

Between the Testaments

History and Literature from the OT
to the NT

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Time line of Israel and Judah after their collapse

722 BC northern kingdom (“Israel”) falls

605 BC “captivity”: first wave of captives from southern kingdom (“Judah”)
(Including Daniel.)

586 BC Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon/Chaldea) destroys Jerusalem and Solomon’s temple.

562 BC Nebuchadnezzar dies

539 BC downfall of Babylon

Belshazzar “king” of Babylon was co-regent with his father Nabodius; story of his downfall in Daniel 5.

Cyrus of Persia becomes king over Israel as conqueror of Babylon

Darius the Mede made co-regent/king over Babylon, under Cyrus (Daniel 5:30, 6:28)

538 BC Cyrus’s decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1)

First return under Jeshua, Zechariah, and Zerubbabel, blocked by opponents until second year of Darius I

530 BC Cambyses II (the Great) becomes king of Persia

Called Artaxerxes/Ahasuerus? letters in Ezra 4 before Darius refer to "Artaxerxes".

Darius I called "son of Ahasuerus" in Dan 9:1. The name "Artaxerxes" is generic, meaning "king of justice."

522 BC Darius I (the Great) becomes king

Daniel realizes 70th year of Jeremiah's prophecy is soon (Daniel 9:1). (586-70 = 516)

519 BC decree by Darius to resume reconstruction of Jerusalem and Temple

516 BC completion of Temple (Ezra 6:15)

485 BC Xerxes I becomes king

465 BC Artaxerxes I becomes king

458 BC second return under Ezra (Ezra 7:1, 7-8)

final "decree" referred to in Daniel 9:25? $458+27 = 485$, $69 \times 7 = 483$.

444 BC third return under Nehemiah, completion of walls (Neh 2:1)

424 BC Xerxes II becomes king (probable king of Esther)

Esther is presumably the last book of the Old Testament. Feast of "purim" commemorates Esther.

423 BC Darius II, son of Artaxerxes I, becomes king

404 BC Artaxerxes II becomes king

330 BC Alexander I (the Great) conquers Media-Persia
Propheesied by Daniel (8:21, 11:3).

323 BC Alexander's kingdom split into four.

Two kingdoms in north and south dominate Israel (Dan 8:22,11:4).

Daniel 11 gives a stylized but fairly specific prophecy of the period from Alexander to Antiochus IV, with war between the north (Seleucids) and south (Egypt, Ptolemies).

167 BC Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) desecrates temple.

This is the "abomination of desolation" prophesied by Daniel (11:31) and referred to by Christ as "type" of the 70 AD destruction. Sacrifice is ended for roughly 3.5 years.

Rebellion of Judas Macabee, which leads to the origin of the Pharisees and the ethnic term "sinners."

164 BC partial success of rebellion and partial independence for Israel after Antiochus IV dies suddenly of disease.

Temple is restored and rededicated. ("Hanukkah" means "dedication")

