedication of the temple.

Date: 450-425 B.C.

Title of the Book:

Though the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles cover the same period of Jewish history, the perspective is very different. So while the content is similar, it is not a mere repetition, but more of a spiritual editorial of the history of the people of Israel. The Kings give man's viewpoint while the Chronicles give God's perspective.

Originally one book with 2 Chronicles (until 180 B.C.), the book's Hebrew title means "the words (affairs) of the days," i.e., the annals of Israel from Adam to the Babylonian captivity and Cyrus's decree allowing the exiled Jews to return. In a

¹³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, Chicago, electronic media.

sense it is a “miniature Old Testament,” tracing in capsule form the flow of Old Testament history.¹⁴

When producing the Septuagint, the translators divided Chronicles into two sections. At that time it was given the title, “Of Things Omitted,” referring to the things omitted from Samuel and Kings. The name “Chronicles” comes from Jerome in his Latin Vulgate Bible (A.D. 385-405): *Chronicon Liber*. He meant his title in the sense of “The Chronicles of the Whole of Sacred History.”¹⁵

Theme and Purpose:

First Chronicles begins with an outline of history from Adam through the death of King Saul. The rest of the book is about the reign of King David. The books of Chronicles seem like a repeat of Samuel and Kings, but they were written for the returned exiles to remind them that they came from the royal line of David and that they were God’s chosen people. The genealogies point out that the Davidic promises had their source in those pledged to Abraham that He would make him the father of a great nation, one through which He would bless the nations. The main theme is that God is faithful to His covenant.

Chronicles emphasizes the role of the Law, the priesthood, and the temple. Although Solomon’s temple was gone, the second temple could be regarded as the Remnant’s link to the first. This book also taught that the past was pregnant with lessons for their present. Apostasy, idolatry, intermarriage with Gentiles, and lack of unity were the reasons for their recent ruin. It is significant that after the Exile, Israel never again worshiped foreign gods.¹⁶

Key Word:

The key words are David (183 times) and the Davidic Covenant.

Key Verses: 11:1-3; 17:11-14; 29:11-12

Key Chapters:

Chapter 17. Because of the importance of God’s covenant with David to all of Scripture and its fulfillment in the person of Christ, this chapter is the pivotal and key chapter since it unfolds the Davidic Covenant as does 1 Samuel 7.

Key People:

As mentioned, it is a book about David, though others that were prominent in 1 Samuel are also important here like Nathan, Bathsheba, and Uriah.

Christ as Seen in 1 Chronicles:

What was said in 1 and 2 Samuel regarding David as a type of Christ would naturally be prominent here also.

¹⁴ Ryrie.

¹⁵ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 100.

¹⁶ Wilderson and Boa, p. 101.

Outline:

First Chronicles naturally divides into four sections: (1) The Genealogies or the Royal Line of David (1:1-9:44); (2) the Rise of David or His Anointing (10:1-12:40), (3) The Reign of David (13:1-29:21), and (4) The Accession of Solomon and the Death of David (29:22-30).

- I. Genealogies from Adam to David (1:1-9:44)
 - A. Adam to Abraham (1:1-27)
 - B. Abraham to Jacob (1:28-54)
 - C. Jacob to David (2:1-55)
 - D. David to the Captivity (3:1-24)
 - E. Genealogies of the Twelve Tribes (4:1-8:40)
 - F. Jerusalem's Inhabitants (9:1-34)
 - G. The Family of Saul (9:35-44)
- II. The Rise and Anointing of David (10:1-12:40)
 - A. The Death of Saul (10:1-14)
 - B. The Accession of David (11:1-3)
 - C. The Capture of Jerusalem (11:4-9)
 - D. The Heroes of David (11:10-12:40)
- III. David's Reign (13:1-29:21)
 - A. David and the Ark (13:1-17:27)
 - 1. David brings the Ark to Chidon: Uzza's death (13:1-14)
 - 2. David's fame and victory over the Philistines (14:1-17)
 - 3. David brings the ark to Jerusalem (15:1-29)
 - 4. David's celebration and arrangements for the ark (16:1-43)
 - 5. David's desire to build a Temple: the Davidic covenant (17:1-27)
 - B. David's Wars (18:1-20:8)
 - C. David's Sinful Census (21:1-30)
 - D. David's Preparations for the Temple (22:1-23:1)
 - E. David's Organization of the Levites (23:2-26:32)
 - 1. Numbering of and duties of the Levites (23:2-32)
 - 2. Dividing the Levites into twenty-four groups (24:1-31)
 - 3. Assigning the musicians (25:1-31)
 - 4. Appointing gatekeepers (26:1-19)
 - 5. Assigning the treasures (26:20-28)
 - 6. Delegating magistrates (26:29-32)
 - F. David's Civil Leaders (27:1-34)
 - G. David's Last Instructions to the People and to Solomon (28:1-21)
 - H. David's Offerings and Worship (29:1-21)
- IV. The Accession of Solomon and Death of David (29:22-30)