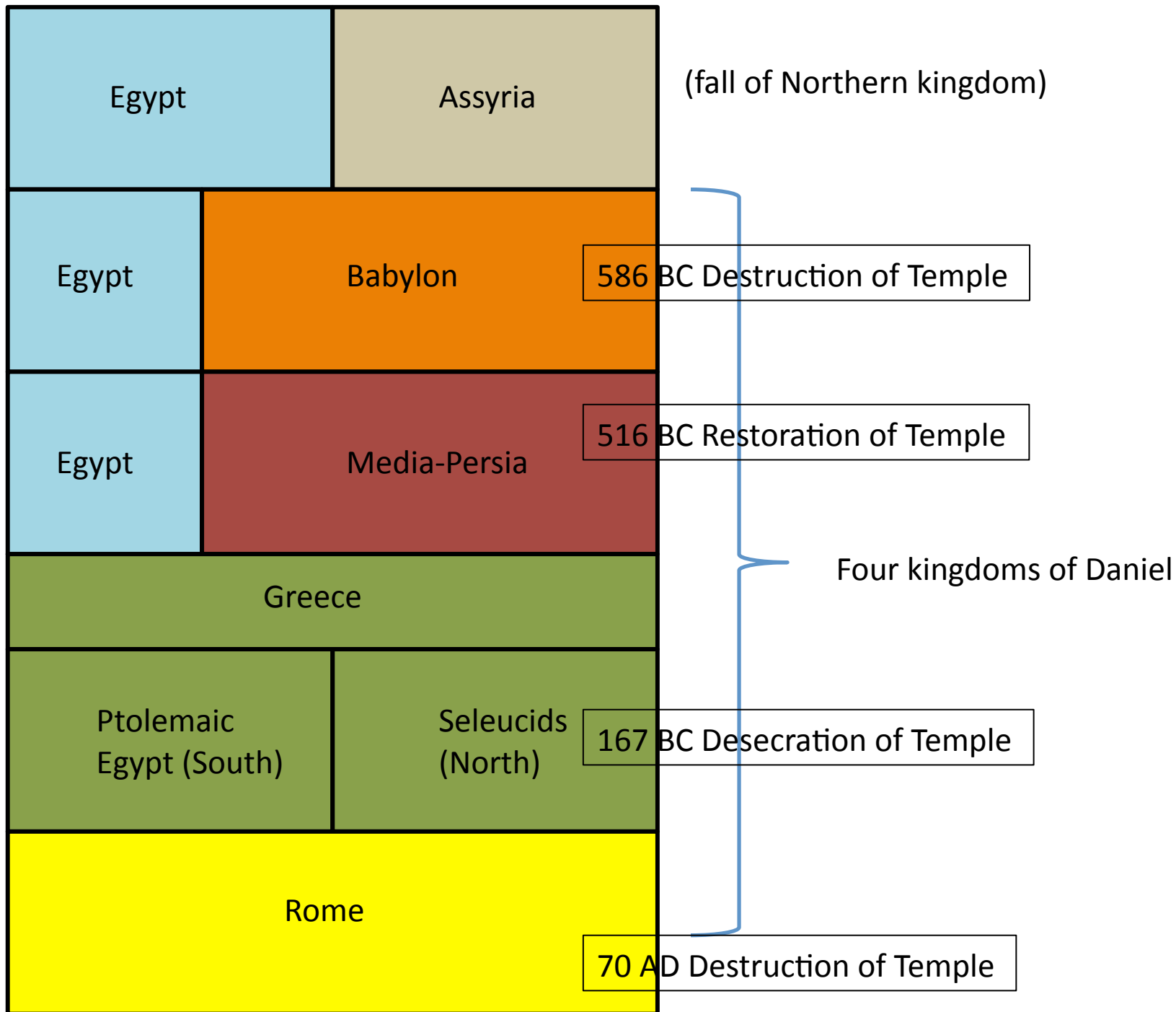
63 BC Rome under Julius conquers Seleucids.

Propheesied by Daniel (2:40, 7:7-23).

47 BC Herodian dynasty appointed by Rome (Edomite converts to Judaism)

30 AD Probable date of Christ's crucifixion
(could be as early as 27 AD and as late as 33 AD)

70 AD final destruction of Jerusalem and Temple



What do we generally learn from studying this period?

1. How the Jews evolved from tribal, landed nation to an international ethnic group.

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have exiled you, and pray for the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer 29:7)

Model for citizenship in a secular state while “sojourners” with true citizenship in heaven.

2. Global mission of God— interaction with the nations of this earth and witness to the nations through that interaction
(e.g. Daniel and Nebuchannezzar, Jonah) “Should I not be concerned?”

3. Be careful about locking down history! E.g., many people with same name.

Dates and Times– Do They Matter?

1. Archeology has many uncertainties, Bible translation has many uncertainties, so often we must say we don't know, and leave options open.
2. But resolving questions can help to refute those who say "the Bible is full of contradictions". It also raises our own confidence that we know what the Bible is saying.
3. In general, as in natural science, resolving questions increases our understanding and can lead to better applications in the real world.
4. There is no reason to assume that progress in understanding cannot be made, as the Church matures in experience and wisdom. As in natural science, some things that were viewed as mysteries are now understood.
5. Is speculation/hypothesis a waste of time? Not any more in Bible study than in science– sometimes fruitful progress is made when we aren't sure at first.

Ezra 4:7-8 In the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia.... Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king...

Ezra 4:17-22 The king sent an answer: "...the letter that you sent to us has been plainly read before me....Therefore make a decree that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me.

Ezra 4:23-24 Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Darius II was king in 423 BC, almost 100 years after the completion of the temple in 516 BC under Darius I. Ezra himself was probably dead by then— led return in 458 BC, 35 years before Darius II.

Daniel 9:1-2 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Options:

- 1) Cambyses II was also called Artaxerxes (king of justice), or there was another vassal king called Artaxerxes before Darius the Great.
- 2) archeological records are wrong in calling Cambyses II the king before Darius
- 3) Later author (not Ezra) inserts letters about later opposition (100 years later) into book of Ezra. The “then” in Ezra 4:24 doesn’t mean “afterward”.

Daniel 9:24-27

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.”

(9:24)

Sense of finality to atonement (“end of sin”) and end of prophecy seems to refer to Christ.

“Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks [and] for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.” (9:25)

There is debate among translators whether the coming of “messiah prince” is after just 7 or after $7+62 = 69$.

“And after the sixty-two weeks, [] Anointed One shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.”

(9:26)

Destruction of the temple did not occur in 167 BC but did in 70 AD; the “Second Temple” was continuous (with renovations) from Ezra to Herod. This also points to the time of Christ. Christ referred to the 70 AD destruction as the “desolation prophesied by Daniel.”

“And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (9:27)

“He” here is ambiguous– is it the messiah or the anti-messiah who desolates.

Half a week could refer to period of Christ’s ministry, i.e. 3.5 years, or it could refer to the 3.5 years of suspension of sacrifice by Antiochus Epiphanes. But he did not make a “strong covenant”. Is Antiochus a “type” of Christ?

Options:

- 1) Use second decree under Ezra (458 BC) or third and final “decree” under Nehemiah (444 BC) to “start the clock”. Then Daniel 9 can be taken as referring to time of Christ.
- 2) Daniel 9 refers to time of Antiochus. Problems: much less than 483 years from even earliest decree of Cyrus. Jerusalem not destroyed then.
- 3) Daniel 9 is symbolic and we should not take the “sevens” as a prediction of an actual number of years.

Daniel 11:31-12:3

“His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. ” (11:31-32)

Clearly refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the “king of the north”) in the context of the previous passages.

“Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time”. (11:33-36)

This now transitions to the “time of the end”.

“The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price. (11:37-39)

Is this referring to the king of the north, or to a new king? Arguments in favor of a new king are the clear view of a fourth empire earlier in Daniel, and the “newness” of this king’s practices.

“At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood.” (11:40)

Is this two kings battling the new king, or is the “him” here equal to the king of the north? It does not appear to refer to any major battle at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

“He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.” (11:41-45)

Seems consistent with Rome’s invasion of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered. (12:1)

“Time of distress as has never happened” referred to by Christ in regard to 70 AD.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (12:2-3)

At first glance this appears to refer to general resurrection in 70 AD, but can be taken as a generic statement of the final judgment which will save those who are “delivered”.

Overall view of the flow of biblical history

“Covenantalism”

church is continuous with OT Israel, one “kingdom of God,” we are the “inheritors of the promises”

Christ is reigning now over his kingdom and it will continue to “conquer” spiritually until Christ returns— a continuous process until he returns

prophecy about this world focuses on main events leading up to ushering in this new kingdom:
scattering and destruction of Israel, advent of Christ, end of era of the Law in 70 AD

“Dispensationalism”

church and Israel are two different stories, church is “parenthesis” because of rejection of Jesus by Israel

since the reign of Christ over Israel is not happening now, there must be a future “millenium” kingdom

much prophecy focuses on events in the millenial kingdom more than 2500 years in the future, in this new kingdom in which the Jews rule this world

Eph. 2:11-21 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision,... — remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