SECOND CHRONICLES (Destruction of the Temple)

Author:

As previously mentioned, 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally one book. As with 1 Chronicles, it does not state who wrote it, but Jewish tradition, which identifies the author as Ezra, and the consistency of viewpoint and style suggest it was probably the work of one person sometimes referred to by writers as the *chronicler*. In support of Ezra as the author are certain commonalties like the extensive lists, the Levites, and the temple. Whoever he was, he had access to a number of official sources like: (1) the book of the kings of Israel and Judah (27:7; 35:27; 36:8); (2) the book of the

kings of Judah and Israel (16:11; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32); (3) the book of the kings of Israel (20:34; 33:18); (4) the annals of the book of the kings (24:27); (5) the book Nathan, the prophecy of Ahijah, and the visions of Iddo (9:29); (6) the history of Shemaiah (12:15); (7) the annals of Iddo (13:22); (8) the writings of the prophet Isaiah (26:22); (9) the sayings of Hozai (33:19); (10) the Laments (35:25); and (11) the writings of David and his son Solomon (35:4).

Date: 450-425 B.C.

Title of the Book:

See under 1 Chronicles.

Theme and Purpose:

While 1 Chronicles parallels 1 and 2 Samuel, 2 Chronicles continues the history of David's line and parallels 1 and 2 Kings. But for all practical purposes, it ignores the Northern Kingdom because of apostasy and total absence of any godly kings who patterned their life after David. By contrast, 2 Chronicles focuses on those kings who did walk after the lifestyle of David. Chapters 1-9 describe the building of the temple during Solomon's reign. Chapters 10-36 trace the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to the final destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon. Therefore, it devotes extended sections to the lives of those kings who brought revival and reform to the nation like Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

As mentioned, Chronicles goes over some of the same history as Samuel and Kings, but from a different perspective in order to emphasize certain things: In 1 Chronicles, David is the subject while in 2 Chronicles the house of David is central. In Kings the history of the nation is given from the throne whereas in Chronicles it is given from the altar (the temple). In Kings the palace is central, but in Chronicles the temple is prominent. In Kings the focus is on the political history while in Chronicles the focus is on the religious or spiritual element of Israel's history.

Chronicles is more than simply an historical record. It is God's commentary on the spiritual characteristics of David's dynasty. Because of this, the focus is on the kingdom of Judah, the Southern Kingdom where there were revival and godly kings in David's line and why the Northern Kingdom, with no godly kings, is basically ignored.

Key Word:

References to the House of God and the priest(s) occur often. For this reason, the key word conceptually is "the priestly perspective of Judah."

Key Verses: 7:14; 16:9 (see also 1:1; 5:1; 36:14,17-18)

Key Chapters:

The chapters covering the reforms of godly kings are key chapters in the way they illustrate the promise of 7:14. See especially chapter 34 and the reforms under Josiah when the book of the Law was found, read, and obeyed.

Key People: Josiah, Rehoboam, Solomon.

Christ as Seen in 2 Chronicles:

The throne of David has been destroyed, but the line of David remains. Murders, treachery, battles, and captivity all threaten the messianic line; but it remains clear and unbroken from Adam to Zerubbabel. The fulfillment in Christ can be seen in the genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3.¹⁷

The temple which is so prominent in 2 Chronicles is a beautiful portrait of Christ (see Matt. 12:6; John 2:19; and Revelation 21:22).

Outline:

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1:1-9:31)
 - A. Solomon's Inauguration (1:1-17)
 - B. Solomon's Temple (2:1-7:22)
 - C. Solomon's Fame (8:1-9:28)
 - D. Solomon's Death (9:29-31)
- II. The Kings of Judah (10:1-36:21)
 - A. Rehoboam (10:1-12:16)
 - B. Abijah (13:1-22)
 - C. Asa (14:1-16:14)
 - D. Jehoshaphat (17:1-20:37)
 - E. Jehoram (21:1-20)
 - F. Ahaziah (22:1-9)
 - G. Athaliah (22:10-23:15)
 - H. Joash (23:16-24:27)
 - I. Smaziah (25:1-28)
 - J. Uzziah (26:1-23)
 - K. Jotham (27:1-9)
 - L. Ahaz (28:1-27)
 - M. Hezekiah (29:1-32:33)
 - N. Manasseh (33:1-20)
 - O. Amon (33:21-25)
 - P. Josiah (34:1-35:27)
 - Q. Joahaz (36:1-4)
 - R. Jehoiakim (36:5-8)
 - S. Jehoiachin (36:9-10)
 - T. Zedekiah (36:11-21)
- III. The Decree of Cyrus (36:22-23)

EZRA (Reconstruction of the Temple and Restoration of the People)

Author:

Though the book of Ezra does not name its author, Jewish tradition (the Talmud) ascribes it to Ezra along with Chronicles and Nehemiah. Modern scholarship often agrees that Ezra is the author and that he wrote these using various documents (e.g., 4:7-16), genealogies (e.g., 2:1-70), and per-

¹⁷ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 110.

sonal memoirs (e.g., 7:27-9:15) as his sources. In the Vulgate (Latin Bible), Ezra and Nehemiah are titled 1 and 2 Esdras, while the apocryphal book called 1 Esdras in the English text is 3 Esdras in the Vulgate.

The fact that Ezra is the principal character of the major sections of Ezra lends further support to his authorship. He takes part in the events described in chapters 1-10 and also in chapters 8-10 of Nehemiah. In both cases, the passages are written in the first person.

Tradition holds that Ezra was the founder of the Great Synagogue where the canon of Old Testament scripture was settled. Another tradition says that he collected the biblical books into a unit and that he originated the synagogue form of worship.¹⁸

Date:

Ezra wrote between 457 B.C. and 444 B.C.

Although some date the book around 330 B.C., its linguistic similarities with the fifth-century Aramaic papyri from the Jewish community at Elephantine, Egypt, argue for an earlier date during the lifetime of Ezra (who lived to the time of Nehemiah, Neh. 8:1-9; 12:36). Ezra probably finished the book between 456 (when the events of 10:17-44 took place) and 444, when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem.¹⁹

Title of the Book:

In the ancient Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book and called "The Book of Ezra." Modern Hebrew Bibles designate the two-fold arrangement of Ezra and Nehemiah as in our English versions. Further, Josephus (*Against Apion* 1. 8) and Jerome (*Preface to the Commentary on Galatians*) also considered the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as one. But not all agree.

... there is evidence that the two books were originally separate. The lists in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 are basically the same. This would militate against the idea that the two books were originally one, for it would seem strange to repeat the same list in one volume. The name Ezra for the title of the first work comes from the major person in the second half of the book, who also appears in chapters 8 and 12 of the Book of Nehemiah.²⁰

Theme and Purpose:

From an historical standpoint, Ezra continues the narrative where 2 Chronicles ends and traces the history of the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple. From a spiritual and doctrinal standpoint, Ezra demonstrates how God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the land of promise after seventy years of exile as announced by the prophets. As in Chronicles, Ezra, as a priest, shows the centrality of the temple and its worship to the life of the nation as God's people. It begins with the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, which allowed a remnant of the people to return. The people enthusiastically began rebuilding the temple, but were delayed for 18 years by enemies from the north. Finally a decree from Darius let them finish (see Ezra 1-6).