The history of the *Apocrypha*

- The “Septuagint” was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Started with the Books of Moses ca. 250 BC; later books were added over the years, including at least one book (2 Esdras) in the late first century.
- The Jewish Scriptures (“The Law, the prophets, and the psalms”) did not include the books of the Apocrypha and in general they were not accepted widely by the Jews. Jesus and the Apostles do not quote from those books, although the NT quotes from the Septuagint Greek version of the other books.
- The Greek-speaking Gentiles generally had a high view of the Septuagint as “the Bible” (similar to the King James Bible in English). Therefore the apocryphal books were accepted by many in the early church.
- Hebrew scholar Jerome (ca. 400 AD) made a strong case for non-acceptance of these Books on the basis that they were not the Jewish Bible of Jesus, but not all followed him. Reformers (ca. 1600 AD) agreed with Jerome’s arguments. Catholic church today accepts them as a “lesser” canon (“deuterocanonical”).

Books of the second-century Septuagint not included in the Hebrew Bible.

1 Esdras

essentially a copy of Ezra with a long section of Greek wisdom inserted, probably ca. 100 BC

2 Esdras

probably written by messianic Jew ca. 90 AD; lengthy Platonic discussion of various theological difficulties, with very explicit teaching about Christ the Son of God, includes statement that lost 10 tribes of Israel are living at the head of the Euphrates!

Tobit

Judith

Both Tobit and Judith could easily be tales in the Arabian nights; clearly fiction involving intrigue, djinns, etc. Probably Babylonian ca. 200 BC.

1 Macabees

2 Macabees

Fairly straightforward history of the rebellion led by Judah Macabee and the times afterward. Give good insight into the mindset of the Pharisees. (cf. Covenanters)

Prayer of Manasseh

Short, straightforward prayer of repentance

Wisdom of Solomon

Many similarities to Proverbs but with a lengthy discussion of eternal life and some Greek influences. Possibly from a “Solomonic wisdom school” ca. 300-400 BC.

Sirach/Ecclesiasticus

Written by Jewish scholar Sirach around 180 BC in the style of Proverbs. Teaches that good deeds can atone for sins.

“Beat your son with bruises every day so he turns out exactly like you”

“Appearances make the man”

Baruch

strangely ahistorical letter attributed to servant of Jeremiah, deals with donations to Temple worship purportedly at a time when the Temple was destroyed

Letter of Jeremiah

Very brief letter mostly on the stupidity of idolatry

additions to Esther

Apparently a later attempt to make Esther more explicitly God-centered and explain Mordecai’s refusal to bow to Haman.

additions to Daniel

“Daniel as Sherlock Holmes.” Possibly true stories told about Daniel and added later.

The history of the *Talmud*

- Commentary on the Law of Moses, and commentary on earlier Talmud commentary, with the aim of practical law. Very long– like lawbooks of a government.
- Two parts: “mishna” written before Christ (starting around 200 BC) and “gemara” written after Christ (up to around 500 AD)– redefinition of Judaism in absence of Temple sacrifice.
- Often the “tradition” that Jesus is rejecting in debating the Pharisees.

The writings of *Josephus*

Written after 70 AD, Josephus compiles Jewish history from time of Macabees up through Christ and 70 AD destruction of Israel. Though not inspired, an important source of our historical knowledge.

“Law, Prophets and Psalms”

The Jewish Canon

Law

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Prophets

Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
The Twelve

Writings

Psalms
Proverbs
Job
Song of Songs
Ecclesiastes
Ruth
Lamentations
Daniel
Esther
Chronicles
Ezra-Nehemiah

“wisdom
Literature”

The Psalms and the Wisdom Literature

These books have a “timeless” character. It is hard to date them exactly.

Many secular scholars date the wisdom literature very late, around 200 BC, due to some use of non-Hebrew words from surrounding nations, and similarities with Apocrypha wisdom.

Was there prophetic editing of the Bible?

Some books clearly compile material from earlier sources, e.g. Psalms.

Some historical books include copies of songs written by others, or refer to reference material.

Some books talk of their author in the third person or as passed away:

Deut 34:5 – death of Moses

Ecclesiastes 12:9 – summary of life of Solomon

Some books use later geography markers

Gen 14:14 – pursued all the way to Dan

Does inspiration require sole authorship?

Recall that there was a continuous line of prophets up through Ezra and Nehemiah. It seems clear that later prophets arranged and compiled earlier books. These changes were accepted by Jewish priests and scholars as canonical.