¹⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 117.

¹⁹ Ryrie, electronic media.

²⁰ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983, 1985, electronic media.

Chapters 7-10 tell about the return of the priest Ezra who taught the people the law and reformed the nation's spiritual life.

The theme can be summarized as the spiritual, moral, and social restoration of the remnant who returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra.

Key Word:

Fitting with the concepts to return to the land and the temple in Jerusalem, two key words are "Jerusalem," which occurs 48 times, and "temple," which occurs 25 times.

Key Verses: 1:3; 2:1; 6:21-22; 7:10

Key Chapters:

Key chapters would include (1) the decree of Cyrus allowing the remnant to return, **chapter 1**, (2) the foundation of the temple completed, **chapter 3**, (3) the completion and dedication of the temple and the keeping of the Passover, **chapter 6**, (4) the return under Ezra and his prayer, **chapters 7-9**.

Key People: Cyrus (Persian king who decreed to allow the return), Ezra (priest and scribe), Jeshua (the high priest), and Zerubbabel.

Christ as Seen in Ezra:

In keeping with the Davidic covenant and God's promises to keep the line of descendants alive for Messiah, Son of David, Ezra and Nehemiah show how God continued to keep His promises by restoring His people to their land.

Outline:

Ezra divides into two sections: the earlier return under Zerubbabel, the restoration of the temple (1-6) and the later return under Ezra, the reformation of the people (7-10). Or it may be divided:

- I. The Restoration; The First Return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (1-6)
 - A. The Decree of Cyrus (1:1-11)
 - B. The Census of the People (2:1-70)
 - C. The Construction of the Temple Begun (3:1-13)
 - D. The Opposition (4:1-24)
 - E. The Construction Renewed (5:1-6:12)
 - F. The Temple Completed (6:13-22)
- II. The Reformation of the People; the Return Under Ezra (7:1-10:44)
 - A. The Return to Jerusalem (7:1-8:36)
 - B. The Revival of Jerusalem (9:1-10:44)

NEHEMIAH (Reconstruction of the City)

Author:

Though some believe that Nehemiah wrote the book of Nehemiah because of the words, "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah" (1:1), many believe the evidence suggests that Ezra is the

author of Nehemiah and used Nehemiah's memoirs and firsthand accounts as though quoting Nehemiah. On the other hand, many scholars believe that Nehemiah authored the book that bears his name since much of the book is presented as a first-person account of the circumstances surrounding his return to Jerusalem (chaps. 1-7; 12:31-13:31).²¹ Also, in view of the similarities of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah, one wonders why the same author would repeat the same material in one volume.

Date:

The historical setting is simply that of the last half of the ancient Hebrew book of Ezra-Nehemiah which means it was written about 445 B.C. to 425 B.C.

Title of the Book:

Though originally one book, the last half of that book draws its name from the prominence of Nehemiah, contemporary of Ezra and cupbearer to the king of Persia. Nehemiah's name means "*Yahweh* consoles or comforts."

Theme and Purpose:

The book of Nehemiah continues the history of the Jews who returned from exile. Nehemiah gave up his position as cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the Persian king, to become governor of Jerusalem and lead the people in repairing the city walls. Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries (see Neh. 8:2, 9), were both men of God but served *Yahweh* in different capacities. While Ezra was a priest and involved more with the religious restoration of returning Remnant, Nehemiah was a layman and served in a political capacity as governor in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was also written to show the obvious hand of God in the establishment of His people in their homeland in the years after their exile. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, they accomplished in fifty-two days what had not been done in the ninety-four years since the first return under Zerubbabel. By obedient faith they were able to overcome what appeared to be insurmountable opposition.²²

Key Words:

With the rebuilding of the walls the key element, the key words are "wall" and "walls," used some 33 times and "build," "building," "rebuilding," etc., is found more than 20 times.

Key Verses: 4:6; 6:15-16; 8:8**Key Chapters:**

Key chapters would include, (1) Nehemiah's prayer and God's answer, **chapters 1-2**, (2) the work on the walls, the opposition, and its completion, **chapters 3-7**, (3) the confession of the people and their reaffirmation of the covenant, **chapter 9**.