Solomon created a tradition of scholarship in Israel that lasts to this day. “Wisdom literature” became a form of writing that extended beyond the Bible.

Some ancient writers said that Solomon had an influence on Greek philosophers such as Plato, who appears to use the name “I am” for God in at least one place.

The book of Job

The story is very ancient— ancient writings from the time of Abraham have parts of it. The story of Job was apparently quite famous in the Middle East.

The dialogue of Job and his friends may have been written by a prophet to be a “stage play.”

Can fiction be inspired? E.g. parables, Nathan’s story to David. Job is primarily not about history but a philosophical debate, though it rests on the premise that the events did happen.

Job's friends are not idiots. They sit quietly until Job curses the day of his death. Their argument runs:

"If you are a friend of God, pray and he will restore you."

Job replies "I have no hope. I think God will just do whatever he wants."

Their response: "If you do not have hope, then it must be because of some secret sin of yours. You secretly know God is disciplining you."

Job: "I don't say I am sinless, but I have no revelation of what sin that might be. I have done more to obey God than anyone I know. Will God search out some hidden fault of mine and zap me for it?"

Friends: "You get dangerously near to blasphemy talking that way."

Job: "There is no way to know what God is doing in our lives—from a human perspective it appears random, and the evil succeed and the good suffer. Therefore, if there is no hope of eternal life, life is meaningless. We can only have hope if we can one day stand before God and get an explanation."

God: "Trust me, I know what I am doing. But Job is wiser than his friends."

The book of Ecclesiastes

Some Christians dislike this book so much it has been called “an inspired record of uninspired thinking”.

But it is presented as the wisdom of Solomon. (Ecc. 1:12—king in Jerusalem, Ecc 2:9— surpassed all before him)

Ecc. 12:9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

The “vanity theme” throughout Scripture

Job

Ecclesiastes

Psalm 49, Psalm 90

Matthew 6, Luke 12

Romans 8:20

1 John 2:8, 17

James 1:10

1 Cor 7:31

Vanity = “a breath”, “passing away”, “temporary,” “weightless,” “unsatisfying”

The point is not to reject good work, but to not put our hope in this world.

Strong contrast to God who is not vanity: God is eternal, weighty, satisfying.

Do good work, but don't put your hope in it. Not putting our weight on these things frees us to enjoy life: “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”

The Song of Solomon

Longstanding debate: is this about marital love, or allegory about Christ and his church?

Answer: Both! Paul says that marriage itself is an allegory about Christ and his Church.

[Ephesians 5:30-32](#) “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

The husband/”prince on a white horse” theme in Scripture.

Church as the “bride of Christ”, Jesus as the “groom”

Revelation 19:7, 21:9 the final day as a “wedding supper”

John 3:29

Jeremiah 2:2, 32

Isaiah 61:10, 62:5 “as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you”

Psalms 45 “you are the most handsome”

The Proverbs of Solomon

Many people struggle with Proverbs because it is “proverbial” wisdom, not Law and not prophecy/promise. In modern terms, it is statements of “statistical likelihood”.

Prov. 2:19 none who go down into adultery ever regain the paths of life

Prov. 22:6 children trained up right do not go astray

Prov 10:4 laziness causes poverty, diligence makes you rich

First part of Proverbs (1-9):

contrast of two women, “wisdom” and “the adulteress”/”folly”

“wisdom” is a type of Christ, the “Word” (logos)

Can’t read the second part of Proverbs as a narrative: read one verse at a time, as “proverbs”

The Psalms

The Psalms have lots of raw emotion. Embrace it!

On one hand, we are afraid to read the Psalms because they have so much raw emotion.

On the other hand, we don't feel close to God because we never bring our true emotions to him!

“Imprecatory” Psalms. Calling for judgment on the wicked, and vindication.

Note that these are *prayers*, not personal revenge.

Praying for justice is a theme in the Bible: Luke 17:3-7, Rev 6:10

Unless we are in governmental authority ourselves, we leave ultimate justice to the hands of God.

“Messianic” Psalms. “I am sinless.” “I am king.”

In some cases the messiah speaks as sin-bearer: both emotion and lordship.