²¹ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

²² Wilkinson and Boa, p. 125.

Key People: Nehemiah, Artaxerxes, Sanballet, Ezra.

Christ as Seen in Nehemiah:

Nehemiah surely portrays Christ in willingness to leave his high position in order to bring about His work of restoration. Further, the decree of Artaxerxes marks the beginning point of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks of years which, though interrupted by an unspecified time, begins the countdown for the return of Messiah (Dan. 9:25-27).

Outline:

Like Ezra, Nehemiah also falls into two specific issues: (1) the rebuilding of the walls (1-7) and the restoration of the people (8-13).

I. The Rebuilding of the Walls (1-7)

A. Preparation for Rebuilding (1:1-2:20)

B. Rebuilding (3:1-7:73)

II. The Restoration of the People (8:1-13:31)

A. The Renewal of the Covenant (8:1-10:39)

B. The Obedience of the People to the Covenant (11:1-13:31)

ESTHER (Protection of God's People)

Author:

The book gives no hint of who wrote it. But whoever it was knew the Persian culture well. The account has all the marks of a person who was there for he described the events as an eyewitness. And he was probably a Jew. Some have suggested that Ezra or Nehemiah wrote the account but no specific evidence supports that view.²³

Date:

The events of Esther occurred between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, between the first return led by Zerubbabel and the second return led by Ezra. Esther was written sometime between 470 and 465, during the latter years of Xerxes' reign (see 10:2-3), or in the reign of his son Artaxerxes (464-424).

Title of the Book:

The book takes its name from the chief character, whose Hebrew name *Hadassah* (Myrtle) was changed to the Persian name *Ester*, which probably means "star."

Theme and Purpose:

Esther tells the story of a beautiful Jewish girl whom King Xerxes of Persia chose to be his queen. When Haman plotted to murder all the Jews, Queen Esther's cousin Mordecai persuaded Esther to try to save her people. Risking her own life, she appealed to the king and rescued the Jews. Although the name of God does not appear in this book, the theme and purpose of the book is to show God's providential care of His people in their trials and persecutions.

²³ Walvoord/Zuck, electronic media.

Key Word:

The key word is "Jews," which is repeated some 44 times. Thus, in concept, a key term is the word "providence," God's providence in caring for the Jews.

Key Verses: 4:14; 8:17**Key Chapters:**

The key chapters would include, (1) Haman's persuading Ahasuerus to decree to annihilate the Jews, **chapter 3**, (2) the honoring of Mordecai and the hanging of Haman, **chapters 6-7**, (3) the reversal of the decree that led to the deliverance of the Jews, **chapter 8**, (4) the Jew's defensive victory and the inauguration of the feast of Purim, **chapter 9**.

Key People: Esther, Haman, Mordecai, Xerxes (Ahasuerus, Hebrew form of the name of the king of Persia).

Christ as Seen in Esther:

Esther provides a fitting picture of Christ in that she was willing to put herself in the place of death for her people's salvation and also in that she acted as an advocate for them. In addition, we also see how God continued to providentially protect the Jews through whom He would give the Messiah.

Outline:

Esther easily divides into two sections: (1) the danger or threat to the Jews (1-3) and (2) the deliverance or triumph of the Jews (4-10). Or it may be divided into three sections: (1) the danger to God's people (1-3), (2) the decision of God's servant (4-5), and (3) the deliverance of God's people (6-10).

- I. The Danger to the Jews (1:1-3:15)
 - A. The Choice of Esther as Queen in Place of Vashti (1:1-2:23)
 - B. The Conspiracy of Haman Against the Jews (3:1-15)
- II. The Deliverance of the Jews (4:1-10:3)
 - A. The Decision of Esther for the Jews (4:1-5:14)
 - B. The Defeat of Haman (6:1-7:10)
 - C. The Decree of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Mordecai (8:1-17)
 - D. The Defeat Over the Enemies of the Jews (9:1-19)
 - E. The Days of the Feast of Purim (9:20-32)
 - F. The Declaration of Mordecai's Fame and Exaltation at Court (10:1-3